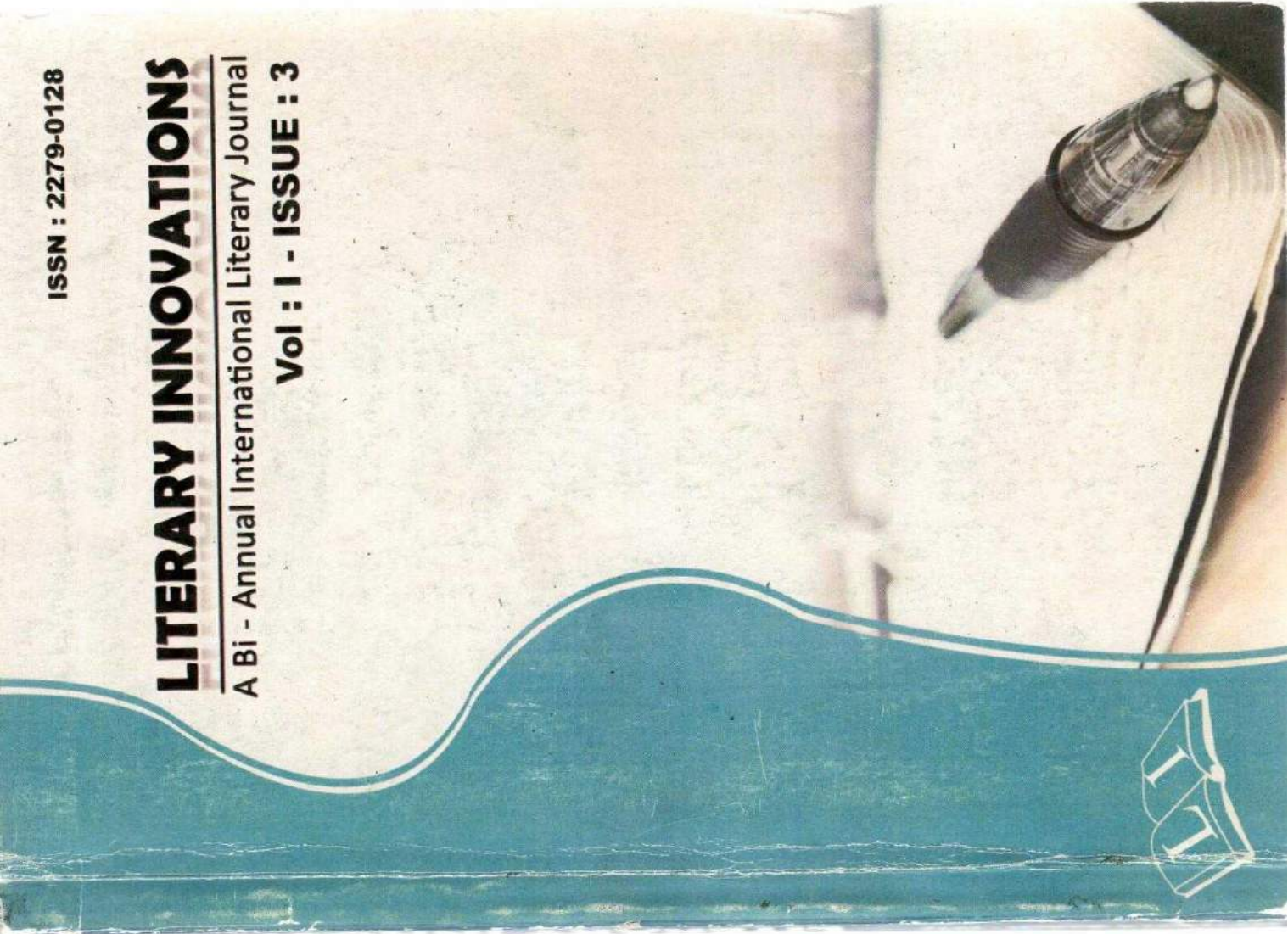


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# **LITERARY INNOVATIONS**

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12. Alice Walker, **In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women**, 1918, p.84.
13. Loc.cit.
14. Mary Helen Washington, **Black Eyed Susans: Classic Stories by and about Black Women**, 1975, p.xxii.
15. Gloria Wade Gayles, "No Crystal Stair: Vision of Race and Sex" in **Black Women's Fiction**, 1984, p.111.
16. **The Third Life of Grange Copeland**, 1981, p.125.

**Ethnicity: A Critique of Paule Marshall's The Chosen Place, The Timeless People**

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Paule Marshall's second novel, The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1961), delineates the problems facing many third world countries in their struggle to establish a national identity. Moreover, it explores the means through which an individual comes to identify with a group. Marshall analyses in the novel the ethnic identity and victimization of Blacks who have been the victim of prejudice for years in the white patriarchy. Robert Bone (1969) describes as "the best novel to be written by an American black woman ... and one of the four or five most impressive novels ever written by a Black American"(4). It is published ten years after Brown Girl, Brownstones, and the novel expands Marshall's theme of development and reclamation of black female psyche, set in the fictional landscape of a Caribbean island, Bournehills. The epigraph of The Chosen Place, The Timeless People suggests a tale of victimization and hopelessness. The novel is typical because each of her other novels is focussed upon the experience of single individuals; however far-reaching the implications. Marshall's vision in these works moves outward from the situation of a woman placed in a problematic family situation. Brown Girl, Brown Stones and Praise Song for the Window are fictions of the private life, whereas The Chosen Place, the Timeless people seems, in contrast, to be primarily a fiction of the public life. The novel's length, its range of psychological themes, the international and interracial characters, and most distinctively its economic and political dimensions make it seem a very different kind of novel indeed. Marshall's wider understanding of the society is certainly proved in this novel.

The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, is a lengthy and ambitious novel. Numerous publications focus on the protagonists' ability to communicate resistance on various levels, such as body language, speech, and ties to the Bournehills community. This study primarily focuses on the identity and vision



of the blacks and their victimization in the hands of white. The chosen novel attempts to bring out the exploitation of Bournehills community people. Merle Kinbona, the protagonist of this novel, has embarked on an Odyssean "Journey back" to self-recovery. Marshall provides Merle Kinbona with a much broader canvas on which to etch the contours of her identity. As Merle does not grow up but realises herself vis-à-vis her environment, history, and culture; Eugenia Collier Writes:

The novel, (The Chosen Place, the Timeless People) then, is the next step in Marshall's ever broadening vision of the relationship of the individual with the community. A vision that links black culture in the Western Hemisphere with its African past and the promise of the future; it sees this black culture as different from European - American, which has been the oppressor . . . (310)

Saul Amron is an aging but still active Jewish American anthropologist who, with his Philadelphia wife, Harriet, and Allen Fuso, a research associate, goes out to Bournehills on a big "Multi million Dollar Development Scheme," as the local newspaper edition headlined it, on behalf of one of the great U.S. Foundations. They fly to the island of Bournehills to conduct a study for the rehabilitation project. The project, to be funded by an American foundation, will transform the island by the introduction of sophisticated technology. Many attempts had been made to change the rugged island but in vain. Particularly, the non-cooperative have been the poor workers who have frustrated the more enlightened "high brown" civil servants of the island. Saul's plan is to carry out a careful anthropological survey of the district before applying his findings to the community development. He is a committed intellectual, who has worked all his life in underdeveloped countries and has acquired a pragmatic confidence in his ability to understand and improve them. He is also sincerely honest and hard-working and has real sympathy for people and their problems. He also has personal some problems. Early in his career, he deserted a nurse, and his first wife died of miscarriage while out on field work with him in Honduras. His self-assessed guilt for this incident had taken him out of the field work altogether until he met Harriet, who just divorced a husband her nuclear scientist. It was she who, recognizing his talents, divinity and

indefatigable desire to return to the field, had arranged for him, to be offered the directorship of the Bournehills project. They were married soon afterwards.

Saul Amron soon meets Merle Kinbona. Merle is a tense and eccentric middle-aged Black woman, who frightens Saul and Harriet with her seemingly disconnected and, sometimes, frank chatter. She is a mulatto woman, whose white father refuses to associate himself with her.

Saul comes to understand the relationship between the natives and the colonial government. As the story deepens, however, we learn that Merle is a deeply troubled and rather lonely woman. Her father was a wealthy white land owner who, though he does not claim her as a child, did surrender her the funds to study in England. While in London, she was active in politics and led a bohemian life. She became the kept woman of a wealthy and jaded British woman. She married a Ugandan student and eventually gave birth to a daughter. However, she had been so ashamed of her lesbianism with the Englishwoman that she had not told her husband about it. Her husband who, when he came to hear of it, had deserted her and one day he returned to Africa with their children without telling her. Merle had gone out of her mind, and after that, she had always blamed herself for what had gone wrong in her life.

Merle returned to the island after she received news that the father was dying. She returned to put her life in order to make a fresh start. Afterwards she acted as a spokeswoman of the Bournehills islanders. The novel opens with her still traking through the depths of her London ordeal. Yet strangely she is the only person on the island who has the respect of the two classes of Blacks. Merle is the bridge between the West, symbolized by the Amrons and Africa, represented by the peasants of Bournehills. She talks incessantly, but never comes off the page. Her mannerisms, her moods, her devotions, and her antagonisms are, one feels, lovingly described.

Marshall has added to this complex characterization of a vital adult woman the questions about what constitute womanhood. Marshall contents that a woman to be and to do? As Marshall discovers, a woman cannot continually please or meet the needs of everyone else and neglect the own



development without severe consequences. He further proves to be more analytical and critical of a woman's character. Maintaining a healthy balance between needs for self and service for community requires a strong sense of personal worth.

As an adult, Merle still manifests her difficulty in dealing with conflicting cultural conditioning. She feels a great need to find peace within herself, but her actions as an adult pit her against economic and psychological forces larger than she is and over which she has no real control. Her reaction to such stress is a severe physical and emotional debility when she is unable to change the economic vulnerability of the people of Bournehills. Merle's mother is a member of the oppressed, poorer elements of Bournehills while her father is a member of the monied controllers of Bourne Island. Merle is a combination of both the worlds.

The circumstances, of her mother's death, and the subsequent lack of interest by Merle's father have instilled in Merle an unconscious sense of the inferiority complex. The adult Merle is haunted by her inability to identify her mother's killer. This unrealistic expectation (that a two-year-old should be able to solve what adults would not) distorts her ability to value herself: "Look, how when she was only a two years child, the woman her father was married to shot and killed her mother right before her eyes" (33). The combination of powerlessness and trauma erodes her self-esteem. Merle's father does not concern himself with his daughter or her upbringing until she is a teenager, when he realizes he will have no other children to inherit his estate. Merle sees her father's heritage first hand when he decides to send her to England for schooling. Merle's life in England inexplicably confounded, and it does broaden her experiences. She finds it difficult to reconcile with the differences in cultures which her parents originate. She is unprepared for the cultural differences, her life in England further reinforces her inability and makes her feel competent and independent.

Merle discovers that allowing another person to control her life has serious consequences. This realization dawns on her mainly through her lesbian relationship with a rich companion in London. She tries to extricate herself

from the relationship. This attempt makes understand that it is easier to give power away than to reclaim it. She lacks the strength or experience to bear with the control that her former lover has over her. Merle's husband accuses her of being an unfit mother. (based primarily on the revelation of her former lesbian relationship). She does not have in fact, the emotional strength to counteract his appraisal  $\frac{3}{4}$  hence the loss of her husband, child, and self-esteem.

As a result of her negative experiences, she doubts her own womanhood. She returns to Bourne Island for asylum after her experience in England. Merle feels guilt about her inheritance from her father as she watches the poor of Bournehills try to scrape a meagre existence out of the soil. She is a part of two groups but a member of neither. Because, it is her father's money that gives Merle her economic independence, she feels a sense of betrayal. However, her independence enables Merle to speak for her community in a way that she would not otherwise be able to do. Nevertheless, the emotional price she pays for the economic buffer is onerous. She is regarded primarily as an eccentric woman, she is nonetheless respected by the elite of Bourne Island. Her inheritance shields her from economic dependence on them, but it does not give her the power she has over them. For the charm, eccentricity, and outspokenness, she has paid a terrible price: "All right, finish for now, but remember, I've had to pay with my sanity for the right to speak any mind so you know I must talk." (11)

Seeing the dignity and the poverty as well of the Bournehills dwellers, Merle she can recognise the strength in the women of Bournehills, but she is unable to recognise that such strength is part of her inheritance. Marshall's portrayal of collective gender identity is explicit here. She understands the need for group history to instill pride in the next generation as she teaches the children of Bournehills the racial history which is excluded from the English text books. However, she spends a lot of time excluding herself from such pride. With her outrageous costumes, outspoken nature, and valourous attitude she skillfully covers up her basic fear as a woman :

Her face, especially in repose or when she was silent. . . confessed that something of great value had been taken from her. It looked utterly bereft



at times. What saved it (and this only in part) was the inner sunlight her eyes gave off. This said some vital center remained intact. And this duality, this sense of life persisting amid that nameless and irrevocable loss made her force terribly affecting, even beautiful.(5)

Her suffering indeed, subsequently adds to her humanity, and provides her with mental strength stability.

Critics like Barbara Christian, Sascha Talmor, and Eugenia Collier think that the real protagonist of the novel is the community of Bournehills and it is through an unwitting confrontation with this chosen place that the major characters seek self-revelations and enlightenment. Merle Kinbona is, no doubt, the protagonist of the novel and a charismatic leader of the Bournehills people. She is the breath and bone and "the voice of a voiceless people," the people of Bournehills (Nazarath 1974:54) She is undoubtedly a leader and "a revolutionary spirit" but wears the mantle with no ease and self-assuredness.

In all, Merle allowed her commodification at the hands of the English woman out of economic necessity. Abandoned and still innocent, Merle could not distinguish lesbian pull from motherly attachment and affection. She could not understand the English woman's kindness and generosity. The woman helped Merle get set up in an apartment and continued to help her financially. After three years, Merle managed to get herself disentangled from, "that woman in Hampstead" (332) but, poverty-stricken and jobless continued to return to the woman's home whenever she needed money. Eventually, however, she decided to "stay away for good" (330), and got married to Ketu, a beautiful black man" from Uganda studying at Leeds University, Merle informs us:

He was a man once he made up his mind about something there was no changing it and he had no patience with weakness of any sort. He could be heard, in other words. But still beautiful... He was one of those people who are absolutely clear in their minds about so many of the things that leave most of us<sup>3</sup>/4especially when we're young<sup>3</sup>/4muddled and confused.... Ketu was like that. He knew more than any man I'd ever met, what he was about.

(331)

Ketu is sharply contrasted to Merle. Unlike his wife, he is uncorrupted by the Western religion and culture. He remains the arbiter of what is right and natural, according to idealized African norms. He is not "muddled or confused" though he is young. Before him, Merle is confused, not knowing whether she is "fish or fowl" (332).

The lesbian relationship is nothing but white corruption of which Merle is a victim, rather it is a result of ignorance and determined exploitation by the rich white woman. The unspeakableness of her lesbian pact stands at the core of her personal and psychic trouble. She never unfolds to Ketu anything about "the damn woman" (33) for lack of the nerve. The woman, however, finds out where Merle lives in Leeds and begins to send checks repeatedly. Merle, at first, rejects, and then cashes after the baby is born. She tells Ketu that the money is from her father. Then as she starts to work again, she refuses the checks. Feeling betrayed, the English woman sends someone to the university to inform Ketu about the past lesbian affair. The evidence includes letters Merle had written, pictures of the two women together and the cancelled checks. Ketu returns home, but Merle feels: "I wasn't Merle to him, any longer a person, his wife, the mother of his child but the very thing he tried to avoid all his years there" (334). Her encounter with the West destroyed her marriage and hurled Merle into the dismal abyss of mental gloom and alienation. Even after many years, the past trauma still remains fresh. Merle returned to Bournehills to heal. Now, eight years later, she exists on the fringe of emotional collapse. She stands pathetically scarred and hopelessly muddled.

Both Merle's childhood trauma and her encounter with the English woman have left a profound scarring effects on Merle's psyche. Merle feels:

I've stopped dead in my tracks. Paralyzed... I'm like someone bewitched, turned foolish. It's like my very will's gone. And nothing short of a miracle will bring it back. Something has to happen... something apart from me... to bring me back to myself. Something that's been up has to come down... before I can get moving again!

(230)



Island. He is struck by her strength and her intense commitment to those voiceless peasants of Bournehills. She looks to be the embodiment of some mysterious power principle that guards the poor black against Sir Johns and their impringing white power structure. She represents that energy that transforms cultural zombies like Hutson into cultural beings and prevents black people from falling into further catastrophe. Finally, Saul has learnt that Bournehills is not a geographical terrain but some ravaged part of his own psyche that must be explored and healed up. Barbara Christian argues :

Marshall creates a microcosm representative not only of Bournehills, but of other under developed societies in the Third World, that are captive both psychologically and economically by the metropolises of the West, yet somehow possessing their own visions of possibility. (167)

The novel, then, is Marshall's ever-broadening vision of the relationship of the individual with the community. A vision that links Black culture in the Western Hemisphere with its African past and the promise of the future, it sees this Black culture as different from Euro-American culture. By the end of the Novel, Merle is able to see her future more clearly as an activist, who intends to make a difference in her home environment. She tells Saul:

But I'll becoming back to Bournehills. This is home. Whatever little I can do that will matter for something must be done here. A person can run for years but sooner or later he has to take a stand in the place for better or worse, he calls home, do what he can to change things there.(468)

Merle's progress as an individual and as a community leader is systematic. She keeps on trying to fulfill her aim. She succeeds ultimately at not only being honest about her past but also at valuing her sense of morality in order to find peace. This, therefore, enables her to map out a better existence for her future and for the future of her community. Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* this dramatically enacts the ethnic identity of blacks. The major characters in the novel undergo a process of reinvestigating the past in an attempt to find a fulfilment in the present. What Marshall demonstrates, furthermore, is that, the process of recovering both communal and personal

Being a member of an oppressed community, Merle cannot expect some messiah to drop down from remote heavens and redeem her situation. Merle's true self will not flower, she will not become whole and unified. "She, therefore must attempt to change the entire society if she is to become a person at peace with herself" (Christian 1990:20). In keeping with this design, American social researchers come to Bournehills with a philanthropic view to improve and bring it up to date. The novel is framed by the arrival and departure of these Americans. These Americans are nevertheless the products of a particular milieu. Robert Bone brings out the personality traits of these Americans:

"That Allan represents an effete civilization that has pledged its soul to the goods of technology. Herriet embodies the suicidal impulse of the Western psyche; its unyielding racism and will to dominate, despite a superficial liberalism. Saul represents the possibility of transformation and renewal, providing only that fate will overtake him with a blinding vision.(4)

In spite of their personal and cultural differences they tread a common ground by virtue of their materialistic outlook and neocolonial philosotheopy.

Merle is obviously torn between wrath and helplessness. Her wrath is against those psychologically enslaved, treacherous black bourgeoisie who are out to sell the island for a few dollars in much the same fashion which the brokers had sold mother Africa a few centuries ago. Lyle Hutson and the likes who are to prepared auction off not only the Bournehills people, but their own conscience too. Merle is the only person who can bring these uppity blacks, the cultural combines to some sense of awareness. She reminds Lyle Huston:

The Kingsley's still hold the purse strings and are allowed to do as they damn please, never mind you chaps are supposed to be in charge. And little Fella is still bleeding his life out in a cane field. Come up to Bournehills some day and see him on those hills. Things are no different. The chains are still on". (210)

She tries to awaken these zombies reminding them of the entire black history. To Saul, Merle appears to be the living conscience of the whole Bourne



memory is the same regardless of one's heritage. Merle, the representative of new world Blacks, is reborn through her re-integration of self and past. Harriet, the representative of the dominant Westerners is destroyed as a result of grappling with her past. Therefore, all the characters, after a long and tedious process of identifying their place, succeed at respective levels. Marshall's prime concern in the novel is carefully carried out through all the characters in a terse and meaningful manner. Thus, Marshall has, no doubt, made a niche for herself by effectively dealing with the problem of ethnic identity.

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### STRIFE FOR POWER IN GIRISH KARNAD'S TUGHLAQ AND INDIRA PARTHASARATHY'S AURANGZEB

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Politics is a power-structured relationship whereby one group of persons is controlled by another and since the essence of politics is power, the play of power-politics would work toward the pursuit of power, domination, and imposing of one's will on others. Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*, a superb classic in Pan-Indian literature and Indira Parthasarathy's *Aurangzeb*, a political allegory originally written in Tamil and translated into English by K. V. Ramanathan, deal with the life histories of the despotic rulers who ruled India in the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries, respectively. Both *Tughlaq* and *Aurangzeb* are idealists and religious, who combined in themselves the qualities of patriotism, studiousness, innovativeness, and originality; but in the pursuit of power, turned into tyrants and achieve nothing but chaos at both personal and political levels. Politics, as a practice, has always been the systematic organization of hatreds. This is true with *Tughlaq* and *Aurangzeb* and a study of these plays yield an interesting comparison of the heroes' lives and their struggle for power. This paper deals with the comparative study of strife for power in *Tughlaq* and *Aurangzeb* in realizing their ideologies, the ways in which they achieved their goals, and their ultimate failure as idealists.

Girish Karnad, the recipient of *Padma Shri*, *Padma Bhushan* and *Jnanpith* award, the highest literary honour conferred in India, is the foremost playwright of the contemporary Indian stage, who has given richness to the Indian theatre that could probably be equated only with his talents as an actor-director. Karnad's play *Hayavadana* won the *Central Sangeeth Natak Akademi* award and the *Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya* award in 1978. In 1993, his play *Nagamandala* was premiered in Minneapolis in the USA and became widely popular across the world. His other famous works (in Kannada) are *Yayati*, *Tughalak*, *Anjumallige*, *Hittina Hunja*, *Taledanda*, *Agni Mattu Male* and *Tippuvina Kannasugalu*. His best-loved play, *Tughlaq* (1964), established Karnad as one of the most promising playwrights in the country.



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# LITERARY INNOVATIONS

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## DIASPORIC INTRICACIES IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S JASMINE

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Jasmine (1989) is a novel by Bharati Mukherjee set in the present about a young Indian woman in the United States who, trying to adapt to the American way of life in order to be able to survive, changes identities several times.

Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine, the story of a widowed Punjabi peasant reinventing herself in America, entered the literary landscape in 1989, the same year as Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. Rushdie, also an Indian writer, received international attention for his novel when a fatwa (or death threat) was issued against him. The fatwa essentially proclaimed it a righteous act for any Muslim to murder Rushdie. Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*, Jill Ker Conway's *The Road to Coorain*, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Condition*, Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* were all published around this time. Each of these writers is considered to be a contributor to the genre of postcolonial literature. Although there is considerable debate over the term "postcolonial," in a very general sense, it is the time following the establishment of independence in a (former) colony, such as India. The sheer extent and duration of the European empire and its disintegration after the Second World War have led to widespread interest in postcolonial literature.

Partly because of the abundance of such postcolonial works, some critics suggested Jasmine was part of a fad. The New York Times Book Review, however, named it one of the year's best works. Mukherjee's time as a student at the University of Iowa's acclaimed Masters of Fine Arts program, the Writer's Workshop, almost certainly informed the setting of Jasmine. She began studies there in 1961 and took her MFA in 1963. She stayed on to earn a Ph.D. in English and comparative literature in 1969. Though Iowa City is a small college town, the state is 95 percent farm land. In the 1980s, when Jasmine is set, many family farmers on the outskirts of Iowa City faced the same dilemma as Darrel Lutz, a character in Jasmine. The hard life of farming coupled with tough times economically persuaded many farmers to sell out to large corporate farms or to non-agricultural corporations. Other farmers struggled on determined to save the farm their fathers and grandfathers had built up, as well as to preserve this unique way of life.

The state of exile, a sense of loss, the pain of separation and disorientation makes Bharati Mukherjee's novel, *Jasmine* a quest for identity in an alien land. Jasmine, the protagonist of the novel, undergoes several transformations during her journey of life in America, from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jane, and often experiences a deep sense of estrangement resulting in a fluid state of identity. This journey becomes a tale of moral courage, a search for self-awareness and self-assertion. Uprooted from her native land India, Jyoti does her best to introduce herself into the new and alien society as an immigrant; the culmination finally indicated in Jasmine's pregnancy with the child of a white man - Bud.

Jasmine changes herself constantly, ferrying between multiple identities in different spaces and at different times. Jasmine shows the most predictable crusade towards Americanization and its obvious uncertainty and without feeling infuriated she survives to make a new start in the host country.



Geographically, the story begins in India and takes off from Europe to America, where it bounces back and forth from Florida through New York to proceed to Iowa, then finally lands in California. The novelist deliberately transports her in time and space again and again so as to bring in a sense of instability into the novel. Born in Hasnapur in India, Jyoti has the distinction of being the most beautiful and clever in the family. She is seen against the backdrop of the rigid and patriarchal Indian society in which her life is controlled and dominated by her father and brothers who record female as follows, "village girls are cattle; whichever way you lead them that is the way they will go" (Jasmine 46).

However, Jyoti seeks a modern and educated husband who keeps no faith in dowries and traditions, and thus finds a US based modern-thinking man, Prakash. Prakash encourages Jyoti to study English, and symbolically gives Jyoti a new name Jasmine, and a new life. "He wanted to break down the Jyoti as I

had been in Hasnapur and make me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past, he gave me a new name; Jasmine....Jyoti, Jasmine; I shuttled between identities" (Jasmine 77).

Here starts her transformation from a village girl under the shell of her father and brothers to a wife of an American traditional husband who gives her all liberties. Jasmine's happiness is short-lived. She is widowed and returns to India to her family. She has to now choose between the rigid traditions of her family and perform Sati, or continue to live the life of Jasmine in America. Jasmine sways between the past and the present attempting to come to terms with the two worlds, one of "nativity" and the other as an "immigrant". Hailing from an oppressive and a rural family in India, Jyoti comes to America in search of a more fruitful life and to realize the dreams of her husband, Prakash.

Jasmine sets off on an agonizing trip as an illegal immigrant to Florida, and thus begins her symbolic trip of transformations, displacement, and a search for identity.

Jasmine undergoes her next transformation from a dutiful traditional Indian wife Jasmine to Jase when she meets the intellectual Taylor and then moves on to become Bud's Jane. It seems likely that as Jasmine leaves for California with Taylor and Duff, her identity continues to transform. The author depicts this transformation and transition as a positive and an optimistic journey. Jasmine creates a new world consisting of new ideas and values, constantly unmaking her past to establish a new cultural identity by incorporating new desires, skills, and habits. This transition is defined not only in the changes in her attitude, but more significantly in her relationship with men.

Mukherjee has explored her theme with its many nuances. The transformation of Jasmine from a semi-educated Punjabi rustic to an American is not psychologically convincing. Perhaps Bharati Mukherjee's purpose of bringing to the contemporary American fiction the reality of the experiences of the floating elements in American society, the immigrant who are trying to establish themselves, is fulfilled. It is not easy to overcome the "aloofness of expatriation" or disunite oneself from the roots and tradition of the culture that one comes from. No doubt the liberated Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane, who make a life time for every name, look like a possibility for every enthusiastic immigrant.

Thus, caught between the two cultures of the east and west, past and present, old and new, Jasmine constantly "shuttles" in search of a concrete identity. Bharati Mukherjee ends the book on a novel note, and re-emphasizes the complex and alternating nature of identity of a woman in exile, then there is



nothing I can do. Time will tell if I am a tornado, rubble-maker arising from nowhere and disappearing into a cloud. I am on the door and in the potholed and rutted driveway, scrambling ahead of Taylor, greedy with wants and reckless from hope (Jas- 241)

Jasmine implies these words and moves to California with Taylor, which symbolically represents the uncertain of what the future will bring but nevertheless confident in her decision to leave. This sense of movement further reinforces the notion that her identity is forever evolving, she cannot remain in a stable life because disruption and change are the means of her survival. The surrounding environments influence her formation of her identities and she navigates between temporal and spatial locations, her perception of herself changes, thereby resulting in a multiplicity of consciousness. These create a tension within her and she feels the need to reconcile these conflicting perceptions so that they do not wage a psychological war inside her. Thereby we see her reinvent her identity completely.

In Mukherjee's vision of America, past and present are constantly reinvented because "there are no absolutes, only correct contexts" (2). Mukherjee presents maximalist ideals such as Hannah and Jasmine as the chief contextualizes through the exploration the idea of America's past and present identity in terms of "correct contexts." The act of reincarnation through renaming, technology, and psychic violence that both maximalist women employ enable them to understand identity in terms of shifting contexts. Mukherjee characterizes these maximalists as "living through centuries of history in a single lifetime" and this "time travelling" ability enables the maximalist ideal to live simultaneously as part of America's traditions and future. The maximalist ideal is primarily carried by women in these novels because Mukherjee most admires America because of its capability to self-invent. The presence of the pregnant

woman becomes a symbol for self-invention and a constant state of rebirth. Women in Mukherjee's novels show how psychological transformation and personal agency that exist beyond political and social signification. The women also use the self-contradiction of dwellers on the borderlands between birth and death of selves to enable those they come into contact with to experience the same freedom. They stand as the symbolic mothers to the "New America" and the pioneers who first discovered its landscape. Mukherjee's maximalist women carve a space for all Americans within a new, hybridized world by breaking down the paradigms within social hierarchies. In this process all Americans become maximized immigrants by constantly arriving to a new country, traveling to the uttermost shores within their ever changing national identity.

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## A CULT OF MAYA ANGELOU'S THEMES IN HER AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

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Maya Angelou, a name that is inevitably etched in the English Literature for her contribution needs no special introduction for the English readers. This paper attempts to focus on the themes that she has explored in her autobiographies. Hailing from the African-American clan, she represents the African-American society and shows the good and the bad side of her culture.

Being born as Marguerite Annie Johnson, a simple black girl later in her autobiographies showcases her transformation into a strong and liberated black woman whose identity benchmarked her as the spokesperson of her community. The very first novel, 'I know why the caged bird sings' as the topic sentence metaphorically suggests a bird's confinement resulting from racism, depression, struggling to escape its cage.

Maya's autobiographies have been deeply rooted to the slave-narrative format where her voice audaciously speaks of her life which is inclusive of her tumultuous travails that she confronts with a brave heart. We see the depiction of African-American society that mirrors the reality blatantly as it chokes the readers to see the brutalities prevailing even at the domestic circle. The black-white relationship in the society points out the discriminating, segregating and seclusion of the peoples with respect to sex colour, race.

The lives of black women which only revolved around motherhood, domestic labour and sexual abuse were the regular norms of their lifestyle.



Maya Angelou after a troubled state of mind ensued by the tragic incident taken place like her rape at eight, had blossomed to ascertain her identity as a potential writer, a phenomenal black woman.

All her works examines the issues of racism, identity, family and tradition so the novels show a panoramic view of the black American life. Her writing demonstrated the remarkable change of principles, values and morals that were stringently prevalent over the years. But due to the Harlem renaissance the course of thinking has changed especially culturally within America who in recent times the tension between the black and whites has waned to a great extent.

Although Maya struggles with insecurity and displacement throughout her childhood, she has a remarkable number of strong female role models in her family and community. Momma, Vivian, Grandmother Baxter, and Bertha Flowers have very different personalities and views on life, but they all chart their own paths and manage to maintain their dignity and self-respect. None of them ever capitulates to racist indignities.

Maya also charts her own path, fighting to become the first black streetcar conductor in San Francisco, and she does so with the support and encouragement of her female predecessors. Maya notes at the end of Chapter 34 that the towering character of the black American woman should be seen as the predictable outcome of a hard-fought struggle. Many black women fall along the way. The ones who can weather the storm of sexism and racism obviously will shine with greatness. They have survived, and therefore by definition they are survivors.

Maya confronts the insidious effects of racism and segregation in America at a very young age. She internalizes the idea that blond hair is beautiful and that she is a fat black girl trapped in a nightmare. Stamps, Arkansas, is so thoroughly

imagined that as a child Maya does not quite believe that white people exist. When Maya gets older, she is confronted by more overt and personal incidents of racism, such as a white speaker's condescending address at her eighth-grade graduation, her white boss's insistence on calling her Mary, and a white teacher's refusal to treat her. The importance of Joe Louis's world championship boxing match to the black community reveals the dearth of publicly recognized African American heroes. It also demonstrates the desperate nature of the black community's hope for vindication through the athletic triumph of one man. These unjust social realities confine and demean Maya and her relatives. She comes to learn how the pressures of living in a thoroughly racist society have profoundly shaped the character of her family members, and she strives to surmount them.

Out of her five autobiographies, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is probably Angelou's most popular and critically acclaimed volume. The book is now frequently read as a complement to fictional works that delve into the subject of racism, such as Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. It has often been cut from reading lists because it involves honest depictions of Angelou's sexuality and her experience of being raped as a child. She wrote *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* at a time when autobiographies of women, and particularly black women, had begun to proclaim women's significance in the mainstream as thinkers and activists. Angelou's book conveys the difficulties associated with the mixture of racial and gender discrimination endured by a southern black girl. At the same time, she speaks to many other issues, such as the relationships between parents and children, child abuse, and the search for one's own path in life.

Angelou's writings has made the American society cleaner in thoughts and visions which is why we see their president to be Barack Obama who admired her saying 'A truly phenomenal woman'.



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**THE PANORAMA OF CROSS CULTURAL  
CONFLICTS IN RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA'S  
HEAT AND DUST**

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The British experience in India is a subject that has been given thorough literary treatment during the past century, and most of these books have tried to highlight some aspects of the cultural contrast between east and west. East-West relationship is not a new theme in Indo-Anglian or Anglo-Indian fiction; it is as old as the Indo-Anglian novel which was itself a product of Indo-English relations. Jhabvala has been variously categorized as an inside-outsider and outside-insider. Ruth Praver Jhabvala was born of German-Polish parents, grew up in England, married an Indian Parsee architect, lived in India for more than two decades and finally moved to New York. Jhabvala's mixed cultural heritage is a special boon to the literary world. *Heat and Dust* deals with the experiences of two socially very different Western generations in India. From the beginning Jhabvala splits the novel into two parallel narratives, alternating between the Riverses in 1923 and the narrator in India fifty years later, who presents her adventures, thoughts, and reflections in the form of a journal. This novel packs a powerful punch and paints an extraordinary portrait of British colonials in India, with their sense of cultural and moral superiority over the local population. The present paper studies the cultural conflicts between East and West.

India has of late become the Mecca of English writers and there is no denying the truth that the assimilative Indian culture has offered a red



## THE EXISTENTIAL PREDICAMENT OF MODERN MAN IN ARUN JOSHI'S THE APPERTICE

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Joshi's novels probe deep into the dark and innermost issues of the human mind, illuminate the hidden corners of the physical and mental makeup of the characters. In his fictional world, Joshi tries his level best to delineate the predicament of the modern man who is confronted by the self and the question of his existence. As a novelist exposing human predicament, Joshi visualizes the inner crisis of the modern man and finds and gets convinced that the most besetting problems that man faces today are the problems of the self, the alienation, identity crisis, sense of void and existential dilemma. These problems are so pervasive that they threaten to eat into every sphere of human activity. As a result, man fails to discern the very purpose behind life and the relevance of existence in a hostile world. When he handles these problems of the self, Joshi is careful enough not to bid good bye to our cultural heritage and imperishable moral values. His fiction explores self and brings to a central focus the way in which the self tries to assess its involvement in the alienation from the family and society. Joshi's characters are mentally disturbed and filled with despair, self-hatred and self-pity, for they regard themselves as strangers in the physical world. Isolated from the self as well as the society and family, Joshi's characters are forlorn and tear themselves away from the velvety embrace of their society and live like strangers. The struggle of the protagonist against social conventions and inner conflicts between what he really is and what society expects him to be, finds a pivotal place in Joshi's

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novels. For Joshi's protagonists, the society of the latter half of the 20th century has lost its meaning. They have no sense of belonging to the society in which they live. The live in their own world, thinking their thoughts, speaking to their own selves disappointed and depressed.

Psychologically, gratification of lust involves jealous possessiveness, abusive violence, and corrosive perversion of emotion. In a sense, it is both masochistic and sadistic. The woman as a whore is the object-world, the "other," the "desexualized" three female body, for such a perception of woman carefully excludes the creative function of love as sexuality and eroticism. Likewise, the city as a whore is the object-world that worships only malevolent gods. No doubt whoring is morally offensive and spiritually degenerative, but it explicitly means that both man and society have been deprived of the centripetal force and the moral vision of good and perfection. While society traps and seduces the individual, the individual takes advantage of society in much the same manner society induces man to move in a certain direction and man in return forces himself upon society.

In a bourgeois structure, the dehumanization of man, both as a target and a social process, is not too difficult to imagine through a process inevitably engenders moral decrepitude, infelicity, vulgarity, and unwholesome vitriolic. It is a diseased civilization in which Ratan Rathor and his mother suffer from the same disease, discontent and discontent. (25)

Joshi's characters are mentally disturbed and filled with despair, self-hatred and self-pity, for they regard themselves as strangers in the physical world. Isolated from the self as well as the society and family, Joshi's characters are forlorn and tear themselves away from the velvety embrace of their society and live like strangers. The struggle of the protagonist against social conventions and inner conflicts between what he really is and what society expects him to

finds a pivotal place in Joshi's novels. For Joshi's protagonists, the society of the latter half of the 20th century has lost its meaning. They have no sense of belonging to the society in which they live. The live in their own world, thinking their thoughts, speaking to their own selves disappointed and depressed.

Arun Joshi is concerned with the predicament of modern man and is sensitively alive to the various dimensions of pressures exerted by the complex character and demands of the society in which contemporary man is destined to live. The protagonists of his novels are abject outsiders and stark strangers. The awareness of man's rootlessness and strangeness and the consequential quest for a meaningful self is the keynote of Joshi's novels. It is the inner crisis of the modern man that has occupied Arun Joshi's primary interest in his novels that are built around the dark and dismal experiences of the soul. Though Arun Joshi's work has attracted serious critical attention, no single critical approach can really be adequate in analyzing the multi-faceted talent of a rare genius.

There has hardly been any attempt to study Joshi's fiction on the basis of the personality problems of his characters from a socio-psychological perspective. Though the attempt is a modest one, the issue is a crucial one, because in his novels he probes the depths of human experience to portray the repercussions of human conflict on the inner lives of his protagonists on the one hand, their psychological, and social and religious effects on the other in a subtle manner. Whenever critics have touched upon the issue of Joshi's concern with the problems of the self, they have dealt with it very vaguely or left the discussion incomplete. (43)

Hence this study stands justified in its attempt to have a comprehensive search for the problems of the self. The study uses various disciplines like



sociology and psychology in a flexible manner and in different combinations. The study attempts to broaden critical perspectives that allow a full understanding of Arun Joshi's fiction. The study also endeavours to explore the painfulness of human isolation and alienation by studying them at the family and social levels and goes deep into the reasons for alienation from one's own self, community and family.

In *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold defines anarchy more. Less as a mental condition in which man accepts and perpetuates Imperfection, mediocrity, and grossness and in doing so loses his Moral freedom. The great threat to cultural progress, as Arnold would have us believe, stems from the barbarians and the philistines. Not from the populace. The uncouth, dehydrated mental structure of the philistines is evidently symptomatic of the decline and fall of culture. (78)

By making Ratan Rathor confront the forces that have disintegrated his personality, Joshi employs the epistemology and metaphysics of social evil. Joshi's methodology includes, among other things, existential confrontation, individuation, and re-integration. It is Himmat Singh who indomitably challenges Ratan Rathor to cast off his fear and cowardice and to face the situation courageously and boldly. Himmat Singh knows well that Ratan Rathor cannot pull the trigger on him and that he cannot dodge the authorities any longer. He overcomes anxiety and fear by going through several stages, finally recognizing the nature and degree of evil in which he was an active participant all along. For a while he reflected upon the meaninglessness and absurdity of human existence, its disgusting hollowness and treacherous emptiness. But with the gradual recognition of his own self, he comes to recognize the source of human baseness and depravity. He was lonely because he was entrapped by the illusory world of appearance and because he hitherto denied himself the opportunity to know his real self. Both Himmat Singh and Ratan Rathor

shared their souls; they made their shadowy choices self-righteously and without knowing the meaning of good and evil. Ratan Rathor was at timid and afraid in every respect, and lacked the will and courage to reject habit and tradition, the boring and ugly commerce of life, and to confront reality the recognition that his life of twenty years has been a total loss, and that between good and evil he himself opted for evil not knowing the meaning of the imprudent choice he made. Finally, now, there arise stern and agonizing reverberations of the inner voice, all reminiscent of a heavier guilt and enlightened remorse; he pawned his soul in the dazzling game of bourgeois filth and fraudulent bookishness; he was a sham, and his life was without purpose.

It is strange that Joshi saves Ratan Rathor from committing suicide. The fact that Ratan Rathor does not have to opt for death as being the only freedom from dejection, anxiety, and failure, a course clairvoyantly echoed by a modern school of existential philosophy, not only strengthens his fractured sense of identity but also gives an immediate sense of form to the digressional narrative. Ratan Rathor is guilty of incivism, but he does not suffer from permanent malignity and ill will; he has shown capricious gullibility to vice, even in its inchoate state, but he has also exhibited a remarkable sense of recovery; he can impute crime to Himmat Singh, but the ascribe ability of crime and the open expression of impudicity are essential to the cognitive process. Following the belaboured and slow recognition of his guilt, Ratan Rathor's method of expiating the guilt, it should be noted, is more Gandhian than Vedantic.

It may be argued that *The Apprentice* is predominantly about money, power, and politics, that it is basically about "a New Slavery with new masters, politicians, and officials, the rich, old and new" (83), and that the narrative directly aims at exposing social and political corruption. It could also be argued that the novel deals with the problem of character-building, since Ratan



Rather the young idealist authored an essay on the crisis of character, inevitably derives these ambivalent impressions from the deep reflections of the protagonist and narrator, but it remains that he moves the heart of social reality without merging himself with bourgeois collectivity that is, without losing his individual identity to perverted communal consciousness. His pervasive and lucid knowledge of the reality of his universe extends from the servile yoke of the bourgeois to the opprobrious and social sin and is finally summed up in the powerful image of the smell of shoes of humanity. However, one must ask perplexingly if Ratan Rathor ever overcome the penitential foulness of the smell and if Joshi would have considered softening the unusually harsh epistemology of moral recovery, if central theme of *The Apprentice* is undoubtedly the existential struggle of Ratan Rathor, the protagonist or narrator his idealism and alienation, fall, expiation and recovery; the narrative pointedly centres on his search for identity, his to self. The structural problem, if there is a noticeable problem, is created by censorious limitation imposed on the theme rightly or wrongly, Ratan Rathor allowed only a limited victory. Admittedly, such a highly complex issue is directly related to a writer's moral vision and his view of human nature.

The story of Ratan Rathor is the story of modern man's alienation and his relentless struggle to conquer alienation and achieve some form of identity with the object world. The progress made by Ratan Rathor from whoring to experiencing the smelly shoes of humanity defines the art and methodology of expiation and moral recovery. His moral recovery remains incomplete, because he has just begun his apprenticeship to the arduous task of moral reconstruction. The contemporary philosophical thought, as Pappenheim argues in "*The Alienation of Modern Man*", has tried to grapple with the problem of modern man's alienation, but nevertheless the issue has become only more sharply pronounced can man, within the framework of modern civilization, conquer by his own actions and will, alienation and, hence, pain, anxiety, and suffering?

to consider Marx's belief that man's dream of self-realization is dependent on the external forces in nature and society and especially upon the development of socio-economic institutions, we will unhesitatingly conclude that man is certainly not free to shape his destiny. In the case of Ratan Rathor, even Arun Joshi does not let him wait for his recovery until the social order has been reconstructed and revitalized. Furthermore, Joshi even presents society insofar as Ratan Rathor's criminality is concerned, assuming, of course, that perverted communal consciousness is not entitled to judge the individual moral deviance. But the emphasis, as has been seen, is on the weakening and strengthening of Ratan Rathor's inner consciousness, a methodology and an epistemology that, indeed, do not rely on the prodigious growth and idealization of a social order and that, therefore, do not subscribe to fatal determinism. Ratan Rathor's disciplined endeavour and his moral will have shown him the way of establishing spiritual identity with himself and with the object world.

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## A THEMATIC DISCOURSE OF THE OEUVRE OF CLAUDE MCKAY: A STUDY

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Claude McKay was the architect of the Renaissance Movement in his country. The proposed study makes an evaluation of the artistic creations of Claude McKay, a Black poet. McKay practices Black culture contrary to White culture. The First World War brought about an awakening among the Blacks. The Black intellectuals inhabited Harlem, a Black settlement in Manhattan. Harlem became a nest of singing birds. To awaken the slumbering conscience of Blacks, they wrote and sang songs. The burthen of their song was "Black is Strength; Black is Beautiful (12)." The awakening in Harlem came to be called Harlem Renaissance. To this movement belonged Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen and others. They were the pioneers of the Harlem Renaissance Movement. McKay became involved the group of Black radicals. Claude McKay read and wrote books on rational thinking and condemned meaningless rites and rituals and blind beliefs.

Claude McKay sprung from the lowest rank of the society. He was born in Nairne Castle near James Hill at Clarendon in Jamaica, a British colony. He was a seminal figure in the Harlem Renaissance and a throb and our wanderer of the Harlem Renaissance. McKay is the eyewitnesses to the hardships and harassments suffered by their people. His reactions are similar to the exploitation and inhuman treatment suffered by them.



## BLACK AESTHETICS IN LANGSTON HUGHES : A DECISIVE EXPLORATION FROM THE SELECT POETRIES OF LANGSTON HUGHES

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Langston Hughes is a well-known name in the chronological order of African American Literature, many critics and writers acclaim him as the most eminent and prominent poet to understand the African American Literature. There rises a strong question what made him a poet? The question is very simple but to distinguish about the knack in Langston Hughes is not so easy, it is a very deep rooted and retort of years about the thirst in him. The ability which is sprouted out as the emission of all his prejudiced and unpredictable aggressiveness and those consequences blasted through his poetry has a strong influence. The testimony of Langston Hughes makes a strong notion of his own voice that he is not as other poets to be romantic and all his poems are a demonstration for his race and society.

The major aims of my work have been to interpret and comment upon Negro life. Most of my own poems are racial in theme and treatment, derived from the life I know. (11)

Hughes uses most of the manner, style, technique and situation from the African-American life as the pedestal element of his writings. There are many traces of encrypting the Negro idioms, phrases, irony, dialects and folk lore in many of his works, such attitude in him puts a strong voice of social

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recognition to a preconceived notion of his early writings. In the essay "Adventure as Social Poet" Hughes himself accepts that he is a social act more than a lyrical poet and used the term poetry as a tool to rediscover the dream in him and the dream of years is about to quench the thirst of freedom.

The major aim of his poetry is to strongly discuss, comments and debates about the African American life in the alien soil. The contemporary poets of his era call him a 'diverse persuasor' when compared, the poets of his era are very few especially in Negroes they are in numbers such as Cullen and Braithwaite who were universally acclaimed but not as Langston Hughes. Prominent place is acquired by using the particular particles of general humanness in Negro's life which considered being unique and universal. The lack is labelled to be black aesthetics in Hughes which was not found in other writers. Cullen was too unenthusiastic he considered himself "to be poet not a negro poet", he was in scripting a bundle lying on African heritage rather than current affairs, to be very clear not on Negro. Braithwaite was not as Cullen, he was "too subjective, personal and tell-tale" to be in other words his poetry was colourless and lifeless with assiduous racial self-effacement. Hughes poetry stood in other words he was poetic and Nordic manner which he hated and abandoned the subjective and witnessed the objective by reaching the urge within the race. Hughes also includes references to the historical context within the time the poem was written. The piano player is called a Negro. During this time, the word Negro was not a word of reverence, but of servitude and submission. This alone identifies the musician's status in society. The speaker notices the hands of the piano player on the piano keys. At a time when blacks and whites were segregated, Hughes allows these two to intertwine. The speaker notices "his ebony hands on each ivory key. Hughes uses the piano as a symbol of the forbidden relationship of blacks and whites. With his ebony hands on each ivory key evokes the duality of black and white

is a powerful line that makes a political statement and a symbol of intolerance and segregation.

The writers of his era were narrow in their subject matter, they were looking at the white on the pessimistic mind-set with indifference of opinion towards the opposing their cruelty beyond humanity. The writers were vigorous defender of the race, they overwhelmed their emotions with the essence to transform their society and they proved the notion that the artistic currency is reality and truth. The black aesthetics of Hughes is the same he too expected the same his cue of the dream in America is not to go back to their homeland but to have a renovation through a revolution and to have secure identity over beaten soil and the world. Hughes explores his thrust in Europe and extends his feelings that the racial American soil to be changed as it was possible in Europe by the blacks in Europe and wished Negro literature to hold a special place in the world literature. He calls them to be the trace of black tradition but not a replica of Africa as though they are not in Africa but look dead to have a name as black folk lore, black music, black painter and black dramatic in the alien soil and this attitude in him is known to be black aesthetics. The overall flow of the poem resembles that of a musical song or lyrics. The beginning of couplets and several lines throughout the poem allow the reader to read it fluently. Hughes intricately takes a poem about music and turns it into music. The words on each line allow the poem to flow fluidly into the next. And together, the words and the tone of the poem connect; they mirror the words and tone of the musician.

The Negro literature is not a paradox it is a fact of the oppressed people who were longing for the freedom but certain aspects some of the blacks were not in the stream of their revolution, they were thinking about the survival and some were about their home land. Hughes father was such a person who was migrating for survival and considered that fittest would not



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 regret that he was in alien soil and so he was in Mexico as a well sophisticated businessman. Certain Africans were out of the brim they considered themselves that they were born in a country and world where blacks considered themselves abandoned and that is not their mistake of being black where else need to make a world of their own and all free Negroes migrated to a place where they can have a comfortable and free living. This was majorly attacked by whites who never accepted such equality in society; they always considered blacks to be their slave forever and made a strong anti-enforcement towards the free Negroes. This was also in the field of literature especially in poetry subject, matter and manner was keenly observed by the white critics who discouraged that the black writings are just lamentation and has no quality. Some critics like McKay objected such attack and made their statement that as black writings is equally good as white.

Hughes father was one among those who were banished during the crisis, he latter migrated from Mexico towards some other region where he can find a suitable place for survival. Hughes such experience as land rover was enlighten in him as social revolutionist and his childhood and boyhood days with his grandmother laid a stepping stone to achieve a place in the history. Hughes mother too was not with him she was in search of job in numerous towns and she had no other way to take him with her for the reason of education and someone needs to pay attention when he was a child. Hughes grandmother was affectionate and she was the one who sowed the seed of revolution in him, she quite often discussed to him to cultivate the habits of fighting and taught him to struggle. This was mentioned in his autobiographies "The Big Sea and I Wander as I Wander".

The habit writing poetry sprouted in him when he was in the grade six there were three boys in the class who could perform writing poetry rest of them were white except Hughes and there was partiality between them though

education was common. The rhythm was in him with an enthusiasm as though the yield was known from its bud.

I was a victim of a stereotype. There were only two of us Negro kids in the whole class and our English teacher was always stressing the importance of rhythm in poetry. Well, everyone knows, except us, that all Negroes have rhythm, so they elected me as class poet.

(15)

The racial discrimination was bleeding in the vein; the little protestor was developing from his schoolings and that promoted him to achieve a place in universities. There were only few blacks in universities to achieve a degree and Hughes was one among those achievers.

I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.

I am the red man driven from the land,

I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek—

And finding only the same old stupid plan

Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

Hughes as poet was not accidental but was incidental he published his first poetry collection to save his friend from debts and he was his publisher too.

The poetic lines are not just references of his mentality set this was the economical bivalence and that was as same in economic condition of all Negroes were down under they were struggling to hold a position to survival



and the publication were not for survival but to have revival in their society. His successful career as poet was not successful as reasonably priced to his survival, he had to move on coming from a middle class family. Money was a nagging concern for Hughes throughout his life. While he managed to support himself as a writer, no small task, he was never financially secure.

Hughes was highly fascinated by W.E.B. Duboi a socialist and was great adherent of his writings and his essay "The Soul o Black Folks". Duboi essays over racial discrimination had great unfastened in the fascinated blacks and he introduction famously proclaimed that "... the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line" (243). Each chapter begins with two epigraphs, one from a white poet, and one from a black spiritual to demonstrate intellectual and cultural parity between black and white cultures. A major theme of the work was the double consciousness faced by African Americans: Being both American and black. This was a unique identity which, according to Du Bois, had been a handicap in the past, but could be strength in the future, Henceforth, the destiny of the race could be conceived as leading neither to assimilation nor separatism but to proud, enduring hyphenation.

At the conclusion of the conference, delegates unanimously adopted the "Address to the Nation of the World", and sent it to various heads of state where people of African descent were living and suffering oppression. The address implored the United States and the imperial European nations to "acknowledge and protect the rights of people of African descent" and to respect the integrity and independence of "the free Negro States. (39)

This emotionally fetched a strong poetical resource in the minds of readers, he was with the conscious of doing something to his people with a goal to address a racial consciousness and cultural nationalism devoid of self-interest. His thought united people of African descent and Africa across the globe to encourage pride in their diverse black folk culture and black aesthetic. Hughes was one of the few prominent black writers to champion racial consciousness as a source of inspiration for black artists.

The double consciousness was in the minds of all Afro-Americans who related to Africans and African Americans by their ethnicity and by nationally they described themselves as Americans and African-Americans. Hughes' definition was different he chose his duty as to reveal the real beauty of his own people, the soul beauty of his race to those who cared to witness. The double consciousness was double in him not as the other Negroes he wished to write and make revival and that was his double consciousness.

O, let my land be a land where Liberty

Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,

But opportunity is real, and life is free,

Equality is in the air we breathe.

Langston set a tone, a standard of brotherhood and friendship and cooperation, for all of us to follow. You never got from him, 'I am the Negro writer,' but only 'I am a Negro writer.' He never stopped thinking about the rest of us and was in his own circle to run the race of the racial emotions not just other or to point out their blunders but request others with humanity. The literary beauty is revealed to the entire world from the folk lore tradition to a



Where wretchedness will hang its head

And joy, like a pearl,

Attends the needs of all mankind—

Of such I dream, my world!

There is another question in me if the whites were merciful to the blacks the knack of Hughes would have been over flowed spontaneously? And I answer myself it must have been romantic because he would have not been influence by those miseries and would be poet not a Negro poet.

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vast universe themes and images and its smooth and complex strategy of delivery is fabulous a message to another people. This statement was made by Donald B. Gibson in his book *A Collection of Critical Essays* one of the most known critic of Afro American literature

That Hughes differed from most of his predecessors among black poets . . . in that he addressed his poetry to the people, specifically to black people. During the twenties when most American poets were turning inward, writing obscure and esoteric poetry to an ever decreasing audience of readers, Hughes was turning outward, using language and themes, attitudes and ideas familiar to anyone who had the ability simply to read . . . Until the time of his death, he spread his message humorously though always seriously to audiences throughout the country, having read his poetry to more people possibly than any other American poet.

Langston Hughes was, in his later years, deemed the "Poet Laureate of the Negro Race," a title he encouraged. Hughes meant to represent the race in his writing and he was, perhaps, the most original of all African American poets. The universality in Hughes has been exclaimed in his poetry "I Dream a World" that he wished to love one another beyond boundaries and the word racialism should be vanished and true humanness should at its acme.

Whatever race you be,

Will share the bounties of the earth

And every man is free,



**THE PREDICAMENT OF WESTERNERS IN INDIA  
IN THE NOVEL "HEAT AND DUST" BY RUTH  
PRAWER JHABVALA**

S. Vanithadevi, PG Assistant in English, GHSS,  
Palacombai, Aundipatty, Theni.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala was born in Cologne on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1927 into a comfortable, middle class German-Jewish family. Soon after graduating she married Cyrus Jhabvala, an Indian student and at the age of twenty four she moved to India. Her stay in Delhi from 1951 to 1975 gave her opportunity to see Indian from close quarters. Being a prolific writer, she published novels and collection of short stories.

The interaction between two cultures, European and Indian is Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's forte. Heat and Dust is a part of this cyclical growth. It signifies her attempt at projecting cross-cultural encounter of the Europeans in the context of the experiences in India. India is technologically and socially not so advanced; she attracts visitors from western countries for her grand ancient culture. However, there are three major categories of those who come to India: one, those who study India literature and culture at their own universities and come on pilgrimage to the country of their interest; second those who fall in love with Indian culture and life and want to settle down here; third, those truth seekers who come to learn yoga from swamis and spend their time in the monasteries. But those who come to India with genuine interest in her culture and her current regeneration are really few. The love of the second category of people towards India is superficial. Therefore, those foreigners who, although placed here in love with India hate her backwardness and poverty but always think of returning to their native countries.

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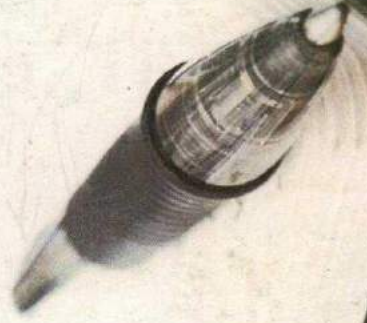


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# **LITERARY INNOVATIONS**

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### The Existential Predicament of Parsi Women in Bapsi Sidhwa's The Crow Eaters

Dr.K.Ravichandran, Assistant Professor of English, Annamalai University, Chidambaram-608002.

The The Crow Eaters is Bapsi Sidhwa's second but first published novel. The Pakistani Bride is her first written and second published novel. The Jew Candy-Man is her third published novel and followed by American Brat. Through her various marginalized narrators and through her experiences of the many marginalized characters in her first three novels, Sidhwa gives voice to hitherto silenced groups of India and Pakistan and in doing so tells other versions of her country's history. Through her first novel, Bapsi Sidhwa discovered a love for writing. She took almost four years to complete The Bride. Though it took four years, it was an experience which she says she enjoyed so much that soon after completing The Bride, she started working on her second novel, The Crow Eaters, a lively and humorous story about the Parsi community of Pakistan. The title of the book is translation of a derogatory term used for Parsis who are stereotyped as being excessively loud and talkative. Success didn't come to Bapsi Sidhwa without a lot of hard work. She wrote her first two novels in Pakistan where no one was publishing in English at that time. So, after receiving many rejections, Sidhwa decided to publish and self-distribute The Crow Eaters. It was very frustrating to peddle one's own books as she did in Lahore. She would go from bookstore to bookstore requesting to read The Crow Eaters. Bookstore owners would show little interest, often criticizing the title of the book. The process was so discouraging that Sidhwa stopped writing for about six years.

In 1980, after receiving a copy of Sidhwa's self-published The Crow Eaters, Britain's Jonathon Cape decided to publish it. It was at that time when Sidhwa felt encouraged enough to pick up her pen and write



are fictional or factional or historical but mingling of all of them with biographical elements.

Fareedoon Junglewalla, the protagonist, is a shrewd man who exploits his relations with the British officers and others to his maximum benefits. The novel begins with a note of praise for him:

Fareedoon Junglewalla, Freddy for short, was a strikingly handsome, dulcet-voiced adventurer with so few scruples that he not only succeeded in carving a comfortable niche in the world for himself but he also earned the respect and gratitude of his entire community. When he died at sixty-five, a majestic grey-haired patriarch, he attained the rare distinction of being locally listed in the 'Zarathusti Calendar of Great Men and Women.'(9)

Bapsi Sidhwa has specially designed this novel to capture the intessential Parsi ethos and diaspora. It describes the social mobility in a Parsi family. There is also generation gap between Fareedoon Junglewalla, his wife Putli, and his son Behram, and his wife Tanya. Behram like Tanya does not believe in old traditions of their community. At the same time it is very difficult for Fareedoon, Putli and Jerbanoo to be uprooted from long-practiced traditions of their community. The Parsi milieu in the novel does not mar the comic effect of the novel. On the contrary, it makes the novel both entertaining and educative, as the Parsi elements add to its texture:

Throughout the novel, Ms. Sidhwa's prose is boisterous and florid, and *The Crow Eaters* never fails to entertain. She writes with an earthy zest and affection for her characters that makes us hope for subsequent novels continuing the Junglewalla clan's story.(17)

*The Crow Eaters* depicts the Parsi mind, their social behaviour, their customs and traditions and their rituals. For Bapsi Sidhwa this novel has been a labour of love because of a deep-rooted admiration for her diminishing community and an enormous affection for it. The writer firmly

"Though the first two novels brought her recognition, it was her third novel, *Cracking India* (also published as *Ice-Candy Man*), that earned Bapsi Sidhwa international acclaim and acceptance as one of the most promising English novelists from South Asia, placing her among the likes of Khushwant Singh, Anita Desai, and R.K. Narayan." (29)

*The Crow Eaters* renders a commentary on different aspects of Parsi community. Bapsi Sidhwa narrates the beautiful story of a successful and accommodating community tucked away in the forgotten crevices of history. Bapsi Sidhwa's extraordinary sense of humour is reflected in this novel. Fareedoon Junglewalla, the protagonist, has to face some confrontation with his old mother-in-law Jerbanoo. This confrontation between the son-in-law and the mother-in-law serves the writer's purpose of fun and comic situations throughout the novel. Nov Kapadia puts it:

*The Crow Eaters*, first published in Pakistan in 1978, describes the social nobility of a Parsi family, the Junglewallas, during the British Raj in the early twentieth century. In just one generation they increased their business from a single general merchant store in Lahore to a chain of stores, in several North Indian cities and license for "handling all traffic of goods between Peshawar and Afghanistan." It also traces the attempts of Parsis, migrating from the west coast and settling in the more salubrious climate of North Indian cities, in the late nineteenth and the turn of this century.

Bapsi Sidhwa is a Pakistani Parsi woman novelist. Her family has settled in Pakistan after Partition of India. The authenticity of Bapsi Sidhwa's work is evident in her experience in Karachi, and Lahore where she continues to live. Her family, the Bhandaras, a leading business family of Lahore for generations, had migrated there in the last century. So Bapsi Sidhwa belongs to the third generation of Parsi settlers in North Indian cities and was reared on tales both, fictional and otherwise, on the entrepreneurial skills of the elders of her community. Hence her description of the exploits of Fareedoon Junglewalla and his family is no



believes that the incidents in *The Crow Eaters* do not reflect at all upon the integrity of a community. On the contrary, the reading of this text enriches one's knowledge of the Parsi community.

The writer herself is much pleased with the portrayal of her own community in the novel. In spite of her good intentions behind the portrayal of the community in this novel, she had to encounter her own community's hostility. Some members of her community did not appreciate her idea of portraying her community in her fictional discourse. At Lahore when the book was about to be released, she had to face many problems. Bapsi Sidhwa in her interview with David Montenegro says,

The book launch took place at an international hotel in Lahore and since there are not so many books written in English it was quite a function ... And there was a bomb threat, which subsequently I realized was from a Parsi who felt very strongly about the book. It took me some time to realize the turmoil the book had created within the community. They thought I was revealing secrets that I had no business giving out... they felt I was damaging the image... they felt threatened by it, although it was written out of great affection.(18)

Some Parsis misunderstood Sidhwa for depiction of the Parsi milieu in *The Crow Eaters*, which is at times branded as a commentary on the Parsi community. Her own community felt offended, though she did not intend to do so. "Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Crow Eaters* is a delightful comic novel. It is a lyrical novel, a modest lesson on the underside of history, a gentle reminder of the world we have left behind, figuratively and literally".(51)

Besides their limited status as a minority community, another reason for the supreme respect and regard the Parsi had for the British was due to the social code of their Zoroastrian religion. The followers of Zarathustra have been always loyal to the ruler and are instrumental in maintaining sound harmony between state and community, based on

mutual support. What all the Parsis wanted from the Britishers was global autonomy and protection. The loyalty of the Parsi community towards the British ruling authorities is reflected profusely in *The Crow*

Fareedoon Junglewalla, the central character in the novel, takes every opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty to the British ruling authorities. After settling down in Lahore, he wears his finest face and in a befitting manner. They adapt to the ways of the land. In the beginning of the novel Sidhwa has mentioned that Fareedoon Junglewalla's had become a name to reckon with. Most of the characters portray humour, but again a typical attitude of the Parsis. "Ruthlessly truthful, deeply negative, she tells her story with rare courage, frankness and good humour. *The Crow Eaters* will certainly endear her to every reader who comes across the book".(88)

Bapsi Sidhwa's major characters are dynamic. Some of her minor characters are more or less flat. Fareedoon Junglewalla's mother-in-law is a major woman character in the novel. The other women characters are Freddy's wife Putli, Billy's wife Tanya, Freddy's daughter Zoya, Yazdi's beloved Rosy Watson, an Anglo Indian girl etc are other women characters in the novel. Jerbanoo, Freddy's mother-in-law, is another interesting woman character in the novel. She struggles constantly with her son-in-law who does not hesitate to kill her for getting insurance money. In England, Jerbanoo disrupts all the social conventions around her. Once ejected out of Allen's residence, she proceeds to make herself at home in Junglewalla's hotel rooms at Oxford Street. She comes back home for the purpose and she is absolutely unconcerned about the situation. Sidhwa comically presents the dialogues between towel-squeezing Jerbanoo and the English man: "Come on, what's going on up there? You washing clothes or something?" Jerbanoo glowered. "You not wash your nose into me mister, I not poke my nose into you!".(267)



The Englishman is not contented with her answer. He threatens her to get a bobby to find out what is going up. Jerbanoo further says "You want to know?" she asked, and her voice despite its malice rang with authenticity. 'I tell you! I wash my bottom. I no dry-clean like you dirty Englishmen. I wash my bottom!' (269) Sidhwa has created Jerbanoo's character as a deliberately exaggerated caricature figure. She serves the writer's purpose of giving comic touches to the novel.

Bapsi Sidhwa has portrayed Jerbanoo's character quite tactfully. She is not the woman who would relish in being confined to only the four walls of the house. But she keeps moving and she knows much about the personal lives of many Parsi families. Jerbanoo visits England with her son-in-law and daughter Putli. She has wonderful expatriate experiences in London. She finds totally different world there. Sidhwa describes: "Jerbanoo touched, tampered and tinkered with everything poking her inquisitive nose into cupboards, drawers and larder, drawing things out for inspection. Often she summoned Mary from her work to inquire. 'May-ree! May-ree! What is this?'" (256)

Tanya is also a dynamic woman character. She does not care for others' likes and dislikes. Her husband Billy also supported her in every possible way. Though Billy is supportive, he has to tell her regarding her behaviour with men she has to be cautious. He is very thrifty and when once Tanya during her pregnancy wanted to eat a pomegranate; Billy went all the way to the market to get it for her. Billy has to tell: "Tanya, he said one day, don't look straight into people's eyes. I know you don't mean anything but men misunderstand. They get bad ideas". (246)

Sidhwa's portrayal of women in *The Crow Eaters* is based on her own observation of Parsi women representing her own community. It is a firsthand experience. The writer's capacity to provide humour and laughter makes the novel a beautiful Parsi saga. K. Nirupa Rani observes

Sidhwa's men have distinct personality traits but her women are not extravagant—they are ordinary, devoid of feelings. In their limited orbits they are socially active and lead only a superficial existence. Commenting upon Sidhwa's women

Even though they are active, they are flat characters. In a novel like *The Pakistani Bride* where there is ample scope for the writer to explore, Sidhwa could not go deep into the psyche of her female protagonist, allowing methodical narration. They are more familiar to Sidhwa and are within her range of experience. (112)

Thus in Bapsi Sidhwa's first published novel *The Crow Eaters* women characters are not very prominent except the character of Jerbanoo who has a voice, but still not a very significant one. Putli is a man of very low profile and so is Tanya, Putli's daughter-in-law. The main women portrayed in *The Pakistani Bride* also share the same plight in Lahore, has no say in choosing a husband for her. Even an elderly woman like the mother-in-law of Zaitoon, Hamida is unheard. They don't have individual freedom at all. The terms are rigidly drawn. Miriam, the main character, is a woman who is a victim of her husband. The role of a woman in a patriarchal society is above to coax her husband. The role of a woman in a patriarchal society is also not very prominent. All these women try to fight the patriarchal system but are restricted by the patriarchal dominance. They don't have a significant role to play. Cultural impact is observed to an extent. In short, in *The Crow Eaters* Bapsi Sidhwa has tried to portray the fate of women representing the Parsi women living in Pakistan and the tribal women living in Pakistan.

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*Immigrants and Marginal Men in  
Paule Marshall's Fiction*



**Dr. K. Ravichandran**





Dr. K. Ravichandran is an Associate Professor of English at Thiruvalluvar University, Tamilnadu. He has been teaching English Language and Literature and supervising pre-doctoral and doctoral research for about ten years. He has published enormously in Indian and International journals. He is a recipient of Dr. Ambrdkar's Fellowship Award 2008. His areas of research include Indian Writing in English, Subaltern Studies, American Literature, and Modern Criticism.

This book "Immigrants and Marginal Men in Paule Marshall's Fiction" is a serious attempt to delineate the manifestations of racism, cultural imperialism, the subjugation of women, and the marginalization of men as found in the fiction of Paule Marshall.

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## A PANORAMA OF TABOO RELATIONSHIP AND QUEER ISSUE OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN MAHESH DATTANI'S DO THE NEEDFUL

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### Abstract

*This paper is an attempt to explore the emotional predicament of the gays who are torn between social tradition and individual's choice of sexual pleasure. Mahesh Dattani as an exponent of modern Indian drama probes deep on the portrayal of the suffering and subjugation of the downtrodden and marginalized people who, still today venture not to voice their pains and problems. In the play Do the Needful Dattani highlights the clash between the homosexuals' feelings and the established accepted notions of the society which do not permit an individual to lead life according to the call of his or her conscience. Thus the play outlines how a gay man is forced to live a life alien to his nature by the tremendous hegemony of mainstream patriarchal society.*

**Key words:** Marginalization, Homosexuality, Patriarchal hegemony.

Mahesh Dattani a protuberant voice of the subalterns in the contemporary Indian dramatic scenario philosophizes the anxieties and difficulties of the downtrodden and marginalized people of the society. He brings out the odds and foibles of the society for emancipating individual self from the evil grip of the contriving social patterns. He echoes the miserable problems and hidden issues of contemporary Indian society in his thought provoking plays. In the play *Do the Needful* Mahesh Dattani describes how the heterosexual society marginalize the 'queer' and never ready to make a space for them. The lesbian and gay people are born as human being in this earth like any other human being but they are deprived of their normal place and basic societal rights to love and be loved. Dattani has been making painstaking efforts to showcase the problems and sobbing of the marginalized people especially residing in our urban area with a sense of anxiety, insecurity and rest. His plays record the injustice meted out to the children, homosexuals, transsexual, and other belonging to marginalized sections of our society.

The play *Do the Needful* is perhaps the first Indian play to be broadcasted by B.B.C radio, staunchly dealing with the subject of homosexuality. The play highlights how a gay man is forced to live a life, alien to his nature by the remarkable hegemony of conventional patriarchal society. In this play Dattani, carries out the intricacy of homosexual relationship which is forbidden and dismissed as something unnatural and undesirable. It is considered as the taboo issue.

Dattani once again points at the shared spaces between women and gay men both under the tremendous hegemony of patriarchal society that forces them to conform and live lives that are alien to their nature. (1)

The play *Do the Needful* revolves around two Gujarati family and the Gowda family. It focuses on the discussions for an arranged marriage between Alpesh and Lata. Alpesh, the protagonist is a divorced man of thirty years and a gay. He finds Mr. Trilok as his soul mate as he finds all his emotional gratification in him. On the other hand Lata, a south Indian Kannada woman is twenty four and notorious has her own reasons to stay uninterested to Alpesh as she loves Salim, a Muslim boy. The Bride and the groom are embraced in their own speculations. Alpesh's parents are anxious to see him married because marriage will confer on him a social identity and the gay will pass for a 'straight'. Alpesh who is a homosexual knows and comprehends that he can't lead a sexually peaceful life with a girl. He has been divorced earlier by his first wife due to his homosexuality. So he feels somewhat indifferent and detached to get involved in a marriage once again. Alpesh has been indirectly threatened and emotionally blackmailed by his mother with tears, at last he surrenders and agrees to get married and says,

"Yes All right. I give up. If you like her, I will marry her. (125)

Here Mahesh Dattani displays or discloses how well-known norms of society suppress and restraint individual desire and passion causing mental agony to the persons concerned.



Lata's parents are also bearing in mind for a speedy marriage as she has brought dishonour to her family by indulging in an affair with a Muslim terrorist Salim. They try their best to hide it from their caste people when they could not do it; they simply became 'broadminded' to select a bridegroom from other caste. The existence of extra marital relationship and the premarital sex in Indian culture has been openly portrayed through the character Lata. According to the parents of Lata, having premarital sex even with a boy of other caste doesn't matter, but it must be done behind the screen and should not be unveiled to their specific caste or religion.

Alpesh and Lata express their reluctance for the family oriented arranged marriage. Lata pleaded her mother and voiced her desperation to live with Salim. Her desire and craving to live with Salim ended in vain. Her helplessness and her parents' wrath are well expressed in the following conversation.

Lata: Please Amma! Please don't insist I agree to this! You are ruining my life.

Prema Gowda: You should have thought of our lives before sleeping with that Terrorist!

Devraj Gowda: Lata, go to your room

Prema Gowda : You have ruined our lives! (122)

Homosexuality and sex outside marriage, tabooed in Indian society, can be exercised in silence and private only. They are seen as matters of shame, hush-hush affairs, not accepted by traditional Indian people in general. On the basis of the values and customs the characters in this play are forced by their parents to fulfil their parents' wishes by marrying. Though the parents of Alpesh and Lata have their own caste honour they cannot endorse this in their children's well known "immoral" act. Dattani's *Do the Needful* is a fabric of complex relationships, which exposes the fact that the understanding of marriage today has lost its holiness and is nothing but a compromise to promote personal ends. This shows that Alpesh and Lata are compelled to marry each other and they compromise to 'do the needful'.

Dattani is a writer who always thrusts the invisible issues forward so that it can be visible to the people and they must face this shocking reality and come to an understanding that such issues are taking place in their own country. In modern India the minds of people has been set with the wrong belief that homosexuality is a modern phenomenon. Existence of homosexuals in nook and corner endures for many centuries. Gay faces many obstacles and they do not feel like liberated men and are enforced to live a life of fake within the norms of

heterosexual society. They feel and express the desire to lead a normal life like others but are compelled to hide their reality, and lead an isolated life in their confining spaces.

Alpesh suffers a lot due to his sexual orientation. He is never allowed to speak about himself in the presence of his parents. The burden of patriarchal hegemony is so much that Alpesh feels nervous all the time. His parents decide to do the needful to a great extent to find a suitable way to get rid of their subversive children. Mahesh Dattani believes that majority of people in the society lives in a state of 'forced harmony'. To live the life in harmony is something which refers to the life which is being enjoyed naturally. But in the plays of Mahesh Dattani almost all the characters except few live in a state of forced harmony. Under the terms and conditions of society the people are forced to live disharmonious lives. Here Dattani tries to bring awareness among the people and points out that gays and lesbians are part of our society but they are not given their proper social status and rights.

Humans originally put a taboo on homosexuality because they needed every bit of energy to produce and raise children – survival of the species was a priority. With over population and technological change, that taboo is absurd and continues only to exploit us and enslave us. (2)

Lata comes to know about Alpesh's real identity. Alpesh's homosexuality is exposed to Lata when she surprises him and the gardener of her family having sex in the cowshed, just as she is about run away with Salim. Finally she decided to marry Alpesh so that they can lead separate sexual lives and also keep up the appearance of a happy couple. As a subaltern, he gives complete freedom to his wife to do as her wish. Both of them will provide each other adequate space and freedom to do things whatever they like. In this way along with their happiness, they will also sustain the happiness of their families and society.

Dattani in *Do the Needful* discover the aspects of the forceful marriage customs that covers the Indian society and brings out the final revelation of extra- marital affair. The message of the play is that the people should do the needful act not according to the traditional rules but according to individual's choice or will otherwise marriage will always be a cage. No problem whether they are homosexuals or transgender what they need from people are comfort, encouragement, self-dignity and self- respect from the society. Forced harmony in the end brings the sense of conflict that is always out of 'control'. Thus the play ends with a sense of mutuality between the two.



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## THE PORTRAYAL OF SOCIAL REALISM: A STUDY OF THEODORE DREISER'S SELECT NOVELS

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### Abstract

Combining a strong social conscience, a frankly deterministic view of life as a struggle for survival, and an honest representation of human sexuality, Dreiser's fiction helped to shape a generation of American writers and to mute the voice of censorship in American culture. One of the foremost practitioners of American realism, Theodore Dreiser wrote novels and stories that explored such themes as the dangerous lure of urban environments, the conflict between Old World parents and their Americanized children, and the hollowness of the American drive for material success. Dreiser's own life provided him with many of the experiences and concerns that he later translated into his fiction. He was born into a large, impoverished family in Terre Haute, Indiana. His father, a German immigrant, tried to make his children conform to strict Old World values and dogmatic Catholicism, but Dreiser and most of his siblings rebelled. At fifteen Dreiser left home and took a series of odd jobs in Chicago. By 1899 Dreiser was settled in New York, editing a magazine and selling his freelance writing. With the encouragement of his friends he decided to try his hand at a novel, to be based on the life of one of his sisters.

After his difficulties with *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser suffered a nervous breakdown and then opted to return to his career in journalism. He produced no new fiction for almost seven years. Then, in 1910, he lost his position as editor of a leading women's magazine and took his dismissal as an opportunity to return to fiction writing. The next fifteen years constituted a period of extraordinary productivity for Dreiser, leading to the publication of four novels, four works of travel narrative and autobiography, and numerous short stories and sketches. He published what many critics consider to be his masterpiece, *An American Tragedy*, in 1925. Based on an actual murder case in upstate New York, the book was hailed as a great American novel and generated substantial profits. With his reputation and finances secure, Dreiser's productivity dropped off; he completed no other novels until almost the end of his life. Like many American intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s, Dreiser was fascinated with socialism and the political experiment going on in the new Soviet Union. In 1927 he paid a lengthy visit to Moscow. Upon his return to the United States, he devoted himself to furthering proletarian causes and the Communist party. When he died in 1945 in California, his reputation as a writer and thinker was at low, but later critics have largely revived his standing as an innovative author who defied genteel and romantic traditions to offer realistic portraits of human nature and social conditions in America. Theodore Dreiser was praised as "the greatest living realist" of the early twentieth century.

Dreiser's novels often reflect the tension between parents who immigrate to the New World and the children they raise under its shifting cultural and moral values. And although his works stand on their own artistic merit, Dreiser is probably almost as famous for the literary censorship that plagued him as much as for his writing itself. For example, *Sister Carrie* (probably his best-known work...and based heavily on his own sister's affair with a married man) almost did not get published at all because of its perceived immorality. After much wrangling, the novel went on to achieve great critical success, and Dreiser himself had a long career, writing a total of twenty-seven works before he died in 1945. Dreiser was the ninth of ten surviving children. He grew up impoverished and did not graduate from high school. A strict Catholic school upbringing turned the author off of Catholicism in general. Theodore Herman Albert Dreiser was born August 27, 1871, in Terre Haute, Indiana, the eleventh of a dozen children. His father, John Paul Dreiser, was a German Catholic immigrant who eloped with and married, in 1851, a woman who had been married. A fire destroyed John Paul's woolen mill; while he was rebuilding the mill, a heavy beam fell on his head, seriously injuring him. During his convalescence, the family lost virtually everything they owned. Nearly penniless, the Dreiser moved to Terre Haute, where Theodore was born. The father's fortunes never improving, Theodore was reared in grim poverty as the family underwent a succession of moves. His early education came in Catholic parochial schools and the



public schools of Warsaw, Indiana, where his family settled in 1884. The most telling aspects of Dreiser's boyhood were the persistent financial hardship, the numerous family removals, and the ardent asceticism of his father's German Catholic orthodoxy. Consequently, Dreiser came to resent bitterly his social and economic status, to develop a sense of insecurity, and, ultimately, to reject Catholicism and later religion itself. At age sixteen, Dreiser left home to seek his fortune in Chicago. Awkward and tall, spindly and weak, he hardly cut a dashing figure. Edgar Lee Masters, in *The Great Valley* (1916), described him in a poetic portrait:

This unlikely caricature of a man had little success in Chicago at first, but he eventually landed a steady job in a warehouse. There he became an avid reader through the efforts of an older friend and former teacher. Encouraged to make something of himself, he attended Indiana University for a year but returned in 1890 to Chicago and various menial jobs. His imagination, however, had been fired; his tireless reading continued, and he burned to improve his lot.

Hoping to become a writer, Dreiser began the application rounds at Chicago newspapers. In 1892, he obtained a position as a reporter with the *Chicago Globe*. Shortly thereafter, Dreiser accepted a job at the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, left Chicago, and began the journalistic career which he followed from city to city for nearly a decade. His experiences in such cities as St. Louis, Toledo, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh helped form his maturing social views. Reporting on the activities of impoverished strikers who battled against the economic and social inequities preserved by such robber barons as John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and Jay Gould, Dreiser was assembling the raw material from which would spring his novels, with their bleak realism, their pessimistic determinism, and his own rejection of capitalism and subsequent conversion to Communism.

The 1890's were pivotal years for Dreiser. Not only did he become a successful journalist and free himself from material need, but he also took a wife and embarked on his fiction-writing career. In 1893, he met and began to court Sarah (Sallie) Osborne White, whom he married on December 28, 1898. The marriage proved disastrous, and Dreiser and his wife were separated in 1909. (In 1919, Dreiser met and became intimate with Helen Richardson, a distant cousin, though the couple were unable to marry until 1944 because Sarah, to her death in 1942, refused to grant a divorce.) Also in the 1890's, Dreiser began to write commercial short stories and articles with some success, and, in 1899, he began his first novel, *Sister Carrie*,

completed in 1900 and accepted by Doubleday, Page and Company.

*Sister Carrie* introduced the major themes and social attitudes that characterize Dreiser's powerful fiction. A study of *Carrie Meeber*, a small-town innocent who comes to Chicago and falls into temptation, *Sister Carrie* clearly draws upon Dreiser's memories of the similar fate of two older sisters. Weary of her shoe-factory job (depicted in the muckraker style of the 1890's, with lascivious bosses and inhuman working conditions), Carrie slips into a romantic liaison and becomes a kept woman. Eventually, after playing mistress to several others, she achieves great success as an actress. In contrast to the authors of typical "fallen woman" stories of his era, Dreiser refused to punish Carrie. Instead, he presents no clear villains or heroes and offers no moral judgments. Through a combination of fate, character weaknesses, and a corrupt capitalistic society, Carrie and her principal lover lead heartbreaking lives.

*Sister Carrie* also marked the start of Dreiser's lifelong battle with censorship. Recommended by the well-known naturalistic author Frank Norris, *Sister Carrie* was contracted for publication by Frank Doubleday, though he had not read the manuscript. Later (supposedly because Mrs. Doubleday read the proofs and expressed stunned horror), Doubleday tried to avoid publication. Stubbornly insisting on the contractual terms, Dreiser forced publication, but Doubleday printed only a minimum run, sent no review copies, and made no advertising effort. Selling fewer than five hundred copies, the novel passed almost unnoticed. In 1907, a second edition, brought out by B. W. Dodge, met with considerable success, but the pattern had been established, and Dreiser would fight a running battle against censorship for the remainder of his career.

Despondent over *Sister Carrie*'s failure to achieve either critical or financial success and plunged back into personal economic chaos, Dreiser apparently suffered a mental breakdown and became suicidal. After a sanatorium confinement, he regained his balance and his passionate drive for success. Accepting an editorial position at Street and Smith, publisher of cheap magazines and dime novels, Dreiser's business fortunes rapidly improved until, in 1907,...

Theodore Herman Albert Dreiser was virtually the first widely recognized American writer whose background lacked connection with the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant establishment; his father was a Catholic emigrant from Germany, and Theodore grew up, with nine siblings, in a relatively impoverished, strictly religious family. Dreiser



rejected his father's religion; he maintained a sympathy for the poor and various relations with his brothers and sisters (including the writer of very popular songs, such as "My Gal Sam," Paul Dreiser), a number of whom provided him with prototypes for his fictional characters. Leaving his Indiana home at fifteen to go to Chicago, Dreiser was fascinated with the raw and vital city, where he worked at a variety of jobs, pausing to spend one term at Indiana University before beginning a career as a journalist.

From Chicago this career took him to St. Louis, Pittsburgh, and New York, where he eventually became established as a successful magazine editor. In 1908 he married his first wife; the marriage lasted until her death in 1941, with many problems, some of them reflected in stories such as "Free" and "Chains." Although his journalistic experiences had given him potential material and writing practice, Dreiser was late in turning to fiction; his first short story was not completed until he was twenty-eight, but having begun, he went on to write other stories and have his first novel, *Sister Carrie*, appear in 1900. While *Sister Carrie*, in which the heroine loses her virtue and survives, unrepentant, was in effect suppressed by its publisher because of its unconventional morality, Dreiser was launched upon his career as a writer of fiction.

Subsequent financial troubles, a partial mental breakdown, marital problems not unrelated to Dreiser's apparent constitutional aversion to monogamy, and continual attacks by the literary, moral, and economic establishments, rather than permanently halting this career, provided it with raw material. With the appearance of his novel *An American Tragedy*, Dreiser, at fifty-four, finally achieved significant financial success and wide acceptance, although his difficult personality, sexual variety, drinking, anti-Semitism, and communist sympathies kept him involved in controversy. Near the end of his life he both developed an interest in Eastern mysticism and joined the Communist Party. He died in 1945.

Theodore Herman Albert Dreiser was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, on August 27, 1871, into a family of German Americans. His father, John Paul Dreiser, was a weaver by trade, and from the time of his entry into the United States (in 1846), he had worked westward in an attempt to establish himself. He induced Sarah Schanab (later shortened to Shnepp), the daughter of an Ohio Moravian, to elope with him, and they settled near Fort Wayne. John Paul became the manager in a woolen mill and soon amassed enough funds to build his own mill in Sullivan, Indiana. In 1870, the year before Theodore's birth,

the mill burned, John Paul was seriously injured, Sarah was cheated out of the family property by unscrupulous "yankee trickery," and...

Theodore Dreiser began his writing career as a journalist, and his novels incorporate journalistic content and technique. By relying heavily on real experience, Dreiser was able to represent the longings of Americans, especially young, urban Americans, who, like himself, wanted success but often experienced failure. His father had been a skilled weaver, but by the time Dreiser was born, the ninth of ten children, his father had failed, and the family lived in poverty, moving from house to house, city to city. On one occasion the family was humiliated and forced to move when one of Dreiser's unmarried sisters became pregnant. Although his father was unable to support the family, he attempted to maintain a rigid Catholic morality. The son of a desperately poor and narrowly religious family, because Dreiser was unable to find work in this community, he and Sarah eloped to Dayton, Ohio, but returned to Fort Wayne, Indiana, before their first child was born. At first, the elder Dreiser tried to build a secure life for his family, establishing his own woolen mill at Sullivan, Indiana, in 1867. Unfortunately, the mill burned to the ground just when it was starting to...

In all of his works, Dreiser portrayed society realistically. His observations of life taught him that human destiny is often affected by accidents of fate and by deep human yearnings or drives—particularly the drives toward money and sex. Yet Dreiser never felt that people are totally at the mercy of these forces, with no will of their own, even though individuals who are emotionally strong by nature seem more successful in coping with fate and drives than those who are passive or weak. Dreiser treated all of his characters with sympathy, however, proving himself to be a man of compassion.

Carrie soon embarks on a quest for work to pay rent to her sister and her husband, and takes a job running a machine in a shoe factory. Before long, however, she is shocked by the coarse manners of both the male and female factory workers, and the physical demands of the job, as well as the squalid factory conditions, opening a vista of material possibilities to her. The next day, he rebuffs her feeble attempts to return the money, taking her shopping at a Chicago department store and securing a jacket she covets and some shoes. That night, she writes a good-bye note to Minnie and moves in with Drouet.

Carrie's dissatisfaction only increases when she meets Robert Ames, a bright young scholar from Indiana and her neighbor's cousin, who introduces her to the idea



that great art, rather than showy materialism, is worthy of admiration.

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## THE BLACK (FEMALE) AS AN ARTIST IN NEGATIVITY OF WHITE'S CULTURE IN WALKER'S THE TEMPLE OF MY FAMILIAR

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### Abstract

*Alice Walker in her novel The Temple of My Familiar made a great effort to reveal the potentiality of black people and they are being ignored by the majority of healthiest people whose power is high against the heart of black people. The most intriguing scenes dealing with racism, I think, are the ones taking place in Africa. On the one hand, Africa is the homeland of black people and so it rightfully belongs to them. Consequently, when white people come there and discriminate against the blacks, this seems even more unfair than when they do so elsewhere. the novel either is an artist from the start, or becomes one as part of their spiritual development. Zedé the elder is a bell chimist and a tailor, Zedé is a tailor as well, Arveyda is a musician, Hal a painter, Lissie a painter and a storyteller, Ola is a playwright, Eleandra was a painter, Nzingha's mother made murals in their hut, Fanny becomes a masseuse – massage, in her case, could be said to be an art – and a playwright, Carlotta becomes a bell chimist just like her grandmother and Suwelo takes up carpentry.*

Alice Walker in *The Color Purple* mainly paying attention on relationships within black community especially the prevalent sexism and brutality in all the ways which she tried to emphasize; she touches again more at length on the race issue in *The Temple of My Familiar*. With the six main characters as well as most of the other ones being black along with musical memories, Walker can treat several dimensions of the problem, leading us to understand that racism is age-old and has existed between all sorts of people. Walker in her novel *The Temple of My Familiar* made a great effort to reveal the potentiality of black people and they are being ignored by the majority of healthiest people whose power is high against the heart of black people. The novel opens with a description of how the white patriarchal urban world encroaches on the rural, matriarchal, native South American community where Carlotta's mother Zedé grew up. It also reveals how the community's culture had to withstand the dominant culture of the whites. The book relates instances of racism during very different periods to illustrate this. Some examples: Lissie clearly remembers the life time in which she was sold by her own uncle into slavery. Probably more than a century later, Hal's father is not allowed into the house of his friend Heath, because he is black, which some decades later also happens to young Fanny, whose friend Tanya is white as well. Hal and Suwelo's uncle Rafe are confronted with the race issue when "white folks wanted [them] for the army, to fight in the Great War, or so they said. The truth

was, they wanted [them] to be servants for the white men who fought. They wanted [them] to fight some people none of [them] had heard of, and they were white folks, too." (97)

The most intriguing scenes dealing with racism, I think, are the ones taking place in Africa. On the one hand, Africa is the homeland of black people and so it rightfully belongs to them. Consequently, when white people come there and discriminate against the blacks, this seems even more unfair than when they do so elsewhere. In that way, Africa is presented as a kind of micro-cosmos, displaying on a smaller scale all the things that are going on in the rest of the world. Ola, Fanny's father, also tells his daughter about how the white man came to Africa and made everything go wrong. As he says: "the whites had done terrible things to us; many of them would claim later that they'd done nothing of the kind, simply because they knew nothing about it. But beyond what they were doing to us, as adults, they were destroying our children, who were starving to death – their bodies, their minds, their dreams – right before our eyes." (307)

Yet, on the other hand, the scenes in Africa display other significant things revolving around the race issue. First of all, the Africans show a profound race pride themselves. Even Africa, the government throwing out a majority of the white man's laws, because they oppressed the native population, decided that the one law they would surely keep the one forbidding interracial marriage. This proved they had as much race pride as the white man. This

pride is sustained as the "prodigal son". The book on community itself ha of slavery, white Fanny argues, for and black women v own operation to s are being criticized entertaining the situ happy. Generally i understand the pow responsibility. Black forms of oppression

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pride is sustained by a myth in which the white man is seen as the "prodigal son of Africa" (309).

The book on several points criticizes how little black community itself has learned from the painful experiences of slavery, white domination and racism. Ola's art, as Fanny argues, for example also gives insights. Black man and black women who should have got the equality in their own operation to survive in the nation well. Black people are being criticized in different way where white man is entertaining the situation, when they are not in the mood of happy. Generally in the continents, the people have to understand the power of individual human values and their responsibility. Black people are guilty of sexism and other forms of oppression and misuse of power themselves.

Nzingha, Fanny's halfsister, draws the same conclusion: "And I feel so frustrated, because the men can always run on and on about the white man's destructiveness and yet they cannot look into their own families and their own children's lives and see that this is just the destruction the white man has planned." (255) Yet, what makes the book especially interesting is that Walker also illustrates how racism works both ways. The two most striking examples are Hal and Fanny. As Lissie tells Suwelo, Hal truly fears the white man. Fanny's fear goes further and is turned into sheer hatred. It should be said that, as was already indicated in the section above, the overall message the book wants to convey about free less environment especially to black people. Lissie, although she herself claims to have almost no positive memory of a white person and clearly is very proud to be a black woman, has had the experience of being white. She has used that experience to harmonize within herself and does not let racism devour her inner peace and wholeness. It is obvious that racism is a destructive force that only leads us away from our goal as a human being.

We might expect her novels to treat the gender issue in great detail. This is indeed the case for *The Temple of My Familiar*, although we should add that it is not as clear cut as it may seem. In comparison to her most famous novel, *The Color Purple*, for example, Walker devotes far more attention to her male characters, as they constitute fifty percent of the main characters. Although each of the male characters still has to learn something and is not quite perfect as a person yet, their portrayal is strikingly less harsh than that of Mr. in *The Color Purple*, which was criticized extensively for putting forward a very negative view on men. Yet, as she herself indicates, Mr. embodies Walker's belief that people can develop positively, a view

that is present even more explicit in *The Temple of My Familiar*. However, it should not surprise that the one character having reached the status of wholeness from the beginning of the novel already and who consequently serves as a guide is a woman, Lissie.

Then the novel implicitly, yet effectively, criticizes some of the most important aspects of our current sexist or patriarchal society (e.g. religion, marriage, government, academy,...) by numerous references to matriarchal systems. Such ancient matriarchies are opposed to the present-day institutions that Fanny describes as "unnatural bodies, male-supremacist private clubs." (274). The present situation is traced back to the point where everything went wrong. Whereas up to that moment men and women lived in separate tribes, visiting each other regularly and living in perfect harmony with each other, themselves and the nature and animals surrounding them, at a certain moment men and women merge. It is during the lifetime in which Lissie is a lion that this happens. Ever since that moment, men and women have allowed for a patriarchal system to develop, in which women were treated badly. Even black men, who should have learned from their own oppression by white people, are guilty of this.

In *The Temple of My Familiar*. First of all, women, in order to be fully appreciated as women, should explore themselves in every possible way, meaning: also sexually. They have to come to terms with their own sexuality, know and appreciate their own body, before they will be able to enjoy a sexual relationship with a man. In *The Temple of My Familiar*, sex is referred to in two ways. On the one hand, there is unfulfilling sex, for example, the sex Suwelo forces both Fanny and Carlotta to have with him and onto which he projects his male-oriented fantasies. For example: he tries to force Fanny to wear sexy lingerie and tells Lissie and Hal how: "[s]he felt terrible. She cried and said she felt degraded." (281) It should not come as a surprise that Fanny later confesses to him that she has never experienced an orgasm with him. On the other hand, there is the type of sex that is possible only if both the woman and the man value the woman for being a woman. It is the sex Arveyda and Fanny have at the end of the novel. But, in order for this to happen, Fanny has to come to terms with her sexuality herself. Just like Shug made Celie aware of her "little button" (*The Color Purple*: 83), Fanny is helped as well:

Fanny thinks of the years during which her sexuality was dead to her. How, once she began to understand man's oppression of women, and to let herself feel it in her



own life, she ceased to be aroused by men. By Suwelo in particular, addicted as he was to pornography. And then, the women in her consciousness-raising group had taught her how to masturbate. Suddenly she'd found herself free. Sexually free, for the first time in her life. At the same time, she was learning to meditate, and was throwing off the last clinging vestiges of organized religion. (389)

This view on religion as explicitly different from the patriarchal Christianity is supported by the stories of Lissie's past lifetimes in which she relates how in the beginning of civilization people worshipped mothers and goddesses, instead of male figures. As in the essays of *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, there also is a lot of reference to artists in *The Temple of My Familiar*. Most strikingly almost every single character in the novel either is an artist from the start, or becomes one as part of their spiritual development. Zedé the elder is a bell chimist and a tailor, Zedé is a tailor as well, Arveyda is a musician, Hal a painter, Lissie a painter and a storyteller, Ola is a playwright, Eleandra was a painter, Nzingha's mother made murals in their hut, Fanny becomes a masseuse – massage, in her case, could be said to be an art – and a playwright, Carlotta becomes a bell chimist just like her grandmother and Suwelo takes up carpentry. Besides the characters being artists, there are also some references to real life artists, not by accident mostly women and artists presumably very influential for Walker herself: Lissie's grandmother is compared to Sojourner Truth (102), Bessie Head stays in the same hotel in Africa as Fanny (176), Fanny talks about an exposition of Frida Kahlo to her therapist (326) and about Nella Larson to her father (341).

Eventually, as an artist you have a social function in general. This suggestion is clearly reminiscent of what Walker says about artists in her collection of womanist prose (cf. supra). As Nzingha says to Fanny: "Writers don't cause trouble so much as they describe it. Once it is described, trouble takes on a life visible to all, whereas until

it is described, and made visible, only a few are able to see it." (261). Moreover, beside their general social function of informing people at large, they have also a guiding function for specific individuals in their inner circle. Sometimes they can see things more clearly which allows them to show their beloved ones the path they should follow that artists are the messenger but they are not slave and art which every people should understand.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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The fundamental grammar and steps to write clear English have been explained as if a teacher teaches them in person. This book is also like a dictionary to speak English without mistakes. It is hoped that this book will be of interest to the general readers, Teachers, Students, Call Centre & Corporate Executives, and the aspirants of Competitive examinations.

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its elemental passions and conflicts and man's eternal struggle to achieve perfection. So, Karnad delves deep into the traditional myths to spell modern man's mental sufferings, pain and dilemmas that are created in his mind.

Karnad does not take the myths in their entirety, he takes only fragments that are useful to him and the rest he supplements with his imagination to make his plots interesting. His interest was not in recreating old myths and legends but in representing them to suit his artistic purpose.

Karnad himself has revealed that Theatre can simultaneously be entertainment, political commentary and artistic statement and can be composed in traditional, realistic and post modern forms.

"Like masks worn by actors that allow them to express otherwise hushed truths, Indian theatre enables immediate, manipulative representations of reality".(Three plays.331).

Gifted playwrights have discovered source materials from myths and legends and have employed them creatively. Realism in drama was a totally new concept and it was alien to theatrical conventions. Myths and legends plays an important role for Karnad's plays. When Karnad was asked the reason for his handling of myths and legends, he replied that his sole purpose was to narrate the particular story effectively, and so,

"the borrowed tales are given a turn of the screw, as it were, which works wonders with his plays".(Indian Drama.26).

Karnad's Naga-Mandala is based on two oral tales from Karnataka as we know from what he says in his "Introduction" to Three Plays: ... these tales are narrated by women- normally the older women in the family-while children are being fed in the evenings in the kitchen or being put to bed. The other adults present on these occasions are also women. Therefore these tales, though directed at the children, often serve as a parallel system of communication among the women in the family.

The dramatist also attempts to in still an isolated effect by driving the material of the play from the folk tales, and also by using the 'non-materialistic techniques' of the traditional Indian theatre. The title of the play is not the name of a human character, but it is that of a snake.As the name suggests, it revolves around a woman and a serpent. As this play is based on a folk tale it could be observed that the serpent plays an important role as in most such narrations all over the world.

It is believed that snake myths are found extensively in Brahmanism, Buddhism, Lamaistic and Japanese writing. In Naga- Mandala the story of the cobra suggests that the play is intended to dramatize not merely the folk tales,

### A CRITIQUE OF MYTHICAL ELEMENTS IN GIRISH KARNAD'S-NAGA-MANDALA

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Girish Karnad's plays abound with the elements of myth. This paper presents the treatment of myth in Naga-Mandala of Girish Karnad. It is concluded that although the ending of the play is not within the orthodoxy of Indian epic texts and Hindu philosophy, it can be seen in the cultural context of Indian woman of today who seeks to fulfil her needs and aspirations. The inexhaustible stories and history of myths, parables and legends that pattern and define our culture offers immense scope for the Indian dramatists.

Our early playwrights writing in English like Sri Aurobindo and Kailasam selected their themes from the myths and legends of Indian Literature. Though Karnad's themes appear to build castles in the air, he took refuge in the myths and legends and made them the vehicle of a new vision.

His childhood exposure to street plays in Karnataka villages and his familiarity with western dramas staged in Bombay have induced him to retell the secular legends of India to suit the modern context. A vigorous vitality that combs the past for apt myths to analyze the present has been the hallmark of Girish Karnad, the pre-eminent Indian playwright in the Kannada language.

Karnad's creative genius lies in taking up fragments of historical-legendary experience and fusing them into a forceful statement. By using the 'grammar of literary archetype', Karnad links the past and the present, the archetypal and the real. Issues of the present world find their parallels in the myths and fables of the past, giving new meanings and insights reinforcing the theme.

By transcending the limits of time and space, myths provide flashes of insight into life and its mystery. They form an internal part of cultural consciousness of the land, with different meanings and it reflects the contemporary issues. Karnad believes in the Jungian collective racial consciousness and so turns to the past habitually for the source materials. All his plays are literary excavations of the Indian collective past - the racial, mythical, legendary and the historical and they have a strong contemporary relevance. By using these myths he tried to reveal the absurdity of life with all



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 but also to imply a deeper meaning at various levels. The folk-tale element of the Naga-Mandala and the magical power, which the cobra possesses continually, remind the spectators that they are only watching a play.

The play deals with a 'self-involved' hero, who undergoes a test put to him by his wife in order to survive. The psychological inadequacy he is trapped in causes severe lack of understanding and communication between him and his wife. It is a threat to family and society. Every man through adolescence faces this existential problem and so he must learn to overcome and this becomes more comprehensive in Karnad's plays. Naga-Mandala is not only about the male difficulty to trust and love women, it seems to be about the socialization process of both men and women, particularly in the Indian society, where marriages are more often than not the first experience of sex and love for most people. The transition from childhood into adolescence and then into adult roles has, in India, very different stages and psychological and cultural relationships are totally different from other less tradition-bound societies.

The Naga-Mandala probes into the female and male growth into selfhood, and their mature adjustment with the social roles appointed for them by the traditional society. Myths and folk tales in a patriarchal society represent primarily the male unconscious fears and wishes and are patriarchal constructs and male-oriented. In these stories the women's experiences and inner feelings are not given importance.

They do not probe much light on women's fears, anxieties and psychological problems. It is a remarkable achievement of Karnad that he adapts this male-oriented folk tale in such a manner that it becomes a representation of the experience of man and woman in the psychologically transitional phase.

In a folk tale, there is a magician or a snake that assumes the form of the Prince, enters the palace and woos the beautiful Princess, locked up in the palace. When the Prince becomes aware of this, he gets the snake/magician killed and the Princess then sets him a riddle. If he fails to answer, he has to die. This existential crisis is treated in the folk tale in different ways.

In Karnad's play, the story takes a happy turn, both Rani and Appanna adjusting to the family and community in a socially useful manner. But this is achieved after upsetting the male egoism and exaggerated sense of power over women. The male assumption of keeping full control over the body, sexuality and virtue of women through the insinuations of family and values like chastity are mocked in the story.

Appanna's violent reaction to his wife's infidelity does not make him consider for a moment his infidelity towards her. The other villagers also ignore

this lapse on his part but they emphasize the institution of marriage and the procreative function of the couple. The importance of the family and progeny are established. The husband and the wife run towards

each other, with a greater sense of relationship. The girl-bride now becomes the mother to be and as such gains a social recognition. This stage of Rani's social integration brings her a new sense of respect and her own worth. This is another significant aspect of the Indian social and cultural life in its treatment of women. As a mother, Rani is seen in the last part of the story to be in command of the household with some authority and decision making power. Appanna even agrees to her rather strange demand that their son should perform an ritual, in the memory of the dead snake.

In the alternate end to the play suggested by the playwright, the snake does not die. It is allowed by Rani to live in her dark, long and cool tresses. The lover is always present; he lives with her, within the family. The danger to male authority as a husband and patriarch lives on constantly at close quarters but mostly within the woman's imagination.

The dutiful and loyal wife may observe the social, moral code entirely; yet within her live the memories of the perfect lover who had given her first emotional and erotic experiences. These desires may haunt her or lie dormant within. Rani can understand emphatically why Kappanna, the young man, who was bound by filial duty to his old and blind mother, runs away one night.

He had been pursuing his dream of a beautiful woman. Though he resisted the alluring voice and presence of the dream girl, he was trying to be a dutiful son carrying his old mother on his back. Finally he is pulled away when the dreams become too powerful. Rani has gone through these new desires, the daydreaming and fantasizing about love and she understands their power over the social and moral duties.

The unique challenge of Naga-Mandala lies in its exposure of its own limitations as a work of art. In this sense, the play is attuned to its contradictions with regard to women's experiences of desire, and the modes of self-expression available to them within existing discourses.

The play hints, indeed, that these contradictions lie at the heart of myths as a whole. Karnad's way of reckoning with the anxiety this can generate is the classic postmodern theatrical device of multiple endings. It appeals to the postmodern sensibility of the late twentieth-century of which Naga-Mandala is a good example.

It can be concluded that, though the ending of Naga-Mandala is not within the orthodoxy of Indian epic texts, the play must be studied and interpreted



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not only by keeping elements of Hindu philosophy as points of reference, but also by taking into account the cultural context of the Indian woman of today who seeks to fulfil her needs and aspirations.

The play *Naga mandala* (play with a cobra) portrays the commoditization of women in a society where women are not valued as objects of individuality but as objects of possession. They are subjected to social indoctrination and their voices are marginalized.

Girish Karnad has facilitated the projection of his vision with the aid of historical myths and legends. He wants to empower the female gender and strives for the recognition of their individualistic identity; he feels it is mandatory to reinstate coherent order to the word beyond the self that is the world of human relationships, of nature, of society as a totality.

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#### ASTUDY OF MAYA'S INTERIOR JOURNEY IN ANITA DESAI'S CRY, THE PEACOCK

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Anita Desai is a modern indo-English writer, widely acclaimed, not only in India but also in the world of fiction writing. She emerged on the literary horizon after independence, focusing on the contemporary issues. Anita Desai has added a new dimension to the contemporary Indian English fiction. She has secured a unique and significant place due to her innovative thematic concerns and deals in her fiction with feminine sensibility. Her preoccupation is explored of deep psych of her characters. The fiction of Anita Desai is relevant to all times because she writes about the predicament of modern man. She digs in to man inner psyche and goes beyond the skin and the flesh. Literature for her is not a means of escaping reality but an exploration and an inquiry. She prefers the private to the public world and avoid from the traditional grooves of external reality and physical world. In fact, her real concern is the exploration of human psyche, inner climate, and she unravels the mystery of the inner life of her characters.

This paper examines the reconciliation in marriage and its failure which is recurrently presented in almost all the novels of Anita Desai. Anita Desai is a contemporary novelist and an insightful writer. For her man-woman relationship is the pivotal concern in her novels and in most cases marriage is a misalliance. The relationship between Maya and Gautama in *Cry the Peacock* (1963) dramatizes a discerning study of man woman relationship. This marriage seeks to unite two persons from entirely different social backgrounds thus paving the way for the marital disharmony.

Anita Desai the prominent novelist of the post-independent India known as the novelist of human predicament of anxiety, frustration and loneliness in the insensitive world especially of the woman portrayal. Her maiden novel *Cry, the Peacock* which deals with the mental rather than physical aspect of its characters. The protagonist Maya- a hypersensitive creature of pure instinct, married to Gautama -an insensitive pragmatic and rational advocate with whom she is unable to reconcile all her life. It is a tale of Maya's love for Gautama her husband. Deeply devoted and affectionate in nature, ever sensitive in mental proclivities, Maya requires a love partner who can sympathise commensurable with her sensibilities. But the tragedy begins in her life because her husband Gautama does not possess those wide-ranging sympathies.



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 David? His family won't get involved with ours. But that doesn't matter so much... What matters is your life- it will be so dry. Just husband, wife, and may be a child rattling like loose stones in this huge America! (278).

Towards the end of the novel we realize that exotic charm that Feroza has evoked in David's mind is gradually fading. Sidhwa has created the character of David to show that in practice, the infusion of two different ancient religions, traditions, and culture namely Zoroastrianism and Judaism is rather difficult. On the other hand Feroza does not wish that religion should interfere with her matrimonial affair. At the end of the novel An American Brat Feroza emerges as a dynamic girl who has already made up her mind not to surrender to social taboo of inter-faith marriage prevailing in the Parsi community.

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## SYMBOLS OF UNTOUCHABLE AND COOLIE: A THEMATIC DISCOURSE

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Mulk Raj Anand's first novel, *Untouchable* is a highly remarkable discourse on untouchability, and *Coolie* is a humanistic discourse on the subject of human labour. It may be argued that the central issue in either case is the philosophy of work and that untouchable and coolie are analogical symbols of human enslavement, subjugation and oppression. While the setting of both the novels is colonial India, the two symbols as developed by Anand have a much more comprehensive meaning and context, perhaps much too larger than could possibly be carried by the respective narratives or even allowed by the tenuous scope of history. It is indeed true that Bakha, the "hero-anti-hero" of *Untouchable*, is an Indian sweeper and Munoo of *Coolie* an Indian coolie, but they are universal and global figures: the two symbols provide a poignant commentary on man's inhumanity to fellow man in the history of the human race, especially on the formation of collusive centres of power and the unprecedented complexity of these hegemonic structures in controlling human beings.

For the purpose of the present paper, the theme of social justice may be considered as a highly serious issue and analytical view of human experience; it is a poetic statement of socio-historicity and ideology; and its function is the unobtrusive revelation of discourse, ideology, language and consciousness. Thus considered, the two symbols, the untouchable and the coolie, are highly evocative of sociohistoricity, ideology and metaphysics. Ironically, however, Anand's impression of the British coolies and other workers turns out to be an illusion. There is hardly any doubt that Anand's social and political thought must be examined against the crosscurrents of major European intellectual thought, especially British socialism, communism and humanism. During his twenty-five-year stay in England, Anand became a part of the 1930s movement, and yet he remained firmly committed to the cause of India's freedom from Great Britain.

In *Untouchable*, the discourse between the young moderate poet Iqbal Nath Sarshar and the barrister R.N. Bashir recapitulates the western and the Gandhian ideologies of social and moral progress. But it is the eloquently crafted philosophical basis of Gandhi's address that dominates the scene. Although one might look at the issue of casteism in its essential context of the vulgarities and misinterpretations of Hinduism, the question remains: will industrial progress



and modernity liberate the Bakhās of society from the karmic obligation of cleansing human excreta and guarantee them basic human dignity and general acceptance in the social order without any reference to their birth or heredity? Ironically, Bakha caught in the maze of the Indian caste system cannot even rebel. The destined life of a sweeper is Bakha's karmic and hereditary obligation. Even Bakha's dreamworld remains tersely defined by the iron hand of destiny. Although Gandhi declares categorically and emphatically that untouchability is "the greatest blot on Hinduism" (146), his moral philosophy seems to be too idealistic to meet the immediate ends of social justice.

The debate on untouchability from Gandhi to Ambedkar and to the present times is still very much alive in the post-independence India. It may be argued that the ancient conception of varunashram does not approve the corrupt historical practice of untouchability. It may be further argued that modern progress will provide legal remedies in achieving social justice and equality. But one may think that the Hindu mind is predominantly caste-conscious, and ask whether it will ever free itself from the theodicy of casteism. Bakha's burning desire to go to school and to become a sahib may be a child's fancy, because his father "had told him that schools are meant for the babus, and not for the lowly sweepers." Bakha had been painfully aware of the absurdity and cruelty of the upper-caste Hindus who have openly and boldly embraced the tradition of untouchability.

The psychoanalytical complexity of Bakha's dream only parodies the western discourse on equality, liberty and justice. The extent to which Bakha's innocence has been violated by social and religious determinism becomes abundantly clear by the ironic enslavement of his desire: all that Bakha dreams is to become a babu or a sahib. Anand's treacherous irony here exposes the colonial-imperialist strategies of doubly colonizing the Bakha types. Bakha knows that he is born into a family of sweepers, but he is unable to comprehend the intricate problem of untouchability. He helps people clean their bodies, but he does not understand how his touch will pollute those who profess purity by birth. What manifests in the minds of the upperclass majority is the fear of intermingling and hence of the probable loss of inherited purity. The drastic implications of the Freudian ideas of fear, estrangement and Oedipal impulse are incontrovertibly congealed in the symbol of the untouchable. Ironically, the temple priest, overpowered by his sexual desire for Bakha's sister Sohini, must have been terribly confused about the meaning of the words "purity" and "defilement." Evidently, Anand has placed the entire problem of the soul's purity and impurity in the midst of the modern discourse, eastern and western, on the nature of man, the origin of evil and class structure, firmly suggesting that

British colonial attitudes by and large have endorsed such forms of human bondage.

Since the world of material reality is basically created by the slave, the master simply remains a consumer, an outsider. In the dialectic of the master-slave relationship, the slave realises his self-consciousness and gratifies his desire by annulment of the otherness or foreignness but only in the object-world of materiality. Thus, it is only through the discipline of work that the slave as knower and the creator of the object world learns to recover his consciousness into a structure of conceptual and symbolic thinking. Evidently, Hegel is defending the ethical formulations of work ethics in Christianity and in Romanticism. But Marx, despite his indebtedness to Hegel for dialectical thought, takes a drastically different position in his conception of dialectical materialism: "Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence and the existence of men is their actual life-process" (391). Here is Marx's more direct statement quoted by Anand in Apology: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness" (183). Thus consciousness in Marx's philosophy of cultural materialism is dependent upon material conditions. In other words, it is the base, the economic development that will determine the superstructure and the quality of one's consciousness. Are Bakha and Munoo Hegelian or Marxist figures? Are their consciousness superior to those of the upper classes? One may remember that Matthew Arnold in Culture and Anarchy calls the aristocrats the barbarians and the bourgeois the philistines. How can the barbarians and the philistines, the perpetrators of anarchy, be supposed to have better consciousness? For Arnold, it is the awakened populace, the working class, who have better consciousness and who are the arbiters of an ideal classless society.

It is indeed remarkable to note that Anand in placing the two symbols in the centre of the western discourse has created a confrontational position very much like the one created by Conrad in Heart of Darkness. I mean the inseparability of the historical, economic, philosophical and moral issues from each other. Although both Bakha and Munoo are labourers, it is Munoo's case in Coolie where Anand shows his consummate skill in the effective use of history and ideology to construct a highly evocative and extremely analytical symbol from one of the most ordinary experiences of common life. He had done the same in the creation of Bakha, who has been ceaselessly pitted in the archetypal conflict between himself and the tyrannical society. Munoo has gone through different positions before embracing death: as a domestic servant, as a factory worker in Bombay, and finally as a rickshaw-puller in Simla. It could be



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argued that *Coolie* is Anand's youthful romance with British socialism and Marxism; the narrative and the central symbol of coolie challenge the European political and economic thought. One might ask if Mill's conceptions of utilitarianism and liberty have any relevance to the Bakhas and the Munoo's of the world as well as other repressed denizens of the colonial spaces. "What liberty and whose liberty? One can hardly forget E.M. Forster's candid admission about English liberty: 'It is race-bound and it's classbound. It means freedom for the Englishman, but not for the subject races of his Empire'" (Abinger Harvest 64). "Colonialism," remarks Young, "was a machine; a machine of war, of bureaucracy and administration, and above all, of power..." (98). It must be noted that the last two stages of Munoo's journey conclusively show that the British colonial governance of India is largely responsible for the creation and perpetuation of slavery, poverty and suffering. It is at this point that one finds Anand almost aligning himself with Conrad's central thesis in *Heart of Darkness*: the entire issue of colonial imperialism turns out to be a nightmarish moral predicament in the figure of Kurtz.

Peter Burra's review of *Coolie* emphasizes the universality of the symbol of "coolie." The coolies declare in unison that, because of the "big sahib's greed" (228), they remain "poor niggers" (227) and that they permanently "belong to suffering" (215). The principal interest of the English factory owners and the British subjects residing in India during the colonial era was not the welfare of the laboring class but the availability of the cheap labour of the Munoo's. After all, India as a rural constituency of the British Empire must engender possibilities of economic advancement of the metropolis and, consequently, the strengthening of capitalism. Marx, as a student of history, had seen this extended analogy between capitalism and colonialism. In fact, Marx in his analysis of the British rule in India maintains that imperialism is "the highest stage of capitalism" (Avineri 171). It may be argued that the true significance of the analytical symbol of the *coolie* finally centers on moral grounds. Do economic advances speed up the pace of rebellion? Does genuine rebellion originate from its basic roots of poverty? In this respect, then, will the wealthier classes of people or nations be always interested in perpetuating poverty? To what extent can a group of people or a nation for that matter dehumanize another group or nation and keep it in permanent servitude for its own economic good, pleasure or comfort? The actual obliteration of a class or group of people may not be necessary because, in that case, there will not be any beneficiary of pity and anxiety. Indeed, although Munoo's death is a stern and tragic reminder of man's inhumanity to man, the ethical and sociopolitical debate on poverty and destitution is hardly concluded.

Anand has repeatedly said that he wrote *Coolie* in response to Kipling's Kim. Kipling's hero Kim, a child-hero, can knock down the giantised figure of a Pathan and become an active pillar of the colonial empire. It should be remembered that both Kim and Munoo are orphans. But Anand's Munoo is a realistic hero, a tragic hero, a "hero-anti-hero"; he is fashioned after the English romantic child-hero whose innocence has been violated and whose direct confrontation with the life of continued exploitation, starvation and poverty proves to be fruitless and unproductive. After completing the full circle of his journey, Munoo finally comes back to the hills; Mrs. Mainwaring, a Eurasian, brings him as her servant to Simla, where he works as her rickshaw-puller. Essentially a hillboy from Kangra valley, Munoo travels to Daultpur and from thereon to Bombay and has had varied experiences, ranging from a domestic servant to a factory worker to a coolie and to a rickshaw-puller. It is during his work as coolie where he encounters challenging problems of a fierce and ugly competition with other coolies and is finally hurt by a car driven by Mrs. Mainwaring. In the story, Munoo receives inhuman and repelling treatment from his Indian masters, the foreign mill owners in Bombay and his compatriot coolies. Thus, Anand presents a vivid picture of human misery – poverty, exploitation, hunger and disease. Munoo's experience as a child-servant is as disgusting as his other experiences. Indeed, the story of Munoo is a study in human suffering. It should be remembered that Munoo, being a Kshatriya by birth, does not carry the same baggage of untouchability as does Bakha. But Anand has successfully shown that his sufferings result from the combined forces of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and feudalism. Since the confrontational life in Bombay is centred on his direct experience as a worker, a labourer and a coolie, Munoo now knows the meaning of poverty, suffering and wretchedness. One of the most moving scenes in Bombay is the existence of pavement-dwellers and of poor workers who live in hutments with dirt, filth and unsanitary conditions around. Anand's caustic irony in portraying the work of the rickshaw-pullers to transport the British sahibs and memsahibs up and down the hills in Simla only sharpens the centrality of the meaning of the symbol of coolie – "For India was the one place in the world where servants still were servants..." (277). The souls of the rickshawpullers loudly echo human cruelty, exploitation, subjugation and social injustice. The incantation uttered by the Bombay coolies, "We belong to suffering! We belong to suffering!" (215), is fully reverberated by the destitution and misery of the rickshaw-pullers of Simla. Anand puts the entire issue of the exploitive use of labour in a direct moral context: "Old Gandhi refused to ride in a rickshaw as, he said, it hurt his soul to have to be borne in a carriage driven by human beings" (262). Finally, Munoo dies of tuberculosis in Simla – unauing and



It must be understood that both Bakha and Munoo are sufferers and not rebels, that the novel *Untouchable* had the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi and a laudatory introduction by E.M. Forster, and that the novel *Coolie* was received enthusiastically by almost all British liberals. It must also be noted that, whereas Bakha's work as a sweeper cannot be valued and negotiated primarily because of the politics of Hindu casteism, Munoo's work as a servant, factory worker and coolie is fully negotiable in the context of material production. These two novels alone had given Anand the status of a revolutionary novelist. Anand fought persistently and uncompromisingly for equality, liberty and justice, and for the basic human needs in the newly emerging civil structures of colonial India and post-independence India. In fact, Anand maintains that the new humanism must include the fundamental human values of "the Buddhist karuna or compassion," bhakti and truth and a deep commitment to the ideal of human dignity.

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The most common themes in Anita Desai's novels are human relationship predominantly the man-woman relationship. Nowadays this theme is becomes more significant due to rapid industrialization, growing consciousness among women of their privileges and individualism and the westernization of attitudes and lives of the people. D.H. Lawrence points out: The great relationship for humanity will always be the relationship between man and woman. The relation between man and man, woman and woman, parent and child will always be subsidiary. Twentieth century novelists treat this subject in a different manner from that of earlier novelists. Thus, the most common themes in her novels are the complexity of human relationships, particularly the man-woman relationship. She writes mostly about the miserable predicament of women suffering under their insensitive and inconsiderate husbands, fathers and brothers. So man-woman relationship brings characters into alienation, withdrawal, loneliness, isolation and lack of communication that frequently occurs in her novels. Most of her novel's protagonists are alienated from the world, from society, from families, from parents and even from their own selves because they are not average people but individuals.

Tension, doubts, despair, disenchantment, disquiet and fear become their lot and they lose their sense of wisdom and mental poise, for example *Maya in Cry*, *the Peacock*, *Sita in Where shall we go this Summer?* and *Nanda Kaul in Fire on the Mountain*. Some characters like Monisha and Nanda Kaul are unable to reconcile to alienation and meet with a tragic end.

The distinctiveness of Anita Desai's fiction lies in her treatment of feminine sensibility. In India where women have redesigned role, which does not allow any room for individualism, identity and assertion, Anita Desai talks of women who question the age old traditions and want to seek individual growth. They try to re-examine the known in a new context and find a meaning in life.

Her female protagonists try to ascertain and rediscover meaningfulness in life through the known, the established. These characters are not normal but different from others. They do not find a proper channel of communication and thus become alienated and start brooding about their lives. Thus, Characters in her novels are normally disturbed females, highly susceptible and engage with their dreams and imagination and estranged from their environments. They



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The first of its kind in Tamil, **Karukku** was not only the first Dalit autobiography but achieved a specific identity, having written by a Dalit Christian Woman. Dalit movements dominated mostly by men had a tendency to sideline issues concerning Dalit women. The Dalit women were compelled to voice their misery doubled up due to caste and gender discrimination. The result was the rise of Dalit Feminism. As an exponent of Dalit Feminism, Bama has found in **Karukku** the right space to articulate the travail and sufferings of Dalit women. **Karukku** thus enjoys the unique recognition of being one of the first radical feminist discourses by a Tamil Dalit woman.

'Karukku' means palmyra leaf and Bama finds many congruities between her strife filled life and the saw edged karukku. As Bama herself describes in the preface of the book: "The driving forces that shaped this book are many cutting me like Karukku and making me bleed; unjust social structures that plunged me into ignorance"

Bama's **Karukku** is an autobiographical statement of what it is to be a Dalit and a woman. A Dalit woman is a Dalit amongst the Dalits. She is thus doubly oppressed by her caste and gender. In Bama's case her position is further endangered by her existence as a Dalit Christian.

Hence **Karukku** focuses on three essential forces that cut across and sears Bama's life, namely: caste, gender and religion. It flouts the established conventions of writing an autobiography. It eschews the confessional mode and avoids a linear narrative. A conventional autobiography is a connected narrative, where the author presents his/her episodes chronologically. The anecdotes and experiences in the author's life generally illustrate the

narrator's journey to success. On the other contrary, **Karukku** is a painful journey that is open-ended and many questions are left unanswered. It is not a "complete success story" like a conventional autobiography. It is rather a revelation of the bitter reality of the social ills confronted by a Dalit woman. **Karukku** is a reflection of different themes like religion, recreation, and education, etc. Through these perspectives, Bama gives us a clear picture of the caste oppression meted out to the Dalit Christians not only by the upper caste society but more so within the catholic church itself. Bama has always had an inner urge to actively engage herself in alleviating the sufferings of the oppressed. She becomes a nun to fulfill her aspirations. But very soon she realises that the catholic institutions are filled with caste prejudice and hatred. The book is about Bama's inner quest for self-discovery and the resultant courage, which forces her to move away from the life of a nun to live the life of a Dalit woman.

Bama has never heard people speak openly of untouchability until her third standard in school. The first time she realises her community's pathetic state is ironically tinged with humour. As she was coming back from school, she finds an elder from her street holding out a small packet of snacks, in a string without touching it and giving it to a Naicker in the village. Bama first couldn't help laughing out, looking at that funny sight. "The manner in which he was walking along made me want to double up. I wanted to shriek with laughter at the sight of such a big man carrying a small packet in that fashion." (Bama 2000: 2-13). When she went home, she again fell in a bout of laughter while relating that incident to her elder brother. But Annan (elder brother) did not laugh. He explained to her that the elder from the street was carrying the parcel like that because he was a parayan, an untouchable; and the Naickers were the upper caste men and hence



wouldn't touch anything brought by the parayas. That incident sowed the first seeds of fury and revolt in Bama.

The very thought that an important elder of her community should be put to such humiliation infuriated her. The self-questioning had begun. Bama began to wonder, "what did it mean when they call us 'paraya'? Had the name become obscene? But we too are human beings." (Bama 2000: 13). Bama started to look out for means to uplift herself and her community from this trampled existence. Her Annan shows her the right path and tells her that education is the only way to attain equality: "If you are always ahead in your lessons, people will come to you of their own accord and attach themselves to you. Work hard and learn" (Bama 2000: 15). Her brother's counsel proved to be influential and from then on Bama took her studies very seriously and saw to it that she always stood first in class. In fact, because of that she says, "Many people became my friends, even though I am a 'paraichi'" (Bama 2000: 15). Once the identity was revealed, she could sense "among the other students, a sudden rustling; a titter of contempt." (Bama 2000: 19)

It was against these odds that Bama completed her undergraduate and B.Ed and decided to become a teacher. She worked in a convent and found that the nuns working there constantly oppressed the Dalit children studying there and treated them with contempt. She painfully recalls the nuns commenting on the Dalit children thus "Look at the cheri children! When they stay here, they eat their fill and look as round as potatoes. But look at the state in which they come back from home—just skin and bone." (Bama 2000: 17-18) It was then that Bama was suddenly struck with the idea of becoming a nun and truly to help the Dalit children. She took a drastic step of resigning her job as a teacher and entered

the order. She entered a particular order since she "had read about the woman who founded that particular order how she had done so for the sake of the poor and lowly; lived and died for them alone. I wanted to be like her, living only for the poor and downtrodden" (Bama 2000: 20-21).

Bama worked in a Christian Order where the Tamils were considered inferior and a Tamil Parayar was the lowest of the lot and held no esteem. Bama was admitted in the Order only after it was confirmed that a convent had asked for her services. After Bama became a nun, she joined the Convent with the single purpose of serving the underprivileged. But to her horror she found that the Convent is not devoid of caste consciousness. The upper caste students enjoyed more status and respect from the nuns. The nuns in the convent constantly threw insults and abuse against the Dalit students. The Dalit children did jobs like sweeping the premises, washing and cleaning the lavatories. The nuns felt that "low caste people are all degraded in some way. They think we have no more moral discipline nor cleanliness nor culture" (Bama 2000: 22-23).

In the midst of the tyrannical nuns, Bama was "dying several deaths within." (Bama 2000: 23) The need for introspection becomes indispensable. She looks back on her own attitude towards Christianity and religious faith. She realises that religion was forced on the Dalit converts right from childhood. She recalls how mechanically they were forced to attend the Bible classes and memorize the Psalms. The catechism classes and the morning 'pusai' (prayer) was a must for all Dalit children. Absence from the classes was severely dealt with. "The cane fell on us with the sharpness of a whip." (Bama 2000: 71) So ironically fear was instilled in the children to spread the Gospel of love! Even the weekly confessions were to be learnt by heart:



I praise the lord omnipotent. Bless me sami, for I have sinned, It is a week I made my last confession, lied four times; I stole five times, I have not obeyed my elders, I was daydreaming in the church, I repent these and those sins that I have forgotten saami. This was always the formula. (Bama 2000: 73)

Religion itself was formulaic. It was only after Bama left school did "the fear – bhayam, that I felt towards God gradually left me, and love – paasam grew" (Bama 2000: 87). In spite of all these mechanical drills Bama still had faith in religion; believed to be spreading the message of love and brotherhood. Nobody in the convent seems to insist that God is righteous and would be angered by injustices and falsehood. "There is a great deal of difference between this Jesus and the Jesus who is made known through daily pieties" (Bama 2000: 90). Bama realizes that she cannot live a life of duplicity and play a dual role. One has to be true to oneself. Bama decides to leave the Order. But "how long can one play-act this way? Anyway it wasn't possible for me. I had to leave the Order come into the world" (Bama 2000: 93). Bama thus "leaves one community (of religious women) in order to join another (as a Dalit woman)." (Holmstrom 2000: ix) Having come out of the religious order, Bama feels a sense of fulfillment and "belonging" to the community of Dalit Women despite the fact that she is economically insecure. **Karukku** is thus a pathetic and moving statement of the suffocation and suppression of the trampled and marginalized existence of the Dalits.

**Karukku** is a revelation of the inner strength and vigour of Dalit women represented by Bama, whose experiences open up new perspectives for Dalit women. We find that centuries of oppression have not succeeded in completely sapping the vitality

and the inner strength of the Dalits. Dalit women, in particular, have enormous strength and vigour to bounce back against all odds. If **Karukku** exploded with the realistic description of the subjugated existence of the Dalits, **Sangati** celebrates with pride the resilience and dauntless spirit of the Dalit women. If equality is under siege today, the major responsibility for it rests with the secular politicians who make communal advance possible by legitimizing communalism and helping it coming to power. It is unfortunate that there is no realization that the rising tide of communalism and casteism can be stemmed only by an uncompromising secular stand. Bama's **Karukku** is not just an autobiographical picture her anguish and sensibilities, but a vibrant and, at the same time, poignant appeal to the cast-ridden socio-cultural, political, and religious context.

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### INTER CASTE ANIMOSITY IN BAMA'S **KARUKKU**

Untouchability is the result of the travesty of the Varnashrama dharma of Hinduism. It is a kind of socio-religious slavery imposed upon the Dalits. The Caste Hindus outcast them and pushed them beyond the periphery of Hindu religion and culture. For ages together, untouchability has been an Indian dilemma and the *raison detre* is Hinduism.

Dalit literature is a literature of protest, pain and agony. Its beginnings can be traced to the undocumented oral folklore and tales of the past decades. The time has come for Dalit writers to not only lament their subjugation but also to simultaneously celebrate with pride the dauntless spirit of the Dalit women. This paper seeks to explore how Bama's **Karukku** proves to be a testimony to this significant changing trend in Dalit literature: "Dalits, who have for so long been treated as commodities owned up by others must shout out their selfhood, their 'I' when they rise up" (Gautaman 1995: 97).

India happens to be one of the world's largest democracies, but ironically being a caste structured society, it is here we find a large section of people living a life of subjugation and insufferable sadness. The caste or varna system in India has segregated thousands of Dalits, from mainstream culture, to a subhuman and

debased existence. After centuries of suppression, the Dalits are in the struggle for emancipation under the liberation movement spearheaded by Babasaheb B. R. Ambedkar, who believed that only education could bring about a change in the oppressed lives of the Dalits.

In Tamilnadu, Dalit writing came to existence nearly two decades after the Marathi Dalit movement. Tamil Dalit writing scaled ascendance after the nationwide stir caused by the Mandal Commission report and the Ambedkar Centenary of 1994. During the past sixty years the force of Periyar's rationalist thought, the spread of the Dravidian Movement's ideas, and the introduction of Marxist political and economic philosophy have provided a much more opportune context in Tamil Nadu. Here the Dalit uprising is not confined only to the expression of Dalit literature. On the contrary, Dalit literature came about as part and parcel of anti-caste struggles, agitation for reserved places in the interest of social justice and political protest for economic equality.

Dalit writing has placed the Dalits on the tracks of self-realisation and equality. It has above all helped, in the words of Raj Gautaman, "to awaken the Dalit who lies asleep within the conscience of all people of all castes." (p.97) Secondly, it has also instilled amongst the Dalits a confidence and pride about their existence. It is thus laden with the twin objectives of liberation and proud reflection of Dalit culture.

After the setting up of the Dalit Panthers Party, a number of autobiographies were written in Marathi followed by Kannada. But the spate of autobiographies in Marathi did not find headway in Tamil Dalit writing. It was only after two decades that the first Dalit autobiography **Karukku** written by Bama arrived on the literary scene.



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## THE NARRATIVE STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE A Comparative Study of Bama's *Karukku* and Miriam Tlali's *Muriel at Metropolitan*

K. Ravichandran and K. Thayalamurthy

### Abstract

*This paper comparatively aims at exploring the bottom of the caste system in India and the apartheid system in South Africa in the literary works of Bama's Karukku and Miriam Tlali's Muriel at Metropolitan. It argues that these two semi-autobiographical works constitute literary resistance not only to the caste system and the apartheid system, but also to patriarchies. The social institutions of religion, law, politics, art and literature glorify the dominant ideology of the Caste Hindus and Race Whites. But, after centuries of suppression, Dalits and Blacks are now finding their voice, in literature as well as through political activism. In many ways an arm of downtrodden politics, literature have become an effective tool in expressing the protest of these communities against the domination of Caste Hindus and Race Whites. The protagonists of these novels take the radical step of rejecting and identifying themselves primarily as Dalits and Blacks. Through an analysis of these two texts, the article discusses the caste and race hierarchy prevalent in the world. It also explores larger ambiguities in the construction of an identity of Indian Dalits and South African Blacks.*

In the context of traditional Hindu society, Dalit status has often been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure, such as leatherwork, butchery, or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses, and waste. Dalits work as manual labourers cleaning streets, latrines, and sewers. Engaging in these activities is considered to be polluting to an individual, and this pollution is considered contagious. As a result, Dalits are commonly segregated, and banned from full participation in Hindu social life. For instance, they are not allowed to enter the inner sanctum of a temple or a school, and are threatened to stay outside the village.

Discrimination against Dalits still exists in rural areas. Even for everyday matters such as access to hotel, school, temples and water sources, they have to wait patiently till the upper castes' turn is over. These sort of discriminations have largely disappeared



in urban areas but they are camouflaging in rural areas. Some Dalits have successfully assimilated into urban Indian society where caste origins are less obvious and less important in public life. In rural India, however, caste origins are more readily apparent and Dalits often remain excluded from local life, though some qualitative evidences suggest that its severity is fast diminishing.

Based on caste norms of purity and hierarchy, all Hindus in India are segregated into Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. The "untouchables" were outside the fourfold divisions of the caste system and were referred to as "Depressed Classes" or "Harijans" during the colonial period. After centuries of suppression, in the 1930s, Bhim Rao Ambedkar launched a fierce struggle against the established norms and ideology of the caste system and denounced the Manusmriti which legitimated this ideology. His movement interrogated the validity of the caste structure which meant that Hindus in India are socially stratified, and rejected the system whereby an entire section of society is relegated to a slavish, debased existence. Ambedkar opposed terms such as "Depressed Classes" and "Harijans" which were imposed on the untouchable communities. He insisted that the untouchable castes must identify themselves as "Dalits," which signifies both their oppressed state and their rebellion against caste norms and values.

India seems to be one of the world's largest democracies, but ironically being a caste structured society, it is here we find Dalit people living a life of subjugation and insufferable sadness. Therefore, Dalits articulated their dissent against the dominant ideology not only in social and political platforms, but also through literary forms. Dalit literature is a literature of protest, pain and agony. Dalit literature has become an effective tool in expressing their protest against the domination of the caste Hindus. Its beginning can be traced to the undocumented oral folklore and tales of the past decades. Dalit literature as a genre was established in the 1960's and 1970's when a spurt of Dalit writings was published in Marathi and Gujarathi. Nearly two decades later, Tamil Dalit writings marked its identity in the literary map of Tamilnadu.

Like Dalits in India, Blacks too were treated as slaves in different countries. They were oppressed by white people by way of racial segregation. Bases of oppression, such as casteism, racism, feminism etc., may differ, but segregation still exists in different corners of the world. Blacks are still affected by racial segregation which may apply to activities such as eating in a restaurant, drinking from a water fountains, using a public toilet, attending school, going to the movies, or in matters of renting or purchasing of a home. Segregation is generally outlawed, but may exist through social norms. It, often allows, however, close contact in hierarchical citations, such as allowing a person of one race to work as a servant for a member of another race.



In South Africa, the Black people's struggle against the government's law of segregation between the races arose in direct response to the implementation of these laws. Because, Blacks were bound within the boundary of the apartheid system that enacted a nation-wide social policy of 'separate development' with the national party victory in 1948, following the 'colour bar' - discriminatory legislation dating back to the beginning of the Union of South Africa.

In 1992, *Karukku*, the first Dalit autobiography in Tamil, written by a Dalit woman, Bama, was published and was warmly received by readers and critics. Bama's contribution to Dalit literature is significant in terms of use of Dalit vocabulary. Her use of Dalit spoken idiom as her narrative voice gives a distinct resonance to her writings. The author-narrator and the characters use the same non-standardized, spoken Dalit vocabulary. Her writing celebrates Dalit women's subversive strategies to overcome their oppression. Her works lay a lot of emphasis on empowerment of Dalits through education. She uses the confessional, and conversational mode of narration in both *Karukku* and *Sangati*.

At the high-point of the Staffrider writer season, two women writers appeared, whose historical importance is becoming clearer and clearer with the passage of time. Miriam Tlali with her three novels, *Muriel At Metropolitan*, *Amandla* and *Mihloti*, and Lauretta Ngcobo's *Cross of Gold*, have indicated a serious crisis in our literary culture today. *Muriel at Metropolitan* is the first novel of Miriam Tlali, which can be regarded as a fictionalized autobiography and it details her working experiences. Most critics consider *Muriel at Metropolitan* as societal conscious of the system of apartheid. The novel explores the relationship between black and white South Africans, particularly at the working-place. Tlali also mirrors the oppression and exploitation of her people and how the Apartheid regime maintains and applies its race laws. *Muriel at Metropolitan* can be called in some quarters "Protest Fiction," written with the express aim of exposing the evils of the apartheid system and raising the political consciousness and confidence of the black people of South Africa.

*Karukku* begins with the first person narration. The narrator moves from the past to the present in exploring the varying manifold sets of different incidents which have taken place in her life. It is a powerful portrayal of Dalit suppression. *Karukku* portrays the Dalits' life and their exploitation and suppression, as its author believes: "Dalit life is excruciatingly painful, charred by experiences. Experiences that did not manage to find room in literary creations". (6)

The nucleus segment of the novel is the predicament of Bama as a Dalit Christian. Bama's life focuses on the festivities and rituals of her family and community. Bama's *Karukku* is an autobiographical statement of what it is to be both a Dalit and a Christian.



Bama's struggle is aggravated by her existence as a Dalit-Christian and a woman. *Karukku* thus focuses on three essential forces that cut across and are seen in Bama's life, namely caste, gender and religion. "Karukku" means palmyra leaf and Bama finds many congruities between her strife-filled life and the saw-edged Karukku. As Bama herself says in the preface to *Karukku*:

The driving forces that shaped this book are many cutting me like Karukku and making me bleed; unjust social structures that plunged me into ignorance and left me trapped me suffocating; my own desperate urge to break, throw away and destroy these bonds; and when the chains were shattered into fragments, the blood that was split then; all these taken together. (xiii)

*Karukku* eschews the confessional mode and avoids a linear narrative, while presenting a painful, open-ended journey at the end of which many questions are left unanswered. By illustrating and discussing a number of such issues, Bama gives us a clear picture of the caste oppression that Dalit-Christians suffer at the hands not only of upper caste society, but even more so within the Catholic church itself. The narrator has always had an inner urge to engage herself in alleviating the sufferings of the oppressed. She becomes a nun in order to fulfill her aspirations. However, very soon she realizes that catholic institutions are also filled with caste prejudice and hatred. Bama painfully recalls the nuns commenting on the Dalit children. Bama expresses her grief:

The warden-sister of our hostel could not abide low-caste or poor children. She'd get hold of us and scold us for no rhyme or reason. If a girl tended to be on the plump side, she'd get it even more. These people get nothing to eat at home; they come here and they grow fat, she would say publicly. When we returned to the school after the holidays, she would say, look at the cheri children! When they stay here, they eat the fill and look as round as potatoes. But look at the state in which they come back from home just skin and bone. (17-18)

This is about Bama's inner quest for self-discovery and the resultant courage which forces her to move away from the life of a nun to live the life of a Dalit woman. Significantly, in this radical narrative Bama has deliberately avoided the usage of standard written Tamil, consciously choosing, instead, the spoken Tamil of her community; this choice signals Bama's courage in breaking away from the grammatical rules of the dominant language, and, in a larger context, from the rules governing all hegemonic discourses.

The narrative brings to light the trauma of an untouchable in a village which is spatially divided along caste lines. The consciousness of being an untouchable comes



to Bama when she saw an elder in her community holding out a small packet of snacks on a string without touching it and giving it to a Naicker in the village.

She learns of the social structure of caste from her brother. He shows her the right path and advises her that education is the only way to attain equality. Her elder brother opines:

Because we are born into the paraiya jati, we are never given any honour or dignity or respect. We are stripped of all that. But if we study and make progress, we can throw away these indignities. So study with care, learn all you can. If you are always ahead in your lessons, people will come to you of their own accord and attach themselves to you. Work hard and learn. (15)

The incident of an elder in her community holding out a small packet of snacks shows the first seeds of fury and revolt in Bama. The very thought that an important elder of her community should be put to such humiliation infuriates her and the self-questioning begins. Bama begins to wonder, "what did it mean when they call us 'paraya?' Had the name become obscene? But we too are human beings" (13).

*Karukku* flouts the established conventions of writing an autobiography, characterized chiefly by a connected narrative in which the author presents her life-episodes. That illustrates the narrator's journey to maturity and success. In this way Bama illustrates all the atrocities to Dalits from the upper castes, with her own experiences in *Karukku*. In her childhood days, she had bitter experiences at the school. Actually she was not guilty, but the headmaster treated her badly. He scolds her in the name of caste. When she protests, the headmaster tells her: "you the people of low caste like the manner you have ... we can not allow you inside this school stand out side" (16).

Because of this incident Bama is in agony. She has been ashamed and insulted in front of all the children. After that she gets suspended from the school. When she is crying, a teacher advised her to meet the church priest with an apology letter. But the priest said: "After all you are from the cherry, you might have done it. You must have done it" (17). Though she does not commit wrong, she has taken the letter from the priest. At the time of entering the class room, she expresses: "when I entered the class room, the entire class turned around to look at me, and I wanted to shrink into myself as I went and sat on my bench, still weeping." (17) It is very shocking incident and she is confused by listening to the caste name particularly when she is not mature enough to understand it at all. She does not harp on the humiliation. In the very act of remembering the scene she has encoded the mode of resistance that constructs her in opposition to the hegemonic structure of the caste system.



Bama reflects over the words of her grandmother who works as a servant for Naicker families. When she works in the fields, even small children would call her by name, order her and command her ; children do all these things just because they belong to the Naicker family. Bama's grandmother, like all the other labourers, call the little boys as Ayaa, which is another name for *master*. When the pariya or Dalit women ask for drinking water, the Naicker women pour out the water from a height of four feet, while the paraiya women and others drink water with their cupped hands. When Bama tries to protest, her grandmother tells her:

These people are the maharajas who feed us our rice without them, how will we survive? Haven't they been upper-caste from generation to generation, and haven't we been low-caste? Can we change this? (14)

Listening to this Bama feels terrible and concerned about the past generation for their services to the upper castes as slaves and the way they are oppressed in the name of untouchability, casteism, suppression, domination etc.

When Bama was working in a convent, the nuns in the convent spoke insultingly about low caste people. They speak as if they do not even consider low caste people as human beings. About low caste people the nuns' notions are: "Low caste people are all degraded in every way. They think we have no moral discipline nor cleanliness nor culture" (22-23). In this connection, Ajay Kumar observes:

The condition of a paraiya under catholic church is not different from the ill treatment that he or she suffers within Hindu society. Irrespective of their religious affiliations or even financial position the low caste people suffered humiliation from the dominant sections of the society. (13)

Bama wants to question the attitude of the nuns, but in the name of her vow of obedience she is silenced. Stella writes: "she was disturbed and shocked to find that the convent and the church are completely deviated from the doctrines they preached" (95).

While discussing African American autobiographies, Selwyn Cudjoe writes, "A public rather than a private gesture 'me-ism' gives way to 'our-ism' and superficial concerns about 'individual subject' usually give way to 'the collection subjection' of the group" (280). This is evident in Bama's narrative, which does not name the village, school or catholic order. She becomes a nun. Nayar argues that *Karukku* is more of a testimony than an individual's "life-writing" (83-100). The speaking of the subaltern gives voice to the lived experiences of herself which is representative of the entire community. As a testimony, *Karukku* thus becomes a collective autobiography of Tamil Dalit-Christian communities.



Miriam Tlali (1933, Johannesburg) is the first black woman in South Africa to publish a novel. Her works seem to be semi-autobiographical. The novel taken for this scrutiny is *Muriel at Metropolitan* (1975). It touches upon a raw nerve of the apartheid system in South Africa. Moreover, it explores the relationship between black and white South African, particularly in the working place. Like Bama, Tlali also mirrors the oppression and exploitation of her people. *Muriel at Metropolitan*, no doubt, exposes the cruelty of the apartheid system and also raises the political consciousness and confidence to the black people of South Africa. Tlali addresses:

In South Africa, the aspirant African female writer has still to struggle to remove the cobwebs of tradition, custom, and the colonial mentality...she has to figure out for herself how to circumvent all male chauvinists who are likely to lash out at her as if she were a challenging force encroaching and violating the sanctity of their exclusive domain. (Tlali 1984:26)

Tlali is not only for women and female writers in South Africa, but also for all marginalized people around the world. Because the bases of marginalization depend on casteism, racism, feminism etc., their primary goal is to get freedom from political, economical, and social discrimination. Tlali's aims are to break out of the traumatic treatment marginalized people suffer at the hands of the dominated communities in the world. The aim of marginalized literature is to recognize their own cruel experiences and the driving quest for integrity and identity. Bama in India and Miriam Tlali in South Africa hail from oppressed communities, whose narrative form of exposition can be composed in 'Vernacular' and 'Protest Fiction' rather than in traditionalism and conventionalism.

Tlali herself has stated in numerous interviews that her work is a deliberate tool of the art of exposition. She has therefore shown very little respect for conventional forms of literary projection. In a paper reading session at Amsterdam before the Committee Against Censorship, she makes her position clear in defense of her works against protest fiction critics and the Censorship Board. She defiantly charges:

To the philistines, the banners of Books, the critics...we black South African writers who are faced with the task of conscientizing our people and ourselves are the relevant audience. We are not going to write in order to qualify into your definition of what you describe as "true art" Our main objective is not to receive ballyhoo comments on our works. What is more important is that we should be allowed to reach our audience. Our duty is to write for our people and about them. (199)

This indicates how far she identifies with her people's liberation rather than an imaginary world and also shows her narrative strategies of resistance against the



apartheid system.

*Muriel at Metropolitan* details her daily working experiences in a furniture and electronics store. The protagonist of the novel, Muriel, finds herself exposed to an environment which actually becomes a microcosm of life in South Africa. Relationships between the black and white people are explored in an insightful manner. Muriel's white colleagues behave in a typical manner that are frequently displayed in their attitudes of themselves as superior and downgrading blacks as inferior. Blacks are portrayed as the oppressed and the exploited. Her portrayal of the sensitiveness and insecurity of the police personnel of the state is shocking. For instance, Muriel was late for working one morning because she had to appear before the security branch at a police station. Muriel's niece had applied for a permit to visit her in South Africa. The hawk-eyed security branch had to know the reason for her visit because she might pose a threat to the security of the country. The following extract is a conversation between Muriel and a white employee at metropolitan:

Where is she from? [The White Women asked]

From Botswana. [Muriel replied]

Where?

Bechuanaland

Why didn't you say so them? What did you call it... Bo-What?

Botswana. It is not called Bechuanaland any more now.

Oh is that all, you were visited by the security police several time to say you know who your sister's daughter is. It sounds childish to me. What for?

Didn't you ask? I was told it was for security reason. Our security might be threatened by her visit or that of unknown persons, I understand that what do you mean our security, who's our? The security of all of us, everybody in this Republic that's why I've got to keep Mr. Bloch waiting and everybody else.

And I thought to myself, to think that my poor little niece is not even aware that she is so important that her innocent request to pay me a visit can be regarded as a threat to the security of the great republic of South Africa. (165)

It is a clear documentation of the South African reality prior to 1994. Muriel's white colleague exhibits ignorance, naively bordering on stupidity and a superiority complex. In her rendering of the black experience, Tlali exposes and indicts the South African social system. Throughout the novel Muriel is proud to show that she is politically well-informed and not afraid to forcefully voice her opinions on racial issues. For example, speaking her mind about the system of migratory labour she states:



It is a system based on cheap labour, which undermines all law of morality and decency, making nonsense of the concept of the family unit. On it the mining industry in the Republic of South Africa has flourished. To my mind, it is comparable only with the slave trade. (60-61)

She openly declares her own political opinion when talking with her white co-workers, Mrs. Kuhn and Mrs. Stein. Central to our discussion here is a black woman's courage within this oppressive context to openly declare her political stance in the face of her enemies:

I replied, 'what you say about people being free to move and free to say what they like is perhaps true of the white but not of the blacks. When I want to visit a relation of mine in another location, I must first obtain permission from the superintendent of that location. Otherwise if the police find me there and discover that I do not live there, I can be arrested. As an African, I can be asked to produce my pass at any time and anywhere and I can be searched; also my house can be searched at any time of the day or night. We are not free to move. Thousands are arrested every month for offences involving movement. How many times have we sent someone out to the police stations to pay a fine and plead for the release of our own black workers here?

And about speech - the black are not free to say what they feel. How can they? They may not hold political meetings. All political organizations have been banned. The Blacks are voiceless.' Mrs. Stein scoffed, 'what you mean, voiceless?' They have no vote. They may not choose anyone to represent them in a parliament, which makes law for them.' (178)

The above extract highlights the social maladies of Blacks in South Africa. In Republic of South Africa, Blacks were not allowed to visit other locations within the same country, apart from their own living place, without permission of the concerned superintendent. Otherwise they would be arrested. Even though Blacks were voiceless and adversely affected by political deprivation, the literary projection shows the narrative strategies of resistance against the racial discrimination under the apartheid system.

The novel, *Muriel at Metropolitan*, is an instance of an interactive style. Racial hegemony is identified and revealed as performative, and thereby illegitimated. Describing an act typifying, in the text, the racial attitudes of representatives of the white race towards those of the non-white race, "you respect a 'white' person because he is a fellow human being and what do you get? /you always get brushed off" (62). It indicates a citational practice, a social practice, re-enacted certainly in countless



variations, but with one clear meaning: the reiteration of a hegemonic norm anchored on a racial signifier. Here it refers specifically to social differentiations with economic and political implications too.

Finally, Muriel rids herself of the guilt of having collaborated in her own enslavement. She does not wait for her freedom to be given to her; she takes it. In doing so she triumphs over the intentions of the apartheid system; she refuses to have her life marginalized and she takes her fate into her own hands. Muriel's self-awareness is a triumph for her human dignity because she finally determines to define herself rather than be defined by other forces. This type of ending to the novel is a reflection of Black consciousness thought. Black consciousness teaches that blacks, in order to rid themselves of the shackles of apartheid, must of necessity, first begin to be inward-looking rather than aspire to be integrated into white society. Therefore Black consciousness can be said to have its roots in the black intellectuals' desire to rid themselves of white liberal tendencies.

Early reviewers like Lionel Abrahams, William Pretorius, and Jane Mkhonza do not mention Muriel's resistance to patriarchal values. Instead, they read the novel as focusing exclusively on race relations. However, Pretorius also aptly notes a theme that indicates "the breakdown of order implicit in the tribal system, and ... the formation of a new and homogenous society" (23). Abrahams perceptively discerns "the relative novelty of the depictions of everyday life and 'ordinary' life experiences in Muriel, traits that differ from the dominant tradition" (12-13). Randall claims that "Tlali's manuscript consisted of a large ring binder crammed with disjointed writing including verses and prayers. It was clear, however, that embedded in this mass of material was an interesting and original narrative" (9).

Thus, Tlali boldly upholds her political opinions and comments on the apartheid system in her writings. But her intention in literary projection is not fully successful because her voice gets muted in the form of editing of her original manuscript. For this harsh editing, according to Randall, "Tlali attacked the [Ravan] press on racial grounds and accused it of manipulating her works" (9). So while commenting of this editing, Tlali defiantly says:

I wouldn't call it edited, except that they took out certain portions. They chopped it up... they actually removed chapters, paragraphs and so on, that was painful, because it didn't have then all the things that I wanted to sort out ... I knew that the African readers here in South Africa would not be able to get those [Political] comments anywhere. (interview II, 1-2)

By comparing the edited versions of Muriel to Tlali's original typescript of the novel editing consisted mainly of an exclusion of the political, didactic material, which



may not have agreed with the hegemonic literary conventions. Moreover, several epigraphic verses, shown to evoke irony were excluded. Thus, Tlali's voice is muted and its ironic resistance of both apartheid and patriarchy are less pronounced than she intended.

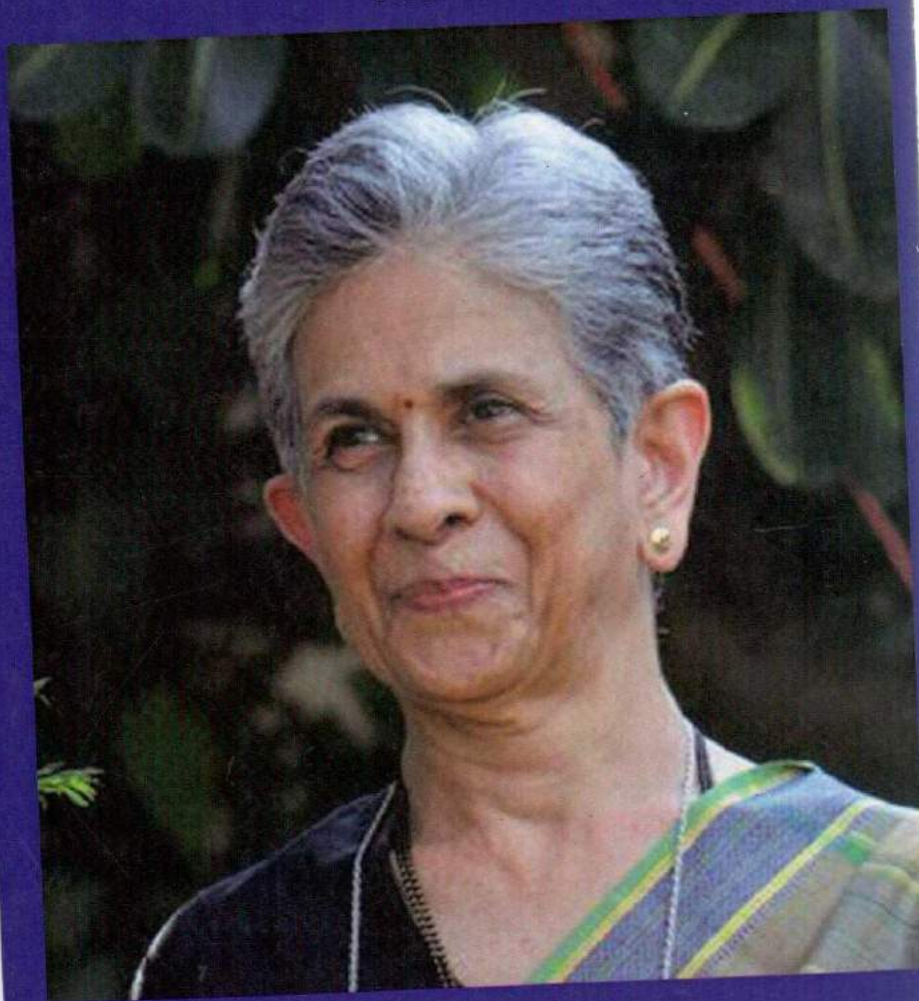
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# *Shashi Deshpande*

The Voice of the Voiceless



Dr. K. Ravichandran





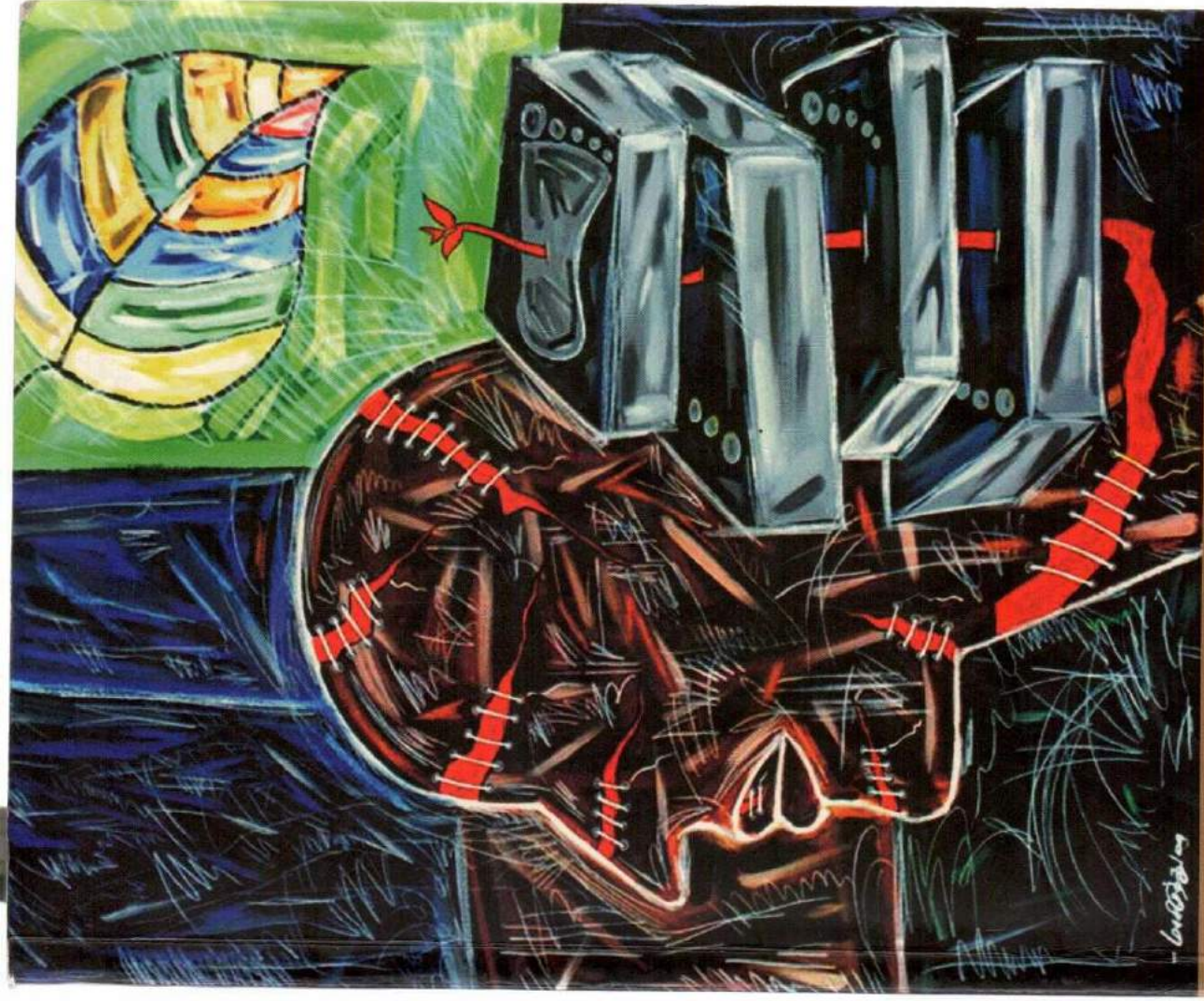
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This book Shashi Deshpande: The Voice of the Voiceless is a strenuous attempt to deal with the problems faced by the middle class educated career women in the male ordained society.

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# Writing as Resistance: Discourses on Dalit Literature

Editors:  
T. Marx & Sundara Babu N.



Ambedkar, two towering personalities in Dalit history, are the first to appropriate the word in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to describe the extreme oppression of untouchables.

The term "Dalit Literature" was first used in 1958, at the first Dalit literature conference in Bombay. However, as an identity marker, Dalit came into prominence in 1972 when a group of Marathi writer-activists founded an organization called the Dalit Panthers. Dalit is a political identity as opposed to a caste name. It expresses Dalits' knowledge of themselves as oppressed people and signifies their resolve to demand liberation through a revolutionary transformation of the system that oppressed them. Bishop A.C. Lal in his address at the Dalit solidarity in 1995 Conference opines: "The word Dalit is a beautiful word, because it transcends narrow rational and sectarian frontiers. It is a beautiful word because it embraces the sufferings, frustrations, expectations and groaning of the entire cosmos" (xiii). Arjun Dangle, a leading Dalit writer and founder of the Dalit literary movement says:

*Dalit is not a caste but a realization and is related to the experiences; joys and sorrows, and struggles of those in the lowest stratum of society. It matures with sociological point of view and is related to the principles of negativity, rebellion and loyalty to science, thus finally ending as revolutionary. (p65)*

Valmiki identifies himself with other Dalit writers in the historic struggle to dismantle the caste system which is responsible for their untouchable status and they are committed to rebuild a society on the principles of human dignity, equality, and respect. In this regard the Marathi playwright Prabhakar Mande observes:

*The event of the development of Dalit Literature is not just a literary event. Therefore, this literature should not be viewed only from a literary perspective. Unless this literary chain of events is seen from a sociological perspective against the entire background of the changes happening in society, its significance will not be grasped. (Press Meet)*

Ambedkar himself declares that the main cause which is responsible for the fate of the untouchables is the Hindu religion and its teachings. While in Mumbai, Valmiki is taken to be a

## The Traumatic Conflagrations of Apartheid in Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan*: An Interrogative Discourse

— K. Ravichandran

Omprakash Valmiki finds a place of pride in the annals of modern creative Dalit writings. He is a consummate artist with social commitment and vision. *Joothan*, an avant-garde autobiography perspicuously chronicles the fate of the underprivileged as well as the personal sufferings and pain of Omprakash Valmiki. Writing his life story of being born in the "Chuhra" caste and growing up Barla in northern India, Valmiki exposes the harsh realities, hypocrisy, and contradictions of the caste-ridden society that thick walls of denial have shut out. With marked contrast, *Joothan* is an authentic venture of Dalit writing that is featured with an ideology, an agenda, and a literary aesthetics. It is a profound resonance of the newly emerging school of writing that challenges the mainstream literature by its authenticity with a revolutionary voice of equality and justice.

This paper aims at making a threadbare analysis of Valmiki's unique literary device of exploiting the interrogatory rhetoric in his world acclaimed maiden venture *Joothan*. Valmiki has exploited this technique to narrate Dalits' life which is excruciatingly painful, charred by painful experiences caused by the callousness of the so called orthodox caste-Hindus who are extremely cruel, inhuman, and compassionless toward Dalits. In order to ventilate his accumulated humiliations, Valmiki finds a sigh of relief through *Joothan* releasing all those miseries, torments, neglects, and admonitions that were confronted by Valmiki from childhood to adulthood. He considers the interrogatory rhetoric as the fittest medium to question, with powerful and strong emotions and contempt, the casteist society and bureaucrats for not having bothered about the heinous act of untouchability for centuries and even after the independence.

The term "Dalit" is root in the Sanskrit "Dal" which means to crack open, split, crush, grind etc. Jyotirao Phule and B.R.



Brahmin by a Maharashtra Brahmin family. Eventually, when the Brahmin family smells his caste name "Chuhras", they start neglecting him. He does not want to hide his Dalit identity. Valmiki points out the daily dilemmas that Dalits face in a caste-ridden society leave behind the stigmas attached to it. In *joothan*, Valmiki draws attention to the bitterness and ambivalence that Dalits feel when they must use the SC identity in order to be considered for jobs reserved for them in contempt.

The non-Dalit writers, who deal with the problems of caste and its bias in the contemporary Indian literature, do not know the exact pain and miseries of Dalits. What they write remains superficial, born out of sympathy but not out of desire for change or repentance. Dalit writers claim that Dalit literature can be written only by Dalits. They have decided to depend on their own value judgments. According to Limbale:

*The standard of a work of literature depends on how much and in what way an artist's ideas embedded in the work affect the reader.... That work of Dalit literature will be recognized as beautiful, and, therefore good which causes the greatest awakening of Dalit Consciousness in the reader. (p117)*

Autobiography is considered to be the best and a favorite genre of Dalit writers who choose the genre to emphasize their authentic life experiences. But mainstream critics argue that Dalit autobiographies are unstructured, and the artless outpourings of Dalit writers' unmediated experiences. Valmiki argues with a clever defence:

*Dalit autobiography is not just a remembering of things past but a shaping and structuring of them in such a way as to help, understand one's life and the social order that shaped it, on the one hand, and to arouse a passion for change in the Dalit reader on the other. (Joothan, xxxv).*

Another credo of Dalit writing is the rejection of Hindu mythology as anti-Dalit and Brahminical. At one point in the autobiography, Valmiki uses the analogy of the goddess "Durga" to describe his mother's anger when she throws away the basketful of "joothan" after the higher-caste character

Sukhadev Singh Tyagi insults her. He says that he has used the analogy, Durga, because he finds no other equivalent that would appropriately describe his mother's heroic action and anger.

The Hindi word "joothan" literally means food left on a plate, usually destined for the garbage pail in a middle class urban home. However, such food would be characterized "joothan" only if someone else were to eat it. Therefore, the title encapsulates the pain, humiliation, and poverty of Valmiki's community which not only had to rely on *Joothan* but also relished it. He gives a detailed description of collecting, preserving, and eating *joothan*. His memories of being assigned to guard the drying *joothan* from crows and chickens and of his relishing the dried and reprocessed *joothan* burned him with renewed pain and humiliation many years later. Both Ambedkar and Gandhi advised Dalits not to accept *joothan*. Especially, Ambedkar, an indefatigable documenter of atrocities against Dalits shows how the high caste villager could not tolerate the decision of Dalits to no longer accept *joothan* and threatened Dalits with violence if they refused it. Valmiki has thus recovered a word from the painful past of Dalit history, and it resonates with multiple ironies.

In *Joothan* Valmiki describes a series of violent encounters with the oppressors. His voice acquires a bitterly ironic tone when he addresses those who deny these experiences. In fact one distinctive aspect of *Joothan* is its interrogative discourse. The text is full of questions that demand answers: "Why didn't an epic poet ever write a word about our lives? Why are Hindus so cruel, so heartless against Dalits? (p26). Such interrogatory rhetoric which brings out the contradictions in the dominant society's ideology and behaviour, reminds one of Ambedkar's fiery writing and speeches which are peppered with witty, pungent and harsh questions:

*I asked them (our Hindu friends), you take milk from the cows and buffaloes and when they are dead you expect us to remove the dead bodies, why? If you carry the dead bodies of your mothers to cremate, why do you not carry the dead bodies of your 'mother cows' yourself? (p143).*

The timbre of his voice is exhortatory. It demands answers and points out contradictions. The strong image of the teacher that Valmiki saw in his school has remained indelibly imprinted



on his memory. Particularly his Headmaster Kaliram called him to his room and questioned:

*Abey, what is your name? I replied 'Omprakash'. I answered slowly and fearfully... "chuhre ka?" All right. See that teak tree there. Go climb that tree, break some twigs and make a broom. And sweep the whole school clean as a mirror. It is after all your family occupation (p5)*

Obedying the headmaster's strict orders, Valmiki cleaned all the rooms and verandas. Then the headmaster assigned him to clean the playground. When he was cleaning the ground, his mouth was covered with dust and as a result he went into a state of giddiness. The other children in his class were studying whereas he was assigned the work of sweeping the whole day even without allowing him to drink water. It continued for two days. On the third day while he was sitting in his class quietly, he heard the headmaster's loud thundering voice that echoed in the entire campus. The headmaster was asking for Valmiki's whereabouts. Immediately a high caste Tyagi boy told where he was. Then:

*The headmaster pounced on my neck. The pressure of his fingers was increasing. As a wolf grabs a lamb by the neck, he dragged me out of the class and threw me on the ground. He screamed: go sweep the whole playground otherwise I will shove chili's up your ass and throw you out of the school.(p6)*

The malnourished Valmiki was unable to bear the pain and started weeping. With pain and tears, Valmiki told everything to his father Munshifir. After hearing this horrible treatment, his father went to the school and he began to scream, "Who is that teacher? That progeny of Dronacharya, who forces my son to sweep? Then he confronted the headmaster with courage and fortitude. Again the teacher roared: "take him away from here. The Chuhra wants him educated. Go, go—otherwise I will have your bones broken" (p7). Then his father challenged the headmaster with a vow that he would retaliate soon. His father had faith that the Tyagis of the village would chastise Master Kalinath for his behavior. But what happened was the exact opposite. On whatever door he knocked, the answer was:

*What is the point of sending him to school? Or when has a crow become a swan? Or, you illiterate boorish people, what do you know? Hey, if he asked a Chuhra's progeny to sweep, what is the big deal in that? Or he only got him to sweep; did not ask for his thumb in the 'gurudakshina' like Dronacharya. (p7)*

Such incidents of humiliation and sufferings of childhood start flashing at Valmiki's memories again. One such incident was Sukhdev Singh Tyagi's daughter's wedding feast. Valmiki's mother was sitting outside the door with a basket for collecting *joothan*. Valmiki as well as his sister Maya also accompanied his mother. When all the people had left after the feast, his mother requested Sukhdev Singh to put something on a leaf plate for her children. In turn, Sukhdev pointed at a basket full of dirty leaf plates and said: "you are taking a basketful of *joothan* and on top of which you want food for your children? Don't forget your place Churhi. Pick up your basket and get going" (p12).

The words of Sukhdev Singh Tyagi penetrated his breast like a knife. It was the first time that he saw his mother get so angry. After throwing away the basketful of *joothan*, his mother retaliated: "Pick it up and put it inside your house. Feed it to the bridegroom's guests tomorrow morning" (p12). Sukhdev Singh pounced to hit her, but his mother confronted him like a lioness. Her act of defiance is an example of rebellion to the child Valmiki. That is why he has dedicated this book to his heroic parents who desired better for their child and fought for his safety and growth with tremendous courage. His father's ambitions for his son are evident in the nickname that he gave him, Munshiji, which means an officer. He pays his debt by giving voice to the indignities suffered by his parents and other Dalits.

Valmiki speculates that caste pride is behind the centuries old custom. The deep chasm that divides the society is made even deeper by this custom, a conspiracy to trap the lower castes in the whirlpool of inferiority. One such humiliating custom is taking "salaam." As soon as the marriage is over, not just bridegrooms but the brides too often have to endure terrible humiliation. When an illiterate girl from a poor family comes to live among strangers, she would already be in a state of panic



Further when she accompanies the bridegroom for taking door-to-door for "salaam", she would be totally wretched and humiliated by the caste Hindus in the street. Similarly in the case of Valmiki when he accompanied his newly wedded cousin for salaam, he received a derogatory comment from a high caste woman: "the Chuhra's progeny also study in the school? she said in surprise. "However much you study, you will still remain a chuhra" (p36).

Valmiki is reminded of the exploitation of the poor that took place in his native place. After extracting work from poor labourers, the upper castes used to deny wages for work in their fields. It was a sheer exploitation of the *Basti* people. When the young men of the *basti* refused to work without wages, the caste Hindus filed a fabricated case against the poor people of his village. The police lathicharged and arrested the innocent poor for no reason. They could not think of what else they could do but they cried. No one in the "*basti*" had the courage to ask the head constable why these people were being beaten "what crime had they committed? (45). Valmiki is unable to forget those bitter memories: "They flash in my mind like lightning every now and then. Why it is a crime to ask to be paid for one's labour? (45). In fact they have been suppressing and oppressing the weaker sections of the society for thousands of years.

Valmiki is in great despair and disgusted with the Hindu religion. He starts hating to be a Hindu because he finds it not humane. Whether Dalits are Hindu remains a burning questions to him also. The chuhras worship their own gods and goddesses whose names are not to be found either in the Vedas or Puranas. The rituals and methods of worship are also different. At a mammoth meeting in 1935, Ambedkar had declared that although he was born a Hindu, he was not going to die as one. True to his word, he embraced Buddhism on October 14, 1956 along with one million of his followers, just three months before his death. Valmiki interrogates himself:

*If I really were a Hindu, would the Hindus hate me so much? Or discriminate against me? Or try to fill me up with cast inferiority over the smallest things? I have seen and suffered the cruelty of Hindus since childhood. Why does caste superiority and cast pride attack only the*

*weak? Why are Hindus so cruel, so heartless against Dalits? (p48)*

Valmiki remembers a horrific and merciless incident that took place in Barla Inter College, Barla. He along with his nephew Surjan Singh confronted Phool Singh Tyagi, the Physical education teacher who is hot-tempered and foul-tongued. He terrorizes the students the moment he enters the class. One day, a loud burst of collective laughter erupted when he called Ram Singh "Kala Daroga." This made Phool Singh even more irritated. Quite surprisingly, he kicked and slapped Surjan Singh mercilessly. Surjan Singh fell to the ground and Phool Singh kicked and belted him non stop. Moreover a filthy comment he made that day etched in Valmiki's mind like a scratch on glass: "*Abey salah*, progeny of a Chuhra, let me know when you die, you think you are a hero. Today, I will be at you till there is nothing left" (p56). Still Valmiki does not forget that inhuman caste atrocities by a caste Hindu teacher. He interrogates; "If laughing was a crime, we had all laughed. Then why was only Surjan Singh punished? How could a teacher beat his pupil so heartlessly?" (p57).

Thus, Dalits in India have to live in this terror filled environment. Valmiki feels proud of himself to write about the travails of the ordinary people than to sing about the glories of the past. He ponders over an incident that took place in Malkapur that epitomized the narrow-mindedness of the caste Hindus. A Marathi textbook meant for class seven included a lesson on Ambedkar. All the students ripped out the lesson on the orders of a Brahmin teacher. Dalit activists staged a protest demanding the arrest of the Brahmin teacher but the police were indifferent. The Board of Education took no disciplinary action against the teacher. This incident became a symbol of Dalits humiliation and it is a great insult to the maker of the Indian Constitution.

The so-called mainstream literary persons see Dalit writers as inferior species or evil castrators of the society. Kureishi is a gregarious connoisseur of literature. Valmiki met him at a poetry reading session in a conference. The moment he met him, Kureishi asked his caste. The moment he finds out Valmiki's caste as "Chuhra," he feels nauseous and Kureishi said with bitterness, "Valmiki, when are you going to come out of that



shell of yours?" (p134). Then the commandant became uneasy. Suddenly all conversation stopped. After that day he even stopped saying hello to him.

According to Valmiki, the Dalits who have become educated face a terrible crisis – the crisis of identity. Dalits want to assimilate with the mainstream society, but the caste Hindus prevent them from doing so. They discriminate against Dalits. They think of them as inferior beings. They cast doubts on their intelligence, their ability, their performance. They use all kinds of nefarious means to attack Dalits. Dalits find easier to runaway from the problem. But the truth is that change would come about through struggle and engagement. When Valmiki encounters many a pejorative comments about his surname, his friends argue "when an untouchable uses his caste name as his surname with a feeling of self assertion, he is being very brave" (p143). One among them has ripped this argument to pieces: "what is so brave about that?... after all he is a Chuhra! his surname spares us the hassle of asking what his caste is" (p143).

During a train journey, Valmiki and his wife faced the heinous act of untouchability from a prosperous caste Hindu's family who journeyed in the same compartment. They start talking about the beauty of Rajasthan and its men and matters. At the juncture of their conversation, the caste-Hindu woman asked Valmiki's wife: "What is your caste?" (p153). Then Valmiki replied, "Bhangi – untouchable". As soon as they heard the word "Bhangi", they lapsed into total silence. The two families did not indulge in conversation till the journey ended. The journey became very painful to Valmiki and his wife. Right from his childhood Valmiki had been facing a lot of pricking like this. He interrogates, "what historical reasons lie behind this hatred and malice?" (p153). Caste is a very important element of Indian society. As soon as a person is born, caste determines his or her destiny:

*Being born is not in the control of a person. If it were in one's control, then why would I have been born in Bhangi' household? Valmiki has asked many scholars! Why Savarnas hate Dalits and Sudras, the lower castes so much.... the Hindus who worship trees and plants, beasts and birds, why are they so intolerant of Dalits?...*

*poverty, illiteracy, broken lives, the pain of standing outside the door, how would the civilized Savarna' Hindu know it? Why is my caste my only identity? (p154).*

Today caste remains a pre-eminent factor in social life. As long as people do not know that you are a Dalit, things are fine. The moment they find out your caste, everything changes. Valmiki opines:

*When caste is the basis of respect and merit important for social superiority, this battle cannot be won in a day. We need an ongoing struggle and a consciousness of struggle, a consciousness that brings revolutionary change both in the outside world and in our hearts, a consciousness that leads the process of social change. (p152)*

Dalits are emerging as an indispensable force in India today. They are spread over the entire country, speak many languages, and belong to many religions. Despite the fact that they are playing a decisive role in shaping India's future, Dalits continue to face certain problems in the name of caste. The Dalit scholar Bhagwan Das comprehends the livelihoods of Dalit today:

*Land-holding upper caste people in villages do not allow the Dalits to wear decent clothes, cast votes freely, ride on a horse in marriage procession, draw water from a public well, sit on a cot while an upper caste man is standing. In cities, a student belonging to the Scheduled Caste is purposely given low marks; an officer is prejudged as incompetent and inefficient just because of his birth in an untouchable caste. A professor, a lawyer, a doctor, an architect born in an untouchable family is considered inefficient and inferior without even seeing his performance. A patient refuses to be treated by a Scheduled Caste doctor and a house-owner refuses to let a vacant house to him for fear of pollution. A superior gives bad reports to a Dalit subordinate in order to obstruct his promotion. In everyday talk in canteens, buses, trains and airplanes, offices and establishments, derogatory remarks are passed. Universities and colleges abusing the power and the authority given to autonomous bodies close the doors of progress to*



In fact, Valmiki proves his mettle as one of the vibrant Dalit voices. It is evident from his avant-garde autobiography *Joothan* that chronicles the fractured psyche of his personhood as well as the collective Dalithood. The fracture is yet to heal. Above all, he is meticulous enough in narrating the wounded episodes through a strong narrative discourse interrogatory rhetoric. *Joothan* is a multivalent poly-vocal text, healing temporarily the fractured self through narrating Dalit history as well as providing a frank criticism of his own people. Thus, *Joothan* confronts its readers with difficult interrogations about their own humanity and invites them to join in the universal project of human liberation to castigate the traumatic conflagrations of Dalits.

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## The Plight of the Underdog as Presented in Fiction: A Continuation Study of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and Romen Basu's *Outcast*

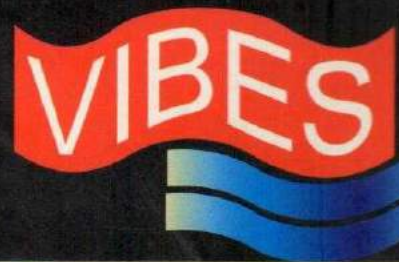
— K. Seban

Novels do not present mere stories. In fact, a novel tends to look at the people in the society. Generally novelists focus on the tensions between individuals and the society. The dominant social structure and traditional study of literature concentrated only on presenting the high class society. In the modern context literature reinforces ideology and questions the values of society. Focus in literature has shifted perhaps towards the individual who is in some way or other, considered as odd within the society. It is obvious that some novelists are moralists; they examine the relationship between the individual and the society and put forward their ideas to reform the society. Novels convey some message to the readers. It would be apt to point out Dickens, who wrote with a social purpose to reform society. Such an attitude prevails even among modern writers to have a point of view and a purpose in their writings.

A story presents all the complicating facts that need to be taken into account. This could be recognized with the complex reality of a character in the story. The protagonist will be the victim and the sufferings are considered universal. A Dalit writer produces a work of art influenced by society and personal experience. This could be judged on the basis of his presentation. But a non Dalit writer who tries to present the plight of the underdogs also tries to suggest that society is in such a bad state that individuals are bound to feel alienated. However, the productive critical method of creating a sense of marginalization could be cleverly pointed out, but a subtle indication conveys the meaning of the plight. D. H. Lawrence in his essay *Why the novel matters* presupposes that, "In life, there is right and wrong, good and bad all the time. But what is



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## CV FOCUS

*Who visits these Mall Marts- the Great Indian Middle Class!  
Who invests in Mall Marts- "The Conduit Class"! Who is  
denied implied entry in the Mall Marts- the Majority Class of  
Bharat! The democratic India elects by majority our  
Parliamentarians, who oppose vociferously such moves, but  
relent reluctantly before the emerging "Conduit Class" of  
India. Nobody knows the tuck, no one can guess the tuck,  
but everyone is aware of the cut. Anyhow, We, the People of  
India are proud to have Ultra Rich Class of 7, 730 persons,  
who are our repository of wealth in billions; who have been  
allowed to be our masters in trade, industry, governance,  
now jostling to acquire our lands to reap rich harvest after  
raising super structures and trading in land-blocks. 9*

**- Editorial**

Indian Rationalist School of thought  
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# Indian Rationalist School of thought



## A Research Article

# HUMAN IDENTITY VS CULTURAL IDENTITY: A RE-READING OF ERNEST J. GAINES' "A LESSON BEFORE DYING"

C. Jayapal and DR. K. Ravichandran

Ernest J. Gaines is one of the most significant southern writers in the midst of twentieth Century. Gaines' fictional works are based on the African American culture. His styles generally expose the traditions of rural southern Louisiana, despite living most of his adulthood elsewhere. The best works of Gaines' critically acclaimed novels are, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1971) and *A Lesson Before Dying* (1993). Gaines has brought a new awareness of African American contributions to the history and culture of Southern America. Gaines has typically written first person narratives that are about struggles and suffering of humble black protagonists who have a strong attachment to the American south land. Many critics observed the originality of Gaines' prose style that he has enriched from contemporary literary trends as the best and the black art movements.

His eighth work of Ernest J. Gaines's *A Lesson Before Dying*, explores the relationship between human identity in black traditional culture. The primary theme of his fiction especially in *A Lesson Before Dying* is the underlying community attitudes, values and beliefs which pave the way to trace and discover the individual identity of the black. As his fiction deals with the difficulties of black American in the South, Gaines has considered an extra level of significance, like the story of communal bond, which is the characteristic of southern black folk culture.

In this story, a real picture is portrayed on how the black culture has been dominated by the white culture with its emphasis on community defined values and behavior. The western cultural individualism is mainly playing the role of a catalyst to help the suffered black people in the demise of the black folk world view. In such cultural climate they act and find traditional solution no longer viable. Keith E. Byerman describes it as:

"Like the older writer, they see the threat that a white system of oppression in its economic, political, and cultural manifestations, poses for blacks. Also like him, they see that the black folk culture provides ways to resist that threat to a large extent Ernest J. Gaines and McPherson, like Ellison, structure their narrations by moving characters between the black and white worlds. These characters, often narrators, thus embody the dialectic that pushes the narrative forward". (41-42).

Gaines's *A Lesson Before Dying* is particularly an illustration of the conflict between community perspective and individual needs. The action of the story revolves around two young black men. The conflict in this novel further illustrates about importance of the development of the social consciousness of the black, Jefferson. Grant Wiggins, who is a black school teacher, tries to teach identity to Jefferson, a non-educated black labor who has been sent to death for a charge of murder which he didn't commit.

"Gentlemen of Jury, look at him, do you see a medium of intelligence? Do you see any one have plan a murder... a cornered animal to strike quickly out of fear, but to plan?... I would as soon as put a hog in the electric chair as this". (7-8).

The novel exposes education, law, and religion as they all have a part of social role, which produces human dignity and self-

respect. Jefferson feels that he has' experienced a change in identity by the end of the novel. He recognized this change through the decoding of black identity and black myths.

Gaines' *A Lesson Before Dying* is different in that it focuses on this issue in a most divert way; the problem Grant and Jefferson are facing is of redefining Jefferson, from his identity given to him by the dominant culture, i.e. hog to a human of new identity. The task before Jefferson and Grant take on enormous significance. Jefferson is a 'hog' because the socially dominate system of inscription, white supremacist patriarchy, deems him so. In effect, for an act of redefinition on Jefferson and Grant's part to have any lifelong impact, the totality of systematic networks of authorization must be broken.

Jefferson's symbolic central character is important in the novel and Grant is the narrative voice, and he is the person having primary responsibility of transforming Jefferson's status to that as "man". Grant makes it clear that even he as a black man, who has become college educated, cannot express himself in the way he wishes in his community. He finds his own freedom extremely limited. He seems the future of his students to be lacking in any advancement. He realizes that all works should have in future:

"And I thought to myself, what am I doing? Reaching them all? They are doing exactly what the old men did earlier. They are fifty years younger, may be more but doing the same thing, those old never attended school a day in their lives. Is it just a vicious circle? Am I doing anything?" (62).

Grant does his role as a teacher who accepts no promise in producing change in others; he finds that he must work for Blacks to change the status of the dominant white supremacy. Grant does the same work and teaches the same ideas that his own teacher Mathew Antoine, had done a generation earlier. And Grant shares bad feelings of Mr. Antoine's as well: "it doesn't matter anymore; he said 'Just do the best you can. But it won't matter'" (66)

Grant realizes that the powerlessness of Jefferson is not so different like him, while teaching and confiding structure of White's law and education system itself. The school house is a sort of detention camp in which Grant is allowed to teach only the ideology that will keep himself and his Black community powerless. Grant even sees something hold in the way of Dr. Joseph inspects the school children:

"And besides looking at hands, now he began inspecting teeth, open wide, say"ahhh"-and he would have the poor children spreading out their lips as far as they could while he peered into their mouths at the university I had read about slave masters who had done the same when buying new slaves..."(56)

Gaines emphasizes the complete punishing function of white and discovers the many "structure" select for the voice of white patriarchy. Pichot and the town's male-controlled elite often take refuge in Pichot's library, a structure designed to surround one with the white, racist ideology. The Sheriff is often behind his desk at the prison, and the groups of white men who declare Jefferson as a murderer are found within the confines of the courtroom. Even Dr.



Joseph is secure in his confining structure—the school house. The connection is clear; these white men are so powerful not simply because they are positioned in such architectural structures. But their power is supported by the broad structures that they all, in return, uphold and enforce.

Marx termed it as 'False Consciousness', "False Consciousness' or ideology is a mode of misrecognizing the true nature of our material lives and social roles when we consume a cultural artifact. It is a system of ideas, values, beliefs that we live by, through which we perceive the world" (Nayar 130). These broad structures are —of ideology, law, and ultimately language itself— are literally and symbolically structure designed to preserve white form of power. This structure is the display of power structure that Foucault refers to when he speaks of broad entirety. For black members of this southern community, such structures of white patriarchy are there to disempower, to criminal, to jail, and to control.

The stress that Gaines puts forth in *A Lesson Before Dying* is one similar to the revolutionary theory of Eagleton's; that producing change is ultimately a stylistic act. If one's goal is to change identity, one must challenge the dominant broad formation themselves. Only with such a foundational change can hogs be redefined. In challenging the white power structure, Grant does know part of what he and Jefferson have to do:

"Do you know what myth is, Jefferson?" ask him, 'a myth is an old lie that people believe in, white people believed that they're better than anyone else on earth and that's a myth. The last thing they ever want is to see a black man stand, and to show that common humanity that is in us all. It would destroy their myth'. (192)

Grant understands that truth about common humanity is based on myth. In order to destroy the myth, it is their job to show its falseness, Grant sees that white power is based on lies; he comes to learn from Reverend Ambrose that to produce a feeling of power for the black community, he must lie as well:

"Yes, you know, all right, that's why you look down on me, because you know I lie. At wakes, at services, at weddings—yes, I lie at wakes and services to relieve pain. 'cause reading, writing, and arithmetic is not enough, you think that's all they sent you to school for? They sent you to school to relieve pain, to relieve hurt— and if u has to lie to do it, then you lie. You lie and you lie and you lie." (218)

The lie that keep the black community so worried and keep Jefferson from gaining his "manhood" are fixed deeply into the social institutions that control discourse. Marxism also insists that

Ideology is the writings, speeches, beliefs and opinions —cultural practices—that assert the 'naturalness' and necessity of economic practices. Ideology is an instrument of power because it helps prop up the dominant classes by naturalizing an exploitative relationship...and preventing the recognition of oppression by the oppressed. (Nayar 130)

If one can gain control of these institutions, one can control the mythology that produce takes shape in the way that he, Tante Lou, Miss Emma, and the whole black community work together and they effectively replace white super mastic mythology with one of their own.

In *A Lesson Before Dying*, the story arises under a conflict between hog and man, the manhood and male responsibility is determined there. The action of the story is filtered through the consciousness of the black young man, Jefferson. The use of Grant as narrator suggests that this story is a move towards the simple narration of male conflicts. The centrality of the disagreement

between Jefferson and Grant to develop social consciousness is implied from the very beginning of the story. Jefferson is an observer in a long day's manhood learner. He has suffered as community standards; latterly discovers his own identity because of Grant's teachings. The lesson learned from the day's events become as important, if not more so, for Jefferson's aunt treated as he is a boy.

Grant doesn't feel any personal use of Christianity. His position of the novel reflects the state of mind of young African Americans active in the civil rights struggle. But it is not personally committed to religious faith. His viewpoint is broadening, but only slowly in the process; he lays the ground work for the lesson that will ultimately help Grant to teach Jefferson the knowledge and rights of being a man. The major point of reverent Ambrose's lesson is the uselessness of Grant's knowledge of "reading, writing and arithmetic," the teacher claims to be the limitations of his responsibility, without any sense of indebtedness to his heritage. Ambrose asks:

"To teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, Reverend".

"What did you learn about your own people? What did you learn about her—her 'round there?" he said, gesturing towards the other room and trying to keep his voice down." (215).

And perhaps that potential is the most significant New Testament connection of all. Christ's presence in the New Testament signifies the promise of eternal life—not its fulfillment. As with Christ, Jefferson's symbolic value has only begun in his death. The point here is that *A Lesson Before Dying*, like the New Testament, resists closure. It is a novel itself that confirms the promise of the 'projective' power within the "appropriation of the world". The transformative power that Jefferson's word has on Grant and on Paul is projected to readers in Grant's narration. The novel itself becomes the promise for a hopeful change.

Through the conversations between Grants and Jefferson, both discover the traditional definitions of manhood and male responsibility. For Jefferson, the changing perspective on manhood means a reevaluation of his conscious knowledge of the world. Gaines makes it clear that 'being a man'; especially for a black man in white south area, has more to do with assuming broad power than with being male. Through Jefferson, Gaines has ignited the spark of Black people to rediscover one self and others who has been kept under unconscious subjugation of ideology produced by the time social structures of White culture. Ultimately in *A Lesson Before Dying* there is a metamorphosis of Black from hog to a human being, there is a search towards the rediscovery of human identity by deconstruction of the false culture of white and reconstruction of Black culture, history, and past.

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# **DIALECTICS OF LANGUAGE & LITERATURE**

Edited by  
**Dr. K.Narasimha Rao**



## THE PHENOMENAL USAGE OF DIALECT IN HARDY'S TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

Dr. K. Ravichandran and N. Harit Portia

### Introduction

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) an English novelist and poet of the naturalist movement born, raised and lived nearly all his life in the Dorset region of England (known in his novels as Wessex). He spent his childhood in a fertile rural region, full of old folk superstitions, ballads and fatalistic beliefs. At the same time, modern industrial life was sneaking into Dorset and its old style agrarianism (farming life) was fast disappearing. In many ways, Thomas Hardy lived between the old world and the new, trying to fashion a lull between the two in his fictional creations. Hardy's writing style is simple and verbose. His sentence structures are not long or very complicated but the difficulty in his work comes from the way he uses a lot of imagery and describes the setting in great detail. While each individual sentence may not be difficult to understand, it is the way the various sentences fit together to form a whole picture which separates him from other authors.

*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) is generally regarded as Hardy's finest novel which is considered to be the brilliant tale of seduction, betrayal and murder. Hardy traces Tess's life from the age of sixteen until she dies in her early twenties. Tess is an unusual girl, full of contradictory emotions and actions. On the one hand she is energetic and independent; on the other she is shy and easily offended. It is helpful to see her as a character caught between the old and the new social orders, independence and dependence, spirituality and passion.

### The Phenomenal Usage of Dialect In Hardy's *Tess of The D'Urbervilles*

The aim of this paper is an attempt to show that dialect is used to determine the status of the individuals. Thomas Hardy uses a lot of regional dialect to differentiate between characters. The use of regional dialect in creative literature enhances realism in the creative work. The appearance of dialect in his novels often seems to be startlingly unreliable. Dialect is a helpful tool that an author may use in order to make his or her characters well-rounded. By using a certain dialect for a character, the author is actually telling the reader more about the characters background without directly stating anything. The use of dialect makes the characters' seem real, believable. It brings the story and characters to life. Dialects are typically used in dialogue or in examples of a very clear and important narrative voice.

The dialect tends to be inflected with realism. In most cases there is a comical element in the use of low dialects. Much dialect literature in the nineteenth century was written in the belief that dialects had unique relationships with the lower classes and a distinctive capacity to express and an exclusive capacity to express their earthly spontaneous wisdom. But writing in dialect could also be adopted as a way of reproducing and preserving the culture of the lower classes, which has always been regional and hence dialectal. Hardy often uses the dialect in dialogue, notably, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy uses a lot of regional dialect to differentiate between characters. In this novel the character's speech displays a number of features of the dialect spoken. Hardy's job as an architect entailed meeting many colourful local folk who spoke the rich and rough Dorset dialect. Tess parents are typical example of this as they are very often heard speaking in the dialect. When Tess is distressed by Angel's rejection of her after her confusion, the dialect breaks out. "Having begun to love" ee, I love "ee forever(Hardy 35) The dialect is a marker of her identity as a member of the peasant class that she can never absolutely do away with, but it also indicates the layers of her personality – it's something that is under the surface, which can always, bubble over.

The dialects are often used with the aim of creating distinct individuals in terms of their local and socio-cultural profile. For example, the people in this novel are said to come from the Wessex area, an imaginary place, which in reality corresponds to Dorset, an area in the South West of England. Tess herself at home used the dialect, but tried to avoid it as much as she could when she was outside. Having a very good knowledge of the characters of this dialect and wanting to make these people as real as possible, Thomas Hardy tried to represent the dialectal forms in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. For example, the word *Tess* has been described as an adjective which in the Wessex dialect means proud and conceited.

As Tess's perspective is central one, the diction that surrounds her is language that she would have been able to understand, if not use. Tess is not allowed any eloquence in speech; her purity lies in her simplicity; her complexity



in unspoken feeling. Jean –Jacques Lecerle, in an article argues that “Tess is the object (as well as the subject) of “the violence of language”. Violence in Tess of the D’Urbervilles is “primarily linguistic”. Starting from the “Pedagogic violence” of Angel’s teaching, he shows how Tess’s “natural language” is repressed by the articulate language of dominant culture” (Lecerle,149), the “standard language” taught at school. Following Deleuze and Guattari, Lecerle speaks of a process of “deterritorialisation / reterritorialisation” (Lecerle,151) Indeed the dialect still on Tess’s tongue, whose characteristic of Tess’s intonation is the intrusion in her language of the dangerous, potentially subversive, object –voice. Lecerle points out, “a striking parallel between Tess’s relation to language and Hardy’s” (153) for an effect of the violence of language is probably, for Hardy and for Tess, the suppression of that /t/ whose tone must have been part of the rich musical texture of the “natural” language heard in infancy.

### Conclusion

Tess of the D’Urbervilles is an incredibly well written novel that uses so many allusions, symbolism and allegory that each idea prevented is expressed in the most aristocratic way. The beauty of the novel lies in the language and style of the novelist. This novel is such a warming piece of literature evoking real emotions in human beings. Tess of the D’Urbervilles is indeed a great work and no doubt the art of Hardy. The novel is not only a tragic master piece but has its beautiful moments. Overall *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* is a novel which once read cannot be forgotten. In this novel through the character of Tess, Hardy tries to bring out the essence of dialect that has been portrayed in literature through language.

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Paris in spring | Photo by Albert Russo

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## Marxist Reading of Ernest J Gaines's *Of Love and Dust* and *A Gathering of Old Men*

- C. Jayapal & K. Ravichandran

**Abstract:** Ernest J Gaines was born on river lake plantation near Oscar, Louisiana, in Point Coupee Parish on January 15, 1933. He started to work as a potato picker at the age of nine, earning fifty cents a day. Poverty became centrifugal in all his works as he grew up with problem of food, education, and attained it through hard work. Gaines' work clearly tells the social, political, and economical position of African American people in South Louisiana. The ideology of Marxism is taken as a tool to interpret his novels to explore the pathos of the poor, labourer, voiceless and slave. This paper aims at analysing of Gaines's the subjugation of poor blacks by the racist white society. *Of Love and Dust* and *A Gathering of Old Men*, show how the central theme of his fiction revolves around the rich and poor, owner and labour conflicts. Each work depicts the common strivings of the disenfranchised, the control of subservient labour by the majority class, and the subsequent revisiting of folk culture that helps to foster the leadership of subordinated and generate a change. As Gaines writes openly and passionately about the proletariat, the most critical aspect of each work in this study is the impact of Marxist reading upon black labour - especially Cajuns and poor blacks. It has the human action and its effect on society is constructed by imperialistic behaviour. Additional to this scrutiny there are various levels of class struggles and emphasis on a changing social system. Gaines's, ultimate message of human equality to achieve true manhood finds similarity with Marxist ideology.

**Keywords:** Culture, Labour, Owner, Human Equality, Colonizers, Have's vs. Have not's, Economic.

*Whatever the motives- whether they have been power, prestige, or security- men have accumulated wealth through conquest, looting, human exploitation and even trade; using, money or lending- most frequently for consumption purposes- has also played its part in this process of the maintenance of an unequal distribution of the income a people has produced.* (9)

In that way Marxist criticism is based on social and philosophical theory, introduced by Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx. It is theoretical ideas which interpret their world of political, social and economic structure. In other words, this principle helps to view the social culture and life structure between rich and poor using materialistic lens. Because they control human life such as government, education, religion, culture including literature. The ideology of Marxism came into existence only during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the initial stage, it criticized the government. The criticism on government gets reflected in the works of middle 20<sup>th</sup> century writers of the world. The Marxist reading is used to understand the motivating ideology behind human action and its effects on society. Thus America grew under the leadership of its first generation

of industrial capitalism. It generally brought large benefits to the country and to almost every sector of the population. At the same time, it demolished social structure and inequality emerged not only between whites and blacks but also between white rich and white poor. In African American literature, Gaines's fiction is generally interpreted with Marxism, because his works are based on land, politics, and society. By employing Marxist criticism on Gaines's works one can understand the way in which the American people were living in America during 1920's, and 1930's. This is the best way to analyse human life and cultural identity of African American people. Gaines was born on river lake plantation near Oscar, Louisiana, in point Coupee Parish on January 15, 1933. He grew up with problem of food, education, and attained it through hard work. It has helped to explicate his experience throughout his works. Gaines discovered a lengthy and rich African American literary tradition in the late sixties. He has won the admiration for numerous writers, including Alice Walker, James Alan McPherson, James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison. As important as reading is to read Gaines's writing style in his seven novels which explore the Negro slaves of the south without social security against unemployment, social structure, rich poor variation, black and white conflict, and irresponsibility of government in South America. Gaines has dealt with the cultural conflicts between the native American and African American people in his novels. Gaines's *Of Love and Dust* and *A Gathering of Old Men* are the best works to interpret under Marxist reading. Because *Of Love and Dust* focuses on the implication is the low paid labour of many for the comfort of the dissolute Marshall Hebert.

Slaves, the slow of indentured servants tapered off not because of a decline in demand for agriculture workers but because a new source of supply appeared the American Negro slaves. Negro slaves offered many advantages over white servants they were property and they could not escape easily; their women could also be workers in the fields. (15)

In *Of Love and Dust*, the character Hebert is the representative of ruling class in South America. Hebert's attitudes towards apartheid are humane and he wants to control over other people, manipulating the legal system for his own sake. He lacks of conscience, sense of responsibility, and unchallenged authority. There is no economical and educational opportunity for the, Louisiana people, who as a result they became chance to increase the illiteracy, labourer and slaves. The novel's conflicting forces seem embodied in Marcus and Bonbon, two men facing the values of their own race and class. However the novel reveals how the shameless racial conflict becomes a mere shield for Marshall Hebert. Bonbon is not a slave in Hebert's social class. He is like a tool as all other workers for Hebert's capitalist who owned and managed their concerns took risks made enormous profit. Hebert's values are shown to be similar to those of Jim and Marcus. In, *Of Love and Dust*, Gaines created a character named Marshall Hebert a white supremacy who has exploited the labour of poor blacks and paid a meager amount.

I remember that old woman telling me to look after him, to talk to



him; I remembered only three days ago she wanted to go to Marshall Hebert again to beg Marshall to keep Bouton from hurting him or killing him out there in the field. Right now I wanted to hit him so bad my hand started shaking. (120-121)

Generally, Marcus's slaves of the south are the happiest, and in some sense, the people in the world. He enjoyed liberty, because he was exploited neither by care nor labour. Jim and Marcus work on the average in good weather. They did not work for more than nine hours a day. The balance of their time is spent for entertainment like drinks. But for white they sleep and the clever and watchful capitalist is devising means to ensure and cruel them. The free labour must work as Marcus does as slave otherwise they will have nothing to eat. He is more of a slave than the white labour, because he works longer and harder for less benefit than the slave, and has no holiday. The care of life with him begins when its labour ends. Marcus has no liberty, and single right even to love a white woman. The novelist has used Marcus' love as a tool to show the suppression of blacks' emotion; though the protagonist is able to get love from his beloved Louise. He cannot live with her. Thus throughout this novel Gaines explores not only the protagonist's love but also rights of blacks and class conflict. Ernest Gaines's *A Gathering of Old Men*, (1983) takes place in the late 1970's on the land of the Marshall plantation, a remote spot in rural Louisiana the peak of civil rights activities in south. It helps to change social relationship. Every aspect of capitalist enterprise assisted in the successful establishment of colonial Black American people: owner and labour flowed overseas to create settlements and these could be made permanent because of the bountifulness of nature—a way of life those continue in people's memories and in social custom. The novel starts with Bouton's death. He was a Cajun farmer shouted by Mathu, a solitary African American elder. The black story behind this Bouton murder, the entire story of this novel revolves around the murder of Bouton. The murder of white man by a black man immediately makes worse the racial tensions that saturated the easily broken social variety of this isolated southern locality. It has remembered unchanged by the revolution of the civil rights movement.

Something to do with Mathu and something to do with Beau Bouton bead in his yard. That's all I know, all I want to know. Up to y'all now, I had done my part. Y'all can go and do like she say or y'all can go home, lock y'all doors, and crawl under the bed like y'all used to. Me, I'm leaving. (28)

The story takes place in one day, from the killing of Beau Bouton to the final shootout in Mathu yard. This novel exposes some basic structure in sociological formula. 1. Exposition: the murder of beau in colonial system. 2. Complication: the armed old man. 3. Crisis: actual murderer and a shoot ensure. 4. Revolution: the old men feel they have achieved their goal. Either the structure of Mathu's yard is looking well-organized with the obvious domination of whites. This frame work is seemingly an imperialistic as well as capitalistic standpoint. Through the image of 'sugarcane field', 'shoot guns in old men hands' and the damaged road one can easily understand the historical, political and sociological weight of the people who live in and around of that particular place (Mathu's

yard). When the old people speak in favor of Mathu, they do say something about their struggle for survival:

You are talking about thirty-five, forty, fifty years ago, Beulah." Mapes said. "And you got no proof fix was mixed up in that." "Now, ain't that just like white folks?" Beulah said to us, but still looking at Mapes. "Black people get lynched, get drowned, get shot, guts all hanging out—and here he comes up with ain't no proof who did it. So let's don't be putting it all on no thirty-five, forty, fifty years ago like everything is so nicey-nicey now. (108)

Tractors have displaced and entire class of people forcing them away from the plantation to make a new livelihood. Tractors have also changed the social structure for as the Cajuns gain economic power, the Boutan families follow the values of the Marshalls. With its essentially exploitative basics, Gil's claim of relationship to Candy would have particular resonance because they think that social structure is based on skin color. Gil and Candy have nevertheless operated on an assumption of freedom. The blacks are not aware of their slavery and the corruption of the whites, this idea is clearly expressed through the characters – Jack and Beau, they used to drink a lot and think a little about the social structure. Further they do not bother about the conflict between Cajuns and blacks. They consider themselves superior to other blacks. Through these characters the novelist shows that except the character Mathu, no one is ready to rebel against the social structure framed by the whites. Not hold up the fact that the white non-slave holders of the south are in the majority as five to one. They have not grouped in family the laws under which they live in. There is no legislation except for the benefit of slavery, and slave holders as a general rule Jack Marshall's character would merit more attention than Bea's as the last male Marshall descendent, he represents economic and social traditions based on the complete use of human labour through slavery. Jack clearly is obsolete, his language revealing an inability to see blacks as human. An honest image of affected in action is Candy, the young heiress to the Marshall plantation and the old men form in front of Mapes. In order to challenge the sheriff's authority, Candy and the old men launched into direction of non-violence. Wryly, Rufe describes the scene:

[Mapes] had already used his only little knowledge he know how to deal with black folks- knocking them around. When that didn't change a thing, when people started getting in line to be knocked around, he didn't know what else to do. So now, he just stood there, a big fat red hulk, looking down at the ground. (93)

In this way, Marshall Hebert represents the ruling class with emphasis on his value system. He wishes to be a gentleman both in his status and in his value system. Moreover, it reveals the true nature of Hebert's value system. The economic and social structures that maintained racial suppression in Louisiana were randomly constructed. Because, Louisiana often goes beyond cultural divisions. This overlap made racial negotiation more difficult. Because the space between constructed racial categories were maintained by rich whites. They placed Boutan between themselves and their African American laborers, a placement that gives power to Cajuns whites. Thus social and economic control over both



Cajuns and African Americans by these rich whites are clearly exposed. Such social constructions happened throughout the America. In Noel Ignatiev's "Study of Irish Immigrant and Their Identity as white Americans, he argues that:

The abolition of slavery called into question the existence of the white race as a social formation. Because the absolute distinction between the white worker and the black worker were erased. (164)

The white racist society does not want to dispel the slavew systems only because they want to control over the black communities who no longer felt a common bond through the racially constructed slave system. The influential white Americans determined to maintain the slave System get continued. By doing so, the rich white class could use such power to construct a larger distance between themselves and their African American labourers. Revolutionary labourers was no accident that the activities of unskilled, migrating casual workers, who fell outside this pattern, should take on a revolutionary cast. There were large numbers of these frequently without homes and families, who followed temporary job in the corn, wheat fields in the south. They began to join with the industrial workers of the world, which taught a revolutionary program our working class abduction of power directly. By addressing the Marxist critics, land owner- labor conflict in *Of Love and Dust* (1967) and *A Gathering Of Old Men* (1983), Ernest Gaines emphasizes the interdependence of white and black people in Louisiana. Simultaneously acknowledged social structure is maintaining the concept of white supremacy. His fictions depict a complex racial hierarchy. As such, Gaines places the Cajun between the land owners, situated socially between rich white and poor working class African Americans. Gaines portrays Cajuns as possible racial intermediaries who can be manipulated by whites to control over blacks. He has come out with a ray of hope for the victim by giving some Solution to get rid of the exploitation at various levels of racial mediation. Simultaneously, Gaines gives readers an opportunity to see from a differing perspective. Gaines' African American protagonists not only realize their own individual worth in the midst of Louisiana's racial conflict, but also various levels of a class struggles and emphasis on a changing social system. This mutual understanding remains central to Gaines's ultimate message of Marxist reading as the key to achieving human equality and true manhood.

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## Ecological Crisis in Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams*

- Chinsu Joy

**Abstract:** Grace is faced with the deterioration of the environment. Codi Homero Noline, the protagonist begins to devote herself to the local environmental justice movement which aims to confirm the equality between mankind and nature, and the equal access to natural resources for the sake of sustainable development in the community. By educating her students about the seriousness of the ecological crisis she works with her town people for cultural activism and finally succeeds in winning the fight for environmental justice. This paper is an attempt to analyse the ecological crisis in the novel *Animal Dreams*.

**Keywords:** Ecological Crisis, Cultural Activism

**Introduction:** Barbra Kingsolver emerged in the American literary scenario during the 1980's. Throughout the three decades of her literary career she has followed the progressive social conscience of her times. Her thematic concerns in her writings include environmentalism, class structure, feminism and ecological diversity all arise from a life lived in pursuit of social justice. When *Animal Dreams* was published in 1990, it soon became a popular and critical success as the novel won an American Library Association Notable Book and Best Book for Young Adults, Pen/USA West Fiction Award, *New York Times* Notable Book and Edward Abbey Award for Ecofiction. The Kentucky-born author Barbara Kingsolver rises to prominence and becomes an important voice among the southwestern writers in the United States. Based on her book *Holding the Line* which covers the great Arizona mine strike of 1983, the novel, through the characterization of Codi and her female town fellows devoted to the protection of their homeland ecological system, is considered as an ecofeminist fiction incorporating the themes of female autonomy and ecology. Houston and Warren argue that *Animal Dreams* is one of Kingsolver's works that unfold a blending of "environmental fiction and feminism known as ecofeminism" (4). According to Roberta Rubenstein, Codi's longing for belonging can be illustrated in two dimensions, namely, "the longing for the idealized lost mother and her association with the lost home/land" and the longing for "connection to a collective cultural history and home" (38) According to Richard Hofrichter, environmental justice is about "social transformation directed toward meeting human need and enhancing the quality of life...using resources sustainably" (4). Its central principle stresses "equal access to natural resources and the right to clean air and water, adequate health care, affordable shelter and a safe workplace" (Hofrichter, 5). As a matter of fact, environmental justice takes into

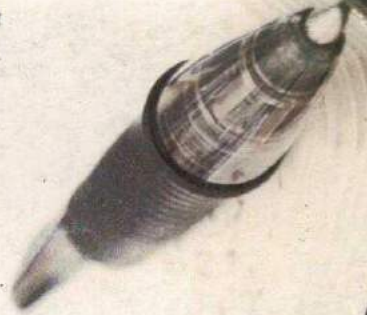


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The Fractured Psyche of a Tribal Woman in Mahasweta Devi's Mother of 1084

Dr.K.Ravichandran, Assistant Professor of English, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar.

Mahasweta Devi wrote the first version of *Mother of 1084* in September 1973, which is one of the Devi's widely read, translated and adapted work, written under the impact of the Naxalite movement. It was indeed a major event that happened after Devi became a professional writer in the late sixties and early seventies of the last century. Devi sympathises the naxalite who are fighting for the right cause especially the exploitation of poor in general and the in human practices of the caste Hindus in particular. A deepening social awareness and literary maturity is evidenced in her watershed novel *Hajar Churashir Ma* (1974) (*Mother of 1084*), which is one of Devi's most widely read, translated and adapted works, written under the impact of the beleaguered Naxalite Movement.

*Mother of 1084*, which is set against the backdrop of the climactic phase of the suppression of the naxalite movement during the 1970s in the urban Bengal. The novel begins with a phone call from the Government Morgues asking Sujata to identify a corpse of Number 1084 that is her own favourite son, Brati. The protagonist of the novel, Sujatha, is such a miserable mother who is apathetic. A political and pathetically ignorant of her own son and his ideals, Brati who had taken part in the naxalite movement, becomes a martyr.

Sujata's physical identification of Brati triggers off a process of awakening in her and ends up with her discovery of her son. Through the portrayal of Sujata's character, Mahasweta Devi brings to light the darker areas of life where persecution of the innocent continuous unabated. Sujata, a victim of the constraints of the male dominated society, is a misfit in her own family. Her husband, Dibyanath chatterjeet, does not hesitate to risk the private sentiments to keep his public statutory untarnished. His indifference to the death of Brati is the most characteristic of a section of the people who passes for the elite which indulges in self care and self - love.



2 Brati, her younger son, was her only favourite, and he was a man of integrity and convictions. But tragically enough, Sujata realizes soon after his death that he remained a complete stranger to her all these days. It comes as a surprise to her. She nursed an innate resentment against the patriarchal order that she had failed to recognize the rising tide of revolt in Brati. The conflict between the exploited and the explainer leads to an orgy of violence and murder in the name of fake encounters. Brati, ten eighty four, is killed along with his friends Somu, Partha, and Bikit in such an encounter with the ruling party patriarchal society.

Sujata feels very bitter for not having under stood or known her son. It is once with the help of others, she learns what he is really. She conducts a quest for the discovery of truth about her son which ends up as a self-discovery, through the meetings with people beyond her circuit of experience. She forges a connection with Brati and with what he strove and died for. In fact, her conformation with Somu's mother and Nandini an activist and faithful follower of Brati, makes her aware of the seedy side of life. Nandini, an angry young woman, was crippled by the police torture Sujata with pathos exposes the hard realities of contemporary society. In the suffering of the members of Somu's family, Sujata could find an echo of her own silent scream of torment and desperation. Thus, Sujata goes through a painful process of discovering Brati and her own being while others in the family enjoy socializing with those persons who have been over a part of the establishment that caused Brati's death. She is now fully aware of the situation in which she lives. The more she learns about Brati, the closer she feels to him.

Sujata's meeting with the mother of Somu, one of the fellow activists of Brati, brings her face to face with the baffling reality when she says: "I lost my son, my son's father, and I, with this tortoise's life of mine shall live on forever, the two funeral pyres burning within." (17) The reference to a "tortoise's life" hints at the self-protective and sheltered life which the woman needs to outgrow.

The novel presents the psychological struggles of Sujata in search of her identity in a world ruled by money governed hypocrisies. Sujata is a bank employee from the upper middle class family. Mother of 1084 depicts the suffering of women, who are conceived as part of the whole.

Sujata suffers due to the lack of the freedom and recognition that she has to face in the family. Devi's oppressed women find their own unique spaces, available strategies in a relentless scenario of violence, oppression, and humiliation. Sujata moves against the system by questioning its basic agendas. The moment she realizes the absurdity of the hypocritical order established in the house, she starts moving against it. The questions of Somu's mother regarding the authenticity of judgement, people see her with is a sharp eye - opener to Sujata.

Sujata's voice comes out as a universal protest against the heart-less society in which we all live. From silent suffering and a sense of imprisoned guilt within, Sujata moves in the direction of issuing a clarion call to women in society to awake and arise or be forever fallen. Through a direct address to the audience i.e. from a plane of the theatre as illusion to the theatre as a message giving social reality, Sujata communicates to the audience with a motto of intended transformation to be brought about in society. Though she collapses at the end of her exhortation, Sujata's quest for Brati and his ideals and through this a quest for knowledge about the plight of the women has been communicated, ironically not through the devices of the theatre but through an extra theatrical spectacle.

Those who died are lost anyway. But those who remain alive won't ever be able to come back home again. Sujata's words blaming Brati for not having behaved in accordance with his social status is a highly pungent comment against the power structure: "He gave up the life he was born to. If he had stuck to it, Brati would have gone to Britain, returned from Britain, found a good job and risen up the social ladder with effortless ease" (42) When Sujata raises her voice against Dibyanath's presence in the room, it becomes very reactionary. She does not want any more intervention in her life: For Dibyanath it was a slap in the face" (65) Sujata also questions him about his absences from the house to meet his each typist. Her refusal to hand over her ornaments is also something that establishes her voice.

Mother of 1084 also presents the final emancipation of Sujata who, till then, had trained herself to accept whatever was provided to her. Motivated by Nandini's determination, Sujata's process of understanding ends with a compulsion to decide. The moment she realizes the defects of Dibyanath,



Dibyanant Chatterjee, the husband of Sujata, is an overbearing and complacent man. He does not hesitate to risk the private sentiments to keep his public stature untarnished. He knows how to play the cards properly to improve his for main on the established lines. This attitude of his life vividly depicted in the opening scene of the novel when they receive a phone call from police to identify corpse number 1084 which is in fact, Brati's while Sujata is all concerned and helpless, Dirbynant searches for the way to hush up the incident. Sujata is aware of her husband's womanizing and corrupt practices, but she says nothing against him rather she tries to escape all the constraints by taking up a job in the bank. She resents the immoral acts of her children; she continues to discharge her familial duties, bearing calmly all kinds of humiliations.

The natural relationship between a mother and her son is excellently evoked when the novel attempts to create a sentimental situation. Ironically, however much they value each other's feelings; Sujata does not know enough about Brati's activities. It is only with the help of others that she learns what he is really made of as a matter of fact, her first meeting with Nandini, an activist and faithful follower of Brati, provides Sujata with an insight into a part of her life that she had never known, Sujata is in conflict with the world around her. Having been compelled to adapt herself to the prevailing social norms and traditions, Sujata had unwittingly become a part of them.

It has widened further when the former accuses her of being responsible for the death of Brati. The accusation accelerates her realization. She seems to have felt relieved of the burden of sinful life she has lived all these years. She seems to have realized that a greater revolt and higher sacrifice of life are essential to safeguard human values.

She is a working mother for whom her work itself is a form of protest and self assertion against the patriarchal. Forced to take part in the festive occasion, Sujata does not feel at ease. Thus, stage is set for the inevitable when Saroj Pal, the DC DD (Deputy commissioner, Detective Department), a friend of her son, turns up to convey his best wishes. His presence strikes, a chill into her heart, she feels hemmed in on all sides by the enemy. She is reminded of Soroj Pal's cold and business like attitude on the day she was summoned to the mortuary to identify the dead body. Sujata thinks that the

she is out from her bondage. She realizes that her voice of protest against Dibyananth would have led her becoming closer to Brati. She has realized the essence of Brati's struggle. Her search is to know the true causes for Brati's involvement in naxalism. Through her attempt to reach the root of this cause, her own plight is unfolded, against which she emerges boldly. Her realization of the falsities of the system helps her in raising her voice against it with a fierce vengeance for the murder of her son. Mahasweta Devi's active brings them to life with a deep sensitivity which makes them step out to the margins of society of live on their own.

Through the character of Sujata, Mahasweta Devi seeks to bring to light the darker areas of life where prosecution of the innocent continues. She is one of those victims whose kith and kin had been done away with as a result of confrontation with the people in power. Sujata is a middle class woman, a sensitive wife and a loving mother but a stranger in her own house — hold there has reduced her to an insignificant. Brati, her younger son, was her only favorite, for he was a man of integrity and social cause.

Sujata's meeting with the mother of Somu, one of the fellow activists of Brati, brings her face to face with the baffling reality when she says: "I lost my son, my son's father, and I, with this tortoise's life of mine shall live on forever, the two funeral pyres burning with in". (85)

Sujata realizes that by not trying to forge a relationship with Brati, she has unwittingly become part of a complacent and selfish society. Nandini's words awaken her consciousness. Sujata blames herself for not paying any heed to Brati's revolt against the age-old social values and for being ignorant of her own fault. Thus is the company of Nandini, the crippled girl who is nearly true self blinded by the police, and Sujata's is unveiled. However finding in her a rebel in the making, the vested interests chain her and make her continue in her complacency. Nandini shouts at her. It is Nandini who induces the necessary shock in Sujata that is necessary to awaken her from this state of stupor. Through a direct address to the audience i.e. from a plane of the theatre as illusion to the theatre as a message giving social reality, sujata communicates to the audience her transformation and the intermed transformation to be brought about in society.



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human society is devoid of human qualities. Hence, the noble sacrifice like that Brati's is in vain. However, her search for Brati does not end with her death. It continues as a problem very much alive.

Naxalite movement in west Bengal broke out in the tribal region of naxalbari in northern Bengal on may 1967. When a police man, Sonam Wangdi was killed by armed tribals resisting a police coming to the village, then the policemen started gunning down a section of young urban intellectuals, leading to the polarization of leftist political forces in the country.

The novel ends with Sujata breaking down at her daughter's engagement party passionately, exhorting the audience not to be silent sufferers but respond to social reality. She witnessed the brutal impact of absentee landlordism and debt bondage on indigenous groups, especially on their women.

Brati had been home that day he sat in his room on the second floor writing who knows what. He had only been drafting slogans to be written on the walls. They took the papers away when they came to search his room. The papers were no longer in the house.

All that remained in the house were books and exercise books, books received as prizes, gold medals, a snapshot with friends in Darijeeling, a pair of running shoes, a cup from a sports meet. The day Brati went to the park nearby to become a member of the boy's club. The Independence Day parades when he marched so proudly with the boys beating on the drums, playing on the bugles. The day he had come back with a cup from the foot ball finals, and a fractured leg.

There was nothing from the days when he had begun to change they had cleared away, without a trace, the book, papers, leaflets, sheets with revolutionary slogans, journals from that last one years. Sujata had been told that all these were burnt as a rule. Dibyananth had not allowed Sujata the most common rights that a mother has. His mother held the reins. Dibyananth never know that one could honour one's mother without humiliating one's wife, his wife under his feet, his mother held aloft. That was his ethos.

With her pride and strong sense of dignity, Sujata had realized soon after her marriage that the more she kept herself aloof from the household the more satisfied the others were Dibyanath and her mother in law and others. Jyoti, Tuli, and Neepta had always known their mother in a subsidiary role.

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they never have to take account of her. In Sujata's mind one day they had sufficed that ranks of the others or course, Diyananth never eared to probe into her. He was neither very attached nor indifferent to his wife. "I didn't really know Brati". (87). Mahasweta Devi has captured the impact of Sujata's meeting with Nandini in very poetic norms:

With the flow of time and pain settle into layers of sedimentation, then one day, layers of sedimentation. Then one day, penetrating these layers, new buds sprout forth, street cling out their little fingers. These fingers ache to touch the sky. The buds of hope sorrow, joy and bliss – the buds with little aching fingers (81)

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## Post Colonialism: A Scrutiny of Amitav Ghosh's

The Circle of Reason

**Dr.K.Ravichandran**, Assistant Professor of English, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar.

Amitav Ghosh has been brought up in highly unconventional cultural and social diversity as his father, being in British Army used to move from a place to place - in Burma and erstwhile India under British Rule especially in eastern territories of India. Impact of social events as well as military environment in his family has a deep imprint on the mind of Amitav Ghosh and that is well revealed in themes of his novels. Mostly the writers construct the fiction from what he has acquired from the social as well as political situation. Apart from this, extensive study of history, sociology and anthropology has enriched Ghosh's mind so far as intellectual and ideology are concerned.

The writer's analysis of the material which may be informative chaotic or social as well as political nuisance creates the novels keeping certain thematic occupation in the centre. The thematic consideration and analysis of problems of common man with ordinary prudence and their existence is the core of five novels under study. The themes in five novels under study vary in many folds. However certain thematic aspects of life are figuring in all the five novels of Amitav Ghosh.

Amitav Ghosh an anthropologists and contemporary Indian English writer, has endeavored to create new thematic elements in his novels where the reader or critic is left to exercise his mind and intellect to find out what is the true meaning of nationalism, cultural and cross religious, clashes, different religious, faith and belief and migration of people taking place out of political ideologies and system of ruling and changing from time to time.

Amitav Ghosh rightly stresses how the violence and clashes arising from political and communal differences, assumes an added significance for the middle class people of society. It embodies in the fiction of Ghosh and it is invariably and passionately concerned with very existence of man, their loss



In some ways the two themes that have animated Ghosh's writing from beginning – his interest in the lives of middle class Indian families and his concern for the world's afflicted – come together as the very people who once tried in Burma (including he suggests – his ancestors) suddenly turn into dispossessed. Refugees themselves, struggling across rivers and mountains, wheeling the elderly in carts and often dying along the way (29).

The theme of existential challenges, migration chaotic state of situation, involving loss of lives of human beings, especially middle class families mostly Indians and Asians spread out in many countries has remained in center in the five novels under study.

The theme in The Circle of Reason is quite novice and it deviates from the theme of traditional Indian writing on social customs and religious as well as political confrontation in particular family or section of the society. The novel exposes the meaning of unhappy events in the society faced by the middle class families thriving to progress by economic uplift or even by migration. Ghosh writes through the character of Zindi:

But let something happen outside, and that is the end, there is nothing I can do? Why because I can give them food, I can give them roof, but I can't give them work..... the house is almost empty now and work is gone..... Where can I go? (229)

Zindi is worried about the migrant. Ghosh has presented a powerful character like Zindi, who plans a shop for the migrant, but does not succeed. The cause and problems of migrated people mostly middle class families for the work, for the bright future and existence are narrated in the novel. The characters in the novel move from one place to another for better work and for better future. The character Rakesh with Alu migrates from India to Al-Ghazira for better prospects. Bala Kothandaraman in his article Circular Reasoning: Amitav Ghosh's Rhetoric comments: "The different locals are small overcrowded

of identity, rootlessness and aloneness, which constitute the causes of agony and anguish for the man. Ghosh writes:

You know, if you look at the pictures at home, all that pictures of dead people – in Assam, the north east, Punjab, Sri Lanka, Tripura – people shot by terrorists, and separatists and army and police, you will find somewhere believed it all, that single word: everyone is doing it to be free (246).

Amitav Ghosh's novels throws light on themes like nationalism, communal violence, and helplessness of middle class people for compulsory migration from home and helpless to take education and so on. Why Alu's School of Reason fails? Many were interested in weaving and sewing machine rather than in education in The Circle of Reason. Ghosh's preoccupation of problems of uprooted middle class families has been eminently shown in the art of novel. The analysis of five novels under study demonstrates how Ghosh advocates the cause of dispossessed and how the unnecessary misery, hardship and unhappiness are caused by communal frenzy and violence uncontrollable by political machinery in power. Ghosh goes on to show that in modern world how the Hippocratic religion and resultant exploitation and violence by organized militant fundamentalists play vital and fatal roles in the lives of men and women in the society. And political solution of these problems by re-demarcation of national boundaries based on political fallacy is neither a solution at grass root level nor it soothes the problems of dislocated families. Homelessness and mass dislocation as a result of war – Second World War – and agony of the people are another issue discussed and developed in form of novel – The Glass Palace. The novel exposes fatal condition of thousands of people – mostly Indian migrated from Burma to Calcutta on account of Japanese invasion on Burma in 1942. The invasion created Chaotic and critical condition of the people, on the face of Japanese fighting against British. The people of Burma were confronted in critical condition as to which side they should – British or Japanese. In either side people feared extermination from either British or Japanese. No choice was left over but to flee from their-own homeland. Such precarious condition is exposed in the novel artfully by Ghosh. Pico Iyer rightly comments:



theme of educational system constituted for training for getting jobs. Ghosh questions the system of education that makes a man a near machine for certain function. Through the character of Gopal and Balram, Ghosh says:

Well, Gopal said, you must explain to Alu that if he does not go to school he will never be able to get a job. What, Balram looked at him in stunned arrangement. How could I say that it would be wrong; it would be immoral children go to school for their first glimpse into the life of the mind. Not for jobs, if I thought my teaching is nothing but the means of finding jobs, I would stop teaching tomorrow. (52)

Here Ghosh goes on to assert the rationality through the reason as a base for schooling and cautions the educationalists that through monotones repetition for information in school, silence the student on their natural question to live, to face the challenges of life. Ghosh tries to stress the need for rational method for imparting education and profess, that the reason is basic tool for getting education, and that monotones exchange of information should not hamper the impulsive curiosity of student (a man) about life and training. This is further substantiated in the novel as: "After much careful thought Balram had decided to name one the Department of Pure Reason and the other the Department of Practical Reason: a meeting of the two great forms of human thought." (107)

Balram's school of Reason is not succeeded as the story goes on. Here Ghosh takes no sides but simply puts further the ideas before the reader or the society. In this context, Alok Kumar and Madhusudan Prasad comments: "The Circle of Reason is about the insufficiency of 'Reason' as the ordering principle of the human universe." (182)

Against his, Ghosh concludes through the character of Balram as: "Be quite, Gopal. Don't say any more, you don't know what you are saying, science does not know what you are saying, and science does not belong to countries. Reason does not belong to any nation. They belong to history – to the world." (54)

places with refugee's population adding socio-cultural dimension as well as economic and political problems." (156)

The post-colonial situation and modern man's problems of alienation, migration and existential crisis in life of ordinary unprivileged class of the society is explored through the fiction. The themes of rootlessness migration, feelings of displaced are extensively narrated in deep sense and corner of human heart. While exploring the themes migration of small group, the problem of individual is exposed rather than the problems of group as a whole.

Another significant theme in the novel is education. The Circle of Reason is novel of thought and reason inclusive three philosophical elements of Indian philosophy from where titles are derived and explored in the context of ordinary men and women's views of life. *Sarva*- reason *Rajas* – passion and *Tamas* – Death. Man's these stages of life is explained creating the characters like a doctor, a professor, a scientist, a businessman, a weaver, a merchant, a lawyer and above all house wives, such housewives facing the existential challenges and problems to earn money to maintain life. Does Ghosh try to suggest a question? Does philosophical values end where power of money begin? is a question of argumentation. Ulka Joshi in her article comments:

The concept of reason is very much western and it is associated with many traits like the power to think rationally, scientific way of discriminating between right and wrong, a state minus superstition. Progressive attitude and civilized way of life. The writer without making any loud announcements brings together Indian and western elements. (26)

Ghosh as a literary personality exemplifies the fact the literature – novel should be aimed at finding out solution for the common routine problems of people which includes middle class men and women in the society of different culture and faith and he projects the historical events in comparing with post-colonial situation and put forth the life of men and women struggling for existence for work, for wages, for money, for home, ultimately for better life. The themes of The Circle of Reason are different in many ways from traditional themes of novels of earlier times. The novel apart from other theme comments on the



That is how the ideological theme on 'reason' / 'rationality' is evoked. In the form of novel by Ghosh in his artfulness to project the evaluation of meaning of many phenomena of life of Indian middle class families in compared to historical facts.

Traveling across many countries and culture is another major theme in The Circle of Reason, which describes the adventure of a boy from rural Bengal to Middle Eastern cities of Al-Ghazira and El Qued – a desert town in Algeria. The novel depicts the life of expatriate Indian in the Gulf Countries. First section of the Book, The Circle of Reason shows many observations on Indian emigrants. Ghosh writes: "Or there was the day in early August when an American judge in San Francisco, arbitrating on the second ever application by Hindu for citizenship in the United States, look refugee in prehistory and decided that high-caste Hindus were Aryans and therefore free and white." (39)

The Al-Ghazira part of novel exhibits evidence of Ghosh's consciousness and precarious lives of migrant workers. Alu's journey through Indian ocean depicts the thousands of Indians who leave their native place for prosperous life style, along with these are illegal emigrants which include professor, traveling salesmen and men and women, who risk their life and resort to dangerous crossing in search of economic stability but when they – all these migrants reach Al-Ghazira they find problems of one or another kind irrespective of their income. Ghosh, in this regard writes:

But still there was problems the mechanic complained no medical benefits, no accommodation, no security at all. It was all a big problem. .... Things like that matter only at home, and foreign places are all alike in that they are not home. Nothing binds you there. (266)

Ghosh projects the 'concern' for all these workers and professionals in quests for better life. The theme may look interesting but R. K. Kaul in his article "Another Triumphant Entry – Amitav Ghosh's The Circle of Reason" comments:

This is the first novel which depicts the life of expatriate Indians in the Gulf States. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh may be engaged in recriminations among themselves but emigrant from

these countries are treated as one ethnic stock by Arabs. The Arab employers look upon their informal dress as less than decent and their cooking as unhygienic. Ghosh observes strict objectivity in his presentation. He tells us what the Arab think, without either refuting or confirming their opinions. (**Indian Book Chronicles 121**)

Thus one major theme of The Circle of Reason is continued domination and exploitation of men and women of middle class families threatened by political and anarchical system of ruling in the time of colonial and post-colonial – India. Ghosh merely puts forth the historical events and its evaluation in the context of individual feeling of exploited.

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This paper is an attempt to evaluate Amitav Ghosh's use of mixed setting and characterisation. He uses Indian and English characters, i.e. a mixture of Orientalism and Occidentalism in his novel, *The Shadow Lines*. Amitav Ghosh, fully Indian by birth, and upbringing, creates some singular variations in his novels *The Circle of Reason* (1986) and *The Shadow Lines* (1988) on the theme of the East-West encounter as to transform it altogether.

The English characters in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* are neither Mr. Skene of Candler nor "the man with a torch" of Irene Burn. The England of this novel does not arouse fantasies of domination and revenge in the mind of the narrator, it is simply the partial setting for his experience of love, discovery and loss. Sex between the characters is also not a metaphor for empire.

*The Shadow Lines* portrays the friendship (and antipathy) between various branches of an upper-class Bengali family and an English family over three generations. The narrator's family is spread over Dhaka, Calcutta, and London. The narrator's family consists of his grandmother, Mayadebi's elder sister, and his parents, and their three sons, Jain, an economist with the UN, Tridib and Robi. Ila, Jain's daughter, is always away with her parents. The narrator's family is settled in Calcutta where his grandmother is a headmistress in a school. On the other hand, the family of Mayadebi, with the exception of Tridib, goes around the world.

The friendship between the Indian families and the English family began when Lionel Tressawson was in India. Lionel Tressawson was a globe-trotter, a prolific inventor, highly ambitious, and quickly-witted. The friendship between Tressawson and Datta-Chaudhuri is strengthened by their heirs. In this connection, 1939 is significant, because the story in the novel starts at this

period of time. It is also the Second World War period. This is the period when the British imperialism was at its zenith in India. This is the period which also accelerated the fall of the British Empire. The military might of Hitler was challenged by the UK. The British declaration of war automatically brought in India and the colonies, as it had done in 1914.

The membership of the Theosophical society brings Tressawson and Datta-Chaudhuri in each other's intimacy. The Theosophical society was a western attempt to fuse with the springs of Indian spirituality. Founded at New York in 1875 by Madame Blavatsky, Col. Olcott and William Q. Judge, the society shifted to Adyar near Madras on 1878. Annie Besant, as President of the society, gathered many prominent Indians around her, and the society opened branches in many cities, all over India. There could be no better place for an Indian than the society to develop friendship with an Englishman, a colonized with a colonizer.

The Indian spirituality as opposed to British materialism, places Datta-Chaudhuri and Tressawson on surer footing. It is the blooming of friendship between their successors, which forms the backbone of the narrative of *The Shadow Lines*. Mrs. Price, the daughter of Tressawson, and Mayadebi and her elder sister continue to maintain this friendly relation, irrespective of the fact that the year 1939 was the year of Indian slavery. But the spirituality of the theosophical society dissolves any trace of antipathy between the colonizer and the colonized. Amitav Ghosh thus prepares us for a friendly English woman and her family.

The family of Tridib "had taken his father there [London] for an operation. They had to go even though it was 1939 and they "knew there might be a war." (26). The English historian A.J.P. Taylor writes: "Hospital beds were kept empty for the air-raid casualties which never came. Even the maternity wards were barred against expectant mothers." (52).

Even social services ceased—no free mil, no school dinners. A blackout began. Motor cars were forbidden-to-use their headlights. Ghosh invites us to spend our disbelief, to read his novel, of the political scene of England in 1939. Amitav Ghosh portrays the affable, friendly, fine English men and women in *The Shadow Lines*, from 1939 to 1979.



The failure of her faith in the postcolonial India is not only tragedy but also the tragedy of an entire class: All she wanted was a middle-class life in which, like the middle-classes the world over, she would thrive believing in the unity of nationhood and territory, of self-respect and national power, that was all she wanted—a modern middleclass life, a small thing, that history had denied her in its fullness and for which she could never forgive it. (78).

Facon, the great African postcolonial political theorist, observes the modern African middle-class by comparing its achievement with its counterpart elsewhere and writes:

The bourgeois phase in underdeveloped countries can only justify itself insofar as the national bourgeoisie has efficient economical and technical strength to build up a bourgeois society, to create the conditions necessary for the development of a largescale proletariat. ....[In Europe] such a bourgeoisie, dynamic, educated and secular, has fully succeeded in its undertaking of the accumulation of capital and has given to nation a minimum of prosperity. (40).

Fanon goes on to reiterate that violence properly understood and directed can be positive and purifying: "At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect." (180). Seen in this perspective, the grandmother is not only relevant to this novel, but is also a postcolonial two-dimensional character in *The Shadow Lines*.

But, as stated above, India could not fully rupture imperialistic absorption and bond with England. Once again Fanon hits out at both the ex-colonialists and the black elites in a fine pattern of irony:

The Third World often gives the impression that it rejoices in sensation and that it must have its weekly dose of crises. These men at the head of empty countries, who talk too loud, are most irritating. You'd like to shut them up. But, on the contrary, they are invited to dinner. In fact, we quarrel over who will have them. (136).

Edward said says that Western domination of the non-Western world is not some arbitrary phenomenon but a conscious and purposive process governed by the will and intention of individuals as well as by institutional imperatives. The devotion of Tressawsen to Indian spirituality is a recurrent image in the Western discourse or West's inferior "other" for the West always vaunts the East for its spirituality, longevity and stability. In describing these qualities as "overvalued", Said suggests that the vision inscribed in such motifs is as distorted as its negative counterpart and similarly produced, above all else, by Western projections into the Other.

A.N. Kaul says: "It is true that for the privileged Datta-Chaudhuris nationality has ceased to have any significance and crossing national frontiers means nothing more to them than a smooth transition through customs and immigration at identical airports." (29). For Ila, India is not her home. She flees Calcutta, feeling stifled by its social environment, and seeks a home in London. She marries an Englishman, buys a house, finds a job and tries to settle down. Ila lives in London because "she wanted to be free." (42).

The postcolonial India has seen thousands of men and women migrating to England and the USA "to be free" from social conventions and mores, all elites, in search of power and position, even marrying foreigners.

The narrator's grandmother, on the other hand, is fiercely anti-imperialist. The 'mma, bought up on the stories of Khudi-ram Bosc and Baghta Jatin, has lived the nationalist dream and experienced the setbacks and successes that give it its character. Her personal history of anti-imperialism sharpens her sense of nationhood and of the formation of the Indian nation-state.

This is militant nationalism, as opposed to non-violent nationalism of Gandhiji, which ignited the mind, heart, and imagination of Bengalis. Even an ardent supporter of Non-cooperation movement, a follower of Gandhiji, Saratchandra Chatterjee, the Bengali literary giant, became an ardent exponent of armed revolution and admirer of Subhash Chandra Bose.

Ila and her family, like many bourgeoisie elites in the colonial India, had enjoyed a considerable clout, name, fame, and money and the continued to do so even in the postcolonial India, without shedding a drop of blood.



A Passage to India was written in the mid-twenties of the twentieth century. The undecidability of the colonial elitism is understandable, for India is too vast a country to be understood by one or two visits to her by an outsider. The evidence for metropolitan anti-imperialism does not make for a long or inspiring story. We may also read up instances of affiliation with the colonial struggles and commitment to colonial self-determination, cited in the manifestoes of those groups active during the nineteen-twenties, thirties and forties, and who, in 1954, reformed as the narrator with May may be seen between the undecidability of Forster and the protagonists of the Movement for colonial Freedom.

The Shadow Lines, between Forster and the protagonists of "The Movement for colonial Freedom", is partly postimperialist and partly postcolonial novel. It has neither the distancing of the colonizer and colonized of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park and Kipling's Kim nor Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Caitani Mutharabaini (Delhi on the Cross) and Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope. A writer's handling of the material can be effected by his material base in society, that is his class position and standpoint. It does affect his approximation of reality. Amitav Ghosh had experienced neither a prison term in postcolonial India for attempting to decolonize the mind like Ngugi wa Thiong'o nor Fononian distaste for imperialism as seen in Adil Jussawalla's poetry. Thiong'o had to suffer a prison term in a free county for propounding decolonization of the mind of African writers, for writing African fiction in one's own native language. Jussawalla, based on the ideas of Frantz Fanon, constructs postcolonial Indian citizen or an intellectual as a "missing person", who is "missing" precisely because his subjectivity and agency have been annihilated by the colonial past and the postcolonial conflicts and contradictions, which have produced him and which he still embodies. Amitav Ghosh fails on both counts. His attempts at synthesizing the West and East, though marriage, like Forster, fails. At best, The Shadow Lines is a product of a mind and a birth, which is neither wholly western nor wholly eastern. It is an attempt to Indianize westernization by yoking postimperialism of Princes with postcolonization of Dattas, by violence together. It is a case of overlapping the colonized and the colonial mind-sets and intertwined languages of Orientalism and Occidentalism.

Fanon here gives a picture of a post imperialist ruler. Amitav Ghosh also shows the narrator, Tridib, May, and Price as the facsimiles of the post imperialist feature of his novel. The narrator is unable to digest the militant nationalism of his grandmother. Very often, he defends Ila. For Tridib, May is foreign, sexy and desirable, a figure of romance, from far across the seas. Similarly Ila, living in London, is a figure romance for the narrator. Both Tridib and the narrator are Indians but they love women, living across border.

Gathering the threads of our discussion, we, find the story of The Shadow Lines is the story of two upper-class families, one in London and other in India. Prices in London are called the post imperialist breed. In A Passage to Enhland, Nirad C. Chaudri quotes his son about middle-class English men and women:

The English well-bred middle-class type is so very English that it is impossible to get to know their various little ways unless you have lived with them.... They are too polite and considerate to think of imposing their habits on foreigners, yet they get upset if people do not conform to English ways in English ways in English, a marvellous specimen of human beings, very complex altogether.

Ila conforms to the English ways. Date-Chaudhuri is the an-glyphiles. The grandmother could not conform to the English ways and, therefore, condemned Ila's love o freedom and called her a whore. Amitav Ghosh, like Nirad C. Chaudhuri, tells us that the postimperialist England has shed its material superiority, naughtiness, snobbiness, egoism, and standoffishness. His conclusion is indigestible. The love of the narrator with May Price and the marriage of Ila with Nick Price lift the shadow lines between the West and the East. But, is it convincing?

Edward Said has written about the ending of E.M. Forster's A Passage to India as a "a paralyzed gesture of a aestheticized powerlessness" (36) in which "Forster notes and confirms the history behind a political conflict between Dr. Aziz and Fielding-Britain's subjugation of India-and yet can neither recommend decolonization nor continued colonization. No, not yet not here' is all Forster can muster by way of resolution.



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### SEGREGATING THE WEAK - TREATMENTS OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN ANITA NAIR'S *THE BETTER MAN*

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Anita Nair, one of the luminous Indian novelists upholds the banner of feminism throughout her novels. She makes an attempt to portray the characters of her novels to be plus ultra of feminist values. She focuses social problems and domestic problems in her novels. Anita Nair raises voice against female oppression and spell out the problems of women with such clear conviction through their characters that the readers should pause and ponder over it. *The appalling conditions of the women who melt into mere wax in order to disseminate light for others are pictured here in the novel. The novel is made an aperture through are visible the unbeknown and the much under estimated hard works of the weak sex. Here are characterized women who were made dwarfs before the overwhelming male chauvinistic society. Anita Nair's first novel The Better Man (2000) is about women's conditions in a male dominated society, told with great insight, solidarity and humor. This paper is an attempt to study Segregating the weak - treatments of women characters in Anita Nair's "The better Man".*

This novel is about love and hatred, conflict and struggle and above all about women. It delineates the real conflict between men and women. The paper focuses on the condition of the suppressed women. They all suffer in the different ways. Nair's women characters Parukitty suffers mentally and physically. Woman has never been considered the equal of man. Man has always looked down upon women as the weaker sex the victim of male dominance and oppression. Meenakshi suffers economically, socially, and physically. The novel *The Better Man* by Anita Nair is an astonishing book that is tender, lyrical, humorous, and insightful. For having abandoned his mother.



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## RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS: A CRITIQUE OF RICHARD WRIGHT'S *NATIVE SON*

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### Abstract

Richard Wright in his astonishing novel, *Native Son* (1940) has created a controversial world shocking the sensibilities of both Black and White America by presenting the cultural and logical realities behind racism that has been a matter of question in the United States for centuries. In fact, race differences and prejudice attitudes always caused problem whenever Black and White wanted to unite and live together because the racial stereotypical picture held in both groups' mind/logic, made them act in a prejudice way that gave harm to both groups/cultures. Thus, this study aimed to discuss how the racial stereotypical picture held in both groups' mind became destructive and double-edged racism by focusing on racism, race prejudice, fear, anger, cultural conflicts and cultural logic of racism in Wright's *Native Son*.

For centuries racism has been a matter of question in the United States, and race differences and prejudice attitudes always caused problem whenever Black and White wanted to unite and live together because the racial stereotypical picture held in both groups' mind/logic made them act in a prejudice way that gave harm to both groups/cultures. Aiming to discuss how the racial stereotypical picture held in both groups' mind became destructive and the (omit article) double-edged racism, Richard Wright's *Native Son* will be analyzed focusing on racism, race prejudice, fear, anger and logic of racism in the white and the black worlds of America. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has called America a "fundamentally racist society" (Cheney, 1991) and in his novel *Native Son* (1940), Richard Wright shows the workings of such a society at the level of personal interaction. Wright emphasizes the psychological impact

of race logic on African Americans, receiving praise, as Irving Howe wrote, for bringing "out into open, as no one ever had before, the hatred, fear and violence that have crippled and may yet destroy our culture" (Moore 1951). But Wright's work set in the 1930s, a time when Whites enjoyed socioeconomic advantages over blacks also shows how race logic harms white American society.

In tracing the psychological, intellectual and physical journey of Bigger Thomas, Wright shows that although Thomas is of an oppressed race and the Whites he encounters are members of an oppressing race, both live in fear because of what Robert Guthrie has called the Whites' "guilt-hate-fear complex" (Guthrie, 1970) and the Blacks' "fear-hate-fear complex" (Guthrie, 1970). Wright's book dramatizes these complexes that serve to sabotage the good intentions of Americans on different sides of the color line who attempt to cross it. *Native Son* also illustrates the different spaces in which whites and blacks live, and, as Steve Pile and Michael Keith have written, the "spacial logic" controls the groups' mutual perceptions (Pile and Keith, 1993). Namely, the "special logic" controlling the mutual perception shapes the cultural logic of a stereotypical picture drawn from a prejudice and double edged destructive racist perception.

Generally, due to race prejudice, then, both manifestly racist as well as "progressive" whites effectively transform blacks into their own negative stereotypes of "blackness," seeing them as harmful while blacks see whites as overpowering and hostile forces. In fact, whites and blacks both fail to conceive each other as individuals because they are bound by the "cultural logic of racism." Namely, the culture both whites and blacks have grown up have shaped the logic/understanding of the concept of racism that culturally, logically, physically and psychologically formed negative images/stereotypes in the mind of both groups. Thus, both groups with the cultural logic of racism perceived each other as frightening and untrustworthy. To deconstruct this cultural logic of racism, and to perceive others as individuals, not merely as members of a stereotyped group, both blacks and whites have to sympathize with each other.



Throughout the novel, Wright illustrates the ways in which white racism forces blacks into a pressured and dangerous state of mind. Blacks under the oppression of poverty are forced to act subserviently before their white oppressors, while journalists consistently portray blacks as animalistic brutes. Under such conditions, the cultural logic of racism forces Bigger to react with violence and hatred towards both whites and blacks because of fear. Native Son opens with Bigger's mother's and sister's angry voices and the harsh clang of an alarm clock. The angry voices awaken Bigger. He lives in a one-room apartment, along with his sister, mother, brother, and a "rat." This "rat" is important because in the first scene Bigger and Buddy trap a black rat and kill it. This action is symbolic for the entire novel in which Bigger, like the rat, will be hunted down and destroyed.

Bigger is always penniless and hates white people because he feels trapped and different in a world arranged according to white laws and boundaries. He wants to be rich, powerful, and free, but is trapped in a narrow area of the city on its south side. "It maddened him to think that he did not have a wider choice" (Wright, 1940). He feels alienated, as David Sibley writes, "belonging and not belonging to a certain space" (Sibley, 1995). Bigger's hatred arose not only of Whites but also of Blacks and even his family because he can only obey, not choose that lures him into limitation. Bigger was not satisfied with the place he was forced to live in, therefore the thought of limitations maddened him and physical boundaries made him aggressive. Wright illustrates how racist physical boundaries induce Blacks to take out aggressions on one another. Because of their insular lives Blacks "felt that it was much easier and safer to rob their own people because the white policemen never really searched against other Negroes who committed crime against other Negroes" (Wright, 1940). Thus, they are allowed to commit crime in their own culture but when they try to cross boundaries they are punished. The Whites' world is a forbidden territory. Wright illustrates Blacks' limitation when Bigger and his friend Gus meet on a south side street while they are leaning against a building, comforting themselves in sunshine warmer than their

one-room apartments. They suddenly notice a skywriting plane spelling out something.

Bigger uses binary oppositions to set out all the black and white differences and the limitations brought by the spatial logic starting from childhood. Whites are free, but he feels he is in jail. Later he really will be put in jail by that society he resents. Moreover, he is only allowed to see the outside world through a knot-hole. This very limited opportunity caused anxiety and aggressiveness on the surface but deep in inside he is feared. Thus, Bigger, by experiencing the hazards of the culture he lives in, becomes an accidental killer, although before he becomes an accidental killer he first becomes the victim of racism culturally structured and the socially bounded.

In other words, because Bigger has grown up in a culture that proscribes Blacks and Whites interacting not on friendly terms. Bigger assumes that white people's, acts of kindness to him is something to be feared rather than to be flattered. He is so controlled by such a cultural logic that when Jan offers his hand to shake he is shocked. Jan smiled broadly, and then extended an open palm toward him. Bigger's entire body tightened with suspense and dread. Jan's hand was still extended. Bigger's right hand raised itself about three inches, then stopped in mid-air. 'Come on and shake,' Jan said. Bigger extended a limp palm, his mouth open astonishment. He felt Jan's fingers tighten about his own. He tried to pull his hand away, ever so gently, but Jan held on, firmly, smiling. 'I will call you Bigger and you will call me Jan' (Wright, 1940).

Bigger is astonished and cannot understand why Jan is acting like this. And why is Mary responding to him as if he were a human and as if he lived in the same world as she? Bigger's background has not prepared him to accept being treated as a human. He is shocked by fair racial treatment and is unable to respond to them as individuals, only as white people. Mary and Jan assume that Bigger will welcome their friendship, not realizing that Bigger has been conditioned to react with suspicion and fear.

Ultimately, Wright portrays the vicious circle of racism from the white perspective as well as from the black one, emphasizing that even well-meaning



whites exhibit prejudices that feed into the very same black behaviors that confirm the racist whites' sense of superiority. Also, when Jan drives the car with Mary in the passenger seat, Bigger hesitates and feels himself trapped between these two white people. He is so shocked that, ironically, he feels himself less free than when he was trapped in his one-room apartment. As Wright explains, "he could have made all this very easy if he had simply acted from the beginning as if they were doing nothing unusual. But he did not understand them; he distrusted them, really hated them. He was puzzled as to why they were treating him this way" (Wright, 1940). The unusual behaviors created hesitations and fear that was astonishing and challenging for the culturally shaped logical mental picture of racism.

Double edgedness' of racism on psychological, sociological and cultural levels, either directly or indirectly, both whites and blacks are responsible of the prejudice racist views and negative stereotypical images unconsciously drawn by both groups due to lack of communication, boundaries and fear. Bigger dramatizes the anger and pain of his race regarding "fear-hate-fear complex", and the Daltons effectively represent the ruling white power structure regarding "guilt-hate-fear complex".

Native Son inverts the common American assumption of individual opportunity. Both Bigger's crimes and his fate merely fulfill society's expectations of him as a black man and the Dalton's attitudes fulfill the society's expectation of a white but both Bigger and Daltons are directly victims and indirectly criminals of each other because of their cultural logic of racism that makes them act in a blind and prejudice attitude. Consequently, the effect of cultural logic of racism was double edged because both groups were imprisoned corrupted by the social and cultural understanding that prevented individualistic intercourse between the Whites and Blacks. Namely, the cultural logic of racism that was socially and culturally shaped, and the race prejudice was far more than skin deep matter because the attitudes of both groups were the result of their unconsciously painted stereotypical picture that victimized and limited their relations. Thus, whenever black and white intend to unite there will be a fight and cultural corruption unless changes occur in the cultural logic of racism

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### THE TEDIOUS TYRANNY ON FEMALE GENDER IN ALICE WALKER'S THE COLOR PURPLE

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The black community is a closely knit one with the members of the black race interacting with each other on different occasions. They have to necessarily band together for protection and solace from the harsh and hostile white environment in which they live. *The Color Purple*, Walker presses into greatest use the epistolary mode of writing. The novel constitutes the letters of a fourteen-year-old girl who has been violated by the man she believes to be her father. Her letters are horrifying as well as amazing because they are the letters of a human being in whom every capacity for growth and life has been killed.

Alice Malsenior Walker is born on February 9, 1944 as the eighth child of Willie Lee Walker and Minnie Tallulah Grant Walker. Growing up in a sharecropper family in Eatonton, Georgia, Walker experiences first-hand the southern atmosphere in which the black vernaculars are prominent and the stamp of slavery and oppression is still at present which will shape many of her future works. The black community is a closely knit one with the members of the black race interacting with each other on different occasions. They have to necessarily band together for protection and solace from the harsh and hostile white environment in which they live. But the black community is not always a unified and sympathetic one. Sometimes, within the group, differences may arise and the community extends or withholds support as the majority deems fit. The community and its role are very important in the life of

a black person because the community's stand affects their lives in many ways. It is the community which keeps the torch of black folklore, tradition and culture burning alive.

Another important agency which helps the black person survive is the black church. Apart from catering to the spiritual needs of a family, many a black family has been benefitted from the funds allotted by the church towards maintenance. *The Color Purple* examines the different coping agencies of a black person that alleviates the sufferings of domestic violence. In *The Color Purple*, Walker presses into greatest use the epistolary mode of writing. The novel constitutes the letters of a fourteen-year-old girl who has been violated by the man she believes to be her father. The narration is wholly innocent, infinitely pathetic and expressive of the helplessness of a trapped animal that Celie resembles. Her letters are horrifying as well as amazing because they are the letters of a human being in whom every capacity for growth and life has been killed. They constitute the mute cry of a creature so thoroughly beaten to earth that nothing would seem to ever raise her up again. The dispassionate character of the narration moreover heightens the effect of the tragedy for it is born out of an inevitable numbness and resignation. One critic highlights Celie's need: "What she needs is to share her burdens, be taken off the cross, and find a way to save herself. Celie does find a way and it works because, as she discovers, God is herself" (Mari Evans 490).

Celie is the eldest child in a black household where the mother is physically and mentally deranged, worn out by years of child bearing and devoid of the sense and strength to offer succor to her children. Her husband, thus, manages to rape his eldest daughter successively and imposes on her a terrible silence. He warns her not to tell anybody about the rape. Celie, too, ashamed and too bewildered to tell anybody, confides in God through letters, the mute and impersonal stranger, who has failed too in His task of protecting the innocent. Thus, at fourteen, Celie confronts a mother who never has the strength to protect the children she brings into the world, and a father who is so charged with evil that he is capable of physically and, therefore, mentally raping his child.



When Celie is violated, her only attributes are innocence, ignorance and helplessness the qualities of a child. The fact that these can be violated by the very few people, who, by law of nature, ought to conserve them, is an inescapable fact of life. On the other hand, society too chooses to ignore such violations. Barbara Christian explains this accomplishment:

"Through act, word, or dream, they naturally seek to be spontaneously themselves. In order to defend the selves they know they are, they must hold to what is difficult, often wishing, however, that they were not so compelled. Like all natural things, they must have themselves even in conflict" (34).

Celie, meeting her fate alone, watches her mother die "screaming and cussing". After she has been repeatedly raped by her father he takes her away from school in spite of her tears and protests. Celie tries to keep alive the curiosity for knowledge in her by studying her sister Nettie's lessons. Celie is in a futile struggle to conserve in herself the spark of healthy vigor that is necessary to acquire knowledge. She is prevented from sustaining this. Bewildered and ignorant, she watches her body swell and grow larger, and her surprise knows no bounds when a child comes out of herself, kicking and squalling. Celie faces her ordeals and her pregnancies alone. Nobody comes to the house to see her. While she puts up with physical violence in the form of whippings, beatings and rapes, fears lest her growing sister Nettie, should meet with the same fate at the hands of their father.

Celie, as she grows, develops an uncanny fear for men. She never dares to look at a man. "I look at women though", she says, "cause I'm not scared of them" (5). For years, Celie lives in terror of her husband. She is unable to name the men in her life. Her husband remains to her as 'Mr.' He represents to her an impersonal force, as terrifying and as destructive as her father. Celie congeals into numbness and steels herself to meet her oppressors.

For Celie passivity is the only strategy available in order to keep alive. She begins to face the realities of life when she is still ill-equipped to face them. Celie is never given a respite to develop her faculty for fighting back.

All that she can do is to take Albert's blows without buckling under, and to accept without flinching her step children's violence and hatred for her. She becomes incapable of living or looking up to men. Men, to her, possess an undeniable capacity to hurt, physically, sexually and, therefore, mentally. Celie's love is, therefore, given to the women in her life, to her sister Nettie and to Shug with whom she later shares a lesbian relationship.

She effectively gets out of the way when her father palms her off to Albert. Albert marries her because he cannot win Nettie who is young and beautiful. Celie enters her husband's household as cook and servant to Albert and his children. On the very first day her head is broken open by Albert's son Harpo who resents her arrival. Celie faces years of cruelty from Albert who vents his frustration on her, his frustration at not having married the woman he loves, Shug Avery, blues singer and liberated woman. He marries his first wife, a young girl whose short and miserable married life culminates in her death, for the same reason. When Celie steps into her shoes, she takes the place of her predecessor and serves as the punching bag for her husband.

One of the first persons who sympathizes with Celie is her sister-in-law who visits them and approves of Celie's house keeping. She pursues Albert to buy Celie some clothing, and for the first time in her life, Celie experiences the joy of wearing new clothes and bright colours. Her sister-in-law tries in vain to make Albert and Harpo respect and cherish Celie. She looks on helplessly at the depths that Celie has been made to sink to. She feels the helpless anger and the furious indignation that Celie ought to feel. Celie, isolated and alone, thinks of Nettie's flight from her home where she was neither safe nor cherished. She wonders, "I don't fight. I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive" (CP 21). When she resigns herself to her unjust fate and accepts passively the violence of the two men close to her, her father and her husband, she struggles merely to live. She strives, not to transcend her fate or to overcome it. She needs all her strength simply to survive the battered soul and the ruined mind and body. Celie is incapable even of fighting her stepchildren. Here Walker says:



"Everybody say how good I is to Mr. \_\_\_ I be good to them. But I don't feel nothing for them. Patting Harpo back not even like patting a dog. It more like patting another piece of wood. Not a living tree, but a table, a chifferobe. Anyhow, they don't love me neither, no matter how good I is" (29).

From such a household Celie steps into another, equally arid, where the positive human qualities of love and honour are unknown. The atmosphere is mentally stifling. In Albert lies embodied the vices of cowardice, sloth and latent cruelty. He performs no act that can redeem him, however minutely, in his own eyes, or in those of his wife and children. He refuses to work. He makes Celie and Harpo till this land. He ruins his own life and the lives of those around him. Forbidden in his youth by his father to marry the woman of his choice, he has been too craven to stand up for himself. He vents his frustration on his two wives whom he enslaves, and on his children. Celie notices that Albert is worthless, even more worthless than she is.

Celie, in her apathy, grows from an innocent victim, to a human being responsible for her own life and actions. Though her life is almost wholly determined by circumstances beyond her control, Walker asserts the validity of the individual responsibility. Even Celie cannot remain apathetic for long. In her passivity, she becomes culpable. At a certain point in her life, the knowledge dawns on her that she has failed in the duty she owes to herself and to people around her. Celie, by letting herself be victimized sins against herself and against the laws of the world.

Celie is roused a little when she sees Sophia, Harpo's wife, who stands up for herself ceaselessly, and fights the men who all the time try to suppress her. Celie, notwithstanding her mildness, experiences a brief spell of hatred towards Sophia for displaying the courage she herself has never possessed. In a fit of jealousy, she encourages Harpo to beat her, and curb her spirit, which he does. Celie after these suffers the agonies of a guilty conscience. Sophia represents all that she herself ought to be, but is not. She sees with resentment that Sophia holds her own. She would rather die fighting the men around her than let them get away with laying a finger on her.

Sophia spends her whole life fighting the violence and cruelty that permeate her whole society. She makes Celie aware of her duty to herself. She helps rouse the militancy that lies dormant in her gentle nature. She initiates Celie into realizing that it is her duty to fight her dastardly husband and any person who tries to retard her freedom or growth. Sophia tells Celie:

"All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and uncles. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men. But I never thought I'd have to fight in my own house. She let out her breath. I love Harpo, she say God knows I do. But I'll kill him dead before I let him beat me" (40).

Celie's greatest influence is, however, Shug, the woman her husband loves and wants to marry. Shug makes no bones about loving Celie's husband. She is surprised to find in Celie a woman who has always been lonely, battered and ignored. She is wonderstruck to discover that Albert, the man she has loved, is a wife beater, a coward in his own home. Shug, probes into the matter to release Celie from the hell she has been living in and to teach her to liberate herself. Between the two women develops a lesbian relationship. Celie for the first time in her life experiences healthy love, from a person who has no complexes, who does not turn violent, and who does not ignore her existence.

Shug elicits from Celie the pathetic story of her life, of her horrific experiences, the terror, the helplessness of her life. Recalling her past life, Celie weeps afresh and unburdens her great sorrows on the broad shoulders of Shug. She speaks of her marriage, the beating that her husband gives, and the loss of the only person in the world who cares for her, her sister Nettie.

Shug performs the most important act in Celie's life that sparks off the vital change in her. She unearths for Celie and hands over to her the letters from her sister Nettie, written over the years from Africa, which her husband has hidden from her all along. The knowledge of his act of ultimate meanness sends Celie bouncing back to life burning with indignation and thirst for revenge: "I begin to feel a lightening in the head", she writes (120). But Shug counsels her into restraint. She teaches her that her life is too precious to be spent in hating or in intellectual apathy. She teaches her to live positively, to take from



past experience only the wisdom, and to leave the bitterness behind. To Celie, Shug's own life is a lesson and a source of wonder. Shug has always reached for what is natural and healthy, leaving morality to the winds. Shug never regrets her illegitimate relationship with Albert and the three children she has borne him. She never regrets the fact that she has consigned the upbringing of her children to her mother. Shug does the thing she loves best, sing.

Shug teaches Celie to shed her complexes one by one. All these years, whenever Celie thinks of her children, she has felt only shame, not love. She is still overwhelmed at forty by the incidents that took place at fourteen. Her mind and her life however begin to open up, as good fortune, bit by bit comes her way. Although Celie can talk with God in her own intellectual language, she also receives moral support as her letters become emotively personal when she gains a human response from Nettie. Celie learns through the letters that the man who has raped and beat her for several years and sired her two illegitimate children is only a stepfather and not her biological father. These children are the same ones who have been adopted by Nettie's new family and taken to Africa. Nettie describes the children to Celie in a letter:

"I know if she [Corine, Nettie's new adopted mother] can just recall your [Celie's] face, she will believe Olivia [Celie's daughter] if not Adam [Celie's son] is your child. They [Nettie's new family] think Olivia looks like me, but that is because I look like you. Olivia has your face and eyes, exactly. It amazes me that Corine didn't see the resemblance" (186).

This knowledge from Nettie's letters helps relieve tension and frustration for Celie as she tells her stepfather.

She learns, from Nettie's letters, the truth about her family. The man who has raped her is not her father but her stepfather. Her own father was a prosperous, enterprising black, lynched for his good fortune, by a white society. The incident has sent her mother crazy. Celie feels relief that her children are not the products of incest. Celie sets out with Shug to meet and account the man who has raped her and ruined her life. She tries to discover from him the whereabouts of her parent's grave.

Shug takes Celie to Tennessee and there gives her economic independence in addition to her physical and mental freedom. Celie begins to

make and trade in pants. She develops her natural flair for making pants. Celie's pants are symbolic. They symbolize the new freedom of movement she develops and the ease and comfort that go with freedom. Celie symbolically develops the attributes of a man. She gains freedom and responsibilities for her own life and those of others and discharges those responsibilities. Celie's pants bring her money and for the first time in her life she is totally free, nobody's wife and nobody's slave. Celie, who has merely survived so far, begins to assert the positive values of life. She searches for fulfillment, for completeness. She not only shakes herself free of her husband and family but she also begins to manifest a joy in life, a happiness in living and a fullness in existence.

Walker's heroine is, thus, an innocent victim of evil and fate. Celie consequently does not rise to confront her fate for a great many years. It needs all her faculties, in the mean while, simply to survive. Therefore, the effort has put to exemplify on the subject of *The Tediuous Tyranny on Female Gender in Alice Walker's The Color Purple*.

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LITERARY EXPLORATIONS

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## RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS: A CRITIQUE OF RICHARD WRIGHT'S *NATIVE SON*

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### Abstract

Richard Wright in his astonishing novel, *Native Son* (1940) has created a controversial world shocking the sensibilities of both Black and White America by presenting the cultural and logical realities behind racism that has been a matter of question in the United States for centuries. In fact, race differences and prejudice attitudes always caused problem whenever Black and White wanted to unite and live together because the racial stereotypical picture held in both groups' mind/logic, made them act in a prejudice way that gave harm to both groups/cultures. Thus, this study aimed to discuss how the racial stereotypical picture held in both groups' mind became destructive and double-edged racism by focusing on racism, race prejudice, fear, anger, cultural conflicts and cultural logic of racism in Wright's *Native Son*.

For centuries racism has been a matter of question in the United States, and race differences and prejudice attitudes always caused problem whenever Black and White wanted to unite and live together because the racial stereotypical picture held in both groups' mind/logic made them act in a prejudice way that gave harm to both groups/cultures. Aiming to discuss how the racial stereotypical picture held in both groups' mind became destructive and the (omit article) double-edged racism, Richard Wright's *Native Son* will be analyzed focusing on racism, race prejudice, fear, anger and logic of racism in the white and the black worlds of America. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has called America a "fundamentally racist society" (Cheney, 1991) and in his novel *Native Son* (1940), Richard Wright shows the workings of such a society at the level of personal interaction. Wright emphasizes the psychological impact

of race logic on African Americans, receiving praise, as Irving Howe wrote, for bringing "out into open, as no one ever had before, the hatred, fear and violence that have crippled and may yet destroy our culture" (Moore 1951). But Wright's work set in the 1930s, a time when Whites enjoyed socioeconomic advantages over blacks also shows how race logic harms white American society.

In tracing the psychological, intellectual and physical journey of Bigger Thomas, Wright shows that although Thomas is of an oppressed race and the Whites he encounters are members of an oppressing race, both live in fear because of what Robert Guthrie has called the Whites' "guilt-hate-fear complex" (Guthrie, 1970) and the Blacks' "fear-hate-fear complex" (Guthrie, 1970). Wright's book dramatizes these complexes that serve to sabotage the good intentions of Americans on different sides of the color line who attempt to cross it. *Native Son* also illustrates the different spaces in which whites and blacks live, and, as Steve Pile and Michael Keith have written, the "spacial logic" controls the groups' mutual perceptions (Pile and Keith, 1993). Namely, the "special logic" controlling the mutual perception shapes the cultural logic of a stereotypical picture drawn from a prejudice and double edged destructive racist perception.

Generally, due to race prejudice, then, both manifestly racist as well as "progressive" whites effectively transform blacks into their own negative stereotypes of "blackness," seeing them as harmful while blacks see whites as overpowering and hostile forces. In fact, whites and blacks both fail to conceive each other as individuals because they are bound by the "cultural logic of racism." Namely, the culture both whites and blacks have grown up have shaped the logic/understanding of the concept of racism that culturally, logically, physically and psychologically formed negative images/stereotypes in the mind of both groups. Thus, both groups with the cultural logic of racism perceived each other as frightening and untrustworthy. To deconstruct this cultural logic of racism, and to perceive others as individuals, not merely as members of a stereotyped group, both blacks and whites have to sympathize with each other.



Throughout the novel, Wright illustrates the ways in which white racism forces blacks into a pressured and dangerous state of mind. Blacks under the oppression of poverty are forced to act subserviently before their white oppressors, while journalists consistently portray blacks as animalistic brutes. Under such conditions, the cultural logic of racism forces Bigger to react with violence and hatred towards both whites and blacks because of fear. Native Son opens with Bigger's mother's and sister's angry voices and the harsh clang of an alarm clock. The angry voices awaken Bigger. He lives in a one-room apartment, along with his sister, mother, brother, and a "rat." This "rat" is important because in the first scene Bigger and Buddy trap a black rat and kill it. This action is symbolic for the entire novel in which Bigger, like the rat, will be hunted down and destroyed.

Bigger is always penniless and hates white people because he feels trapped and different in a world arranged according to white laws and boundaries. He wants to be rich, powerful, and free, but is trapped in a narrow area of the city on its south side. "It maddened him to think that he did not have a wider choice" (Wright, 1940). He feels alienated, as David Sibley writes, "belonging and not belonging to a certain space" (Sibley, 1995). Bigger's hatred arose not only of Whites but also of Blacks and even his family because he can only obey, not choose that lures him into limitation. Bigger was not satisfied with the place he was forced to live in, therefore the thought of limitations maddened him and physical boundaries made him aggressive. Wright illustrates how racist physical boundaries induce Blacks to take out aggressions on one another. Because of their insular lives Blacks "felt that it was much easier and safer to rob their own people because the white policemen never really searched against other Negroes who committed crime against other Negroes" (Wright, 1940). Thus, they are allowed to commit crime in their own culture but when they try to cross boundaries they are punished. The Whites' world is a forbidden territory. Wright illustrates Blacks' limitation when Bigger and his friend Gus meet on a south side street while they are leaning against a building, comforting themselves in sunshine warmer than their

one-room apartments. They suddenly notice a skywriting plane spelling out something.

Bigger uses binary oppositions to set out all the black and white differences and the limitations brought by the spatial logic starting from childhood. Whites are free, but he feels he is in jail. Later he really will be put in jail by that society he resents. Moreover, he is only allowed to see the outside world through a knot-hole. This very limited opportunity caused anxiety and aggressiveness on the surface but deep in inside he is feared. Thus, Bigger, by experiencing the hazards of the culture he lives in, becomes an accidental killer, although before he becomes an accidental killer he first becomes the victim of racism culturally structured and the socially bounded.

In other words, because Bigger has grown up in a culture that proscribes Blacks and Whites interacting not on friendly terms. Bigger assumes that white people's, acts of kindness to him is something to be feared rather than to be flattered. He is so controlled by such a cultural logic that when Jan offers his hand to shake he is shocked: Jan smiled broadly, and then extended an open palm toward him. Bigger's entire body tightened with suspense and dread. Jan's hand was still extended. Bigger's right hand raised itself about three inches, then stopped in mid-air. 'Come on and shake,' Jan said. Bigger extended a limp palm, his mouth open astonishment. He felt Jan's fingers tighten about his own. He tried to pull his hand away, ever so gently, but Jan held on, firmly, smiling. 'I will call you Bigger and you will call me Jan.' (Wright, 1940).

Bigger is astonished and cannot understand why Jan is acting like this. And why is Mary responding to him as if he were a human and as if he lived in the same world as she? Bigger's background has not prepared him to accept being treated as a human. He is shocked by fair racial treatment and is unable to respond to them as individuals, only as white people. Mary and Jan assume that Bigger will welcome their friendship, not realizing that Bigger has been conditioned to react with suspicion and fear.

Ultimately, Wright portrays the vicious circle of racism from the white perspective as well as from the black one, emphasizing that even well-meaning



whites exhibit prejudices that feed into the very same black behaviors that confirm the racist whites' sense of superiority. Also, when Jan drives the car with Mary in the passenger seat, Bigger hesitates and feels himself trapped between these two white people. He is so shocked that, ironically, he feels himself less free than when he was trapped in his one-room apartment. As Wright explains, "he could have made all this very easy if he had simply acted from the beginning as if they were doing nothing unusual. But he did not understand them; he distrusted them, really hated them. He was puzzled as to why they were treating him this way" (Wright, 1940). The unusual behaviors created hesitations and fear that was astonishing and challenging for the culturally shaped logical mental picture of racism.

Double edgedness' of racism on psychological, sociological and cultural levels, either directly or indirectly, both whites and blacks are responsible of the prejudice racist views and negative stereotypical images unconsciously drawn by both groups due to lack of communication, boundaries and fear. Bigger dramatizes the anger and pain of his race regarding "fear-hate-fear complex", and the Daltons effectively represent the ruling white power structure regarding "guilt-hate-fear complex".

Native Son inverts the common American assumption of individual opportunity. Both Bigger's crimes and his fate merely fulfill society's expectations of him as a black man and the Dalton's attitudes fulfill the society's expectation of a white but both Bigger and Daltons are directly victims and indirectly criminals of each other because of their cultural logic of racism that makes them act in a blind and prejudice attitude. Consequently, the effect of cultural logic of racism was double edged because both groups were imprisoned corrupted by the social and cultural understanding that prevented individualistic intercourse between the Whites and Blacks. Namely, the cultural logic of racism that was socially and culturally shaped, and the race prejudice was far more than skin deep matter because the attitudes of both groups were the result of their unconsciously painted stereotypical picture that victimized and limited their relations. Thus, whenever black and white intend to unite there will be a fight and cultural corruption unless changes occur in the cultural logic of racism.

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The black community is a closely knit one with the members of the black race interacting with each other on different occasions. They have to necessarily band together for protection and solace from the harsh and hostile white environment in which they live. *The Color Purple*, Walker presses into greatest use the epistolary mode of writing. The novel constitutes the letters of a fourteen-year-old girl who has been violated by the man she believes to be her father. Her letters are horrifying as well as amazing because they are the letters of a human being in whom every capacity for growth and life has been killed.

Alice Malsenior Walker is born on February 9, 1944 as the eighth child of Willie Lee Walker and Minnie Tallulah Grant Walker. Growing up in a sharecropper family in Eatonton, Georgia, Walker experiences first-hand the southern atmosphere in which the black vernaculars are prominent and the stamp of slavery and oppression is still at present which will shape many of her future works. The black community is a closely knit one with the members of the black race interacting with each other on different occasions. They have to necessarily band together for protection and solace from the harsh and hostile white environment in which they live. But the black community is not always a unified and sympathetic one. Sometimes, within the group, differences may arise and the community extends or withholds support as the majority deems fit. The community and its role are very important in the life of

a black person because the community's stand affects their lives in many ways. It is the community which keeps the torch of black folklore, tradition and culture burning alive.

Another important agency which helps the black person survive is the black church. Apart from catering to the spiritual needs of a family, many a black family has been benefited from the funds allotted by the church towards maintenance. *The Color Purple* examines the different coping agencies of a black person that alleviates the sufferings of domestic violence. In *The Color Purple*, Walker presses into greatest use the epistolary mode of writing. The novel constitutes the letters of a fourteen-year-old girl who has been violated by the man she believes to be her father. The narration is wholly innocent, infinitely pathetic and expressive of the helplessness of a trapped animal that Celie resembles. Her letters are horrifying as well as amazing because they are the letters of a human being in whom every capacity for growth and life has been killed. They constitute the mute cry of a creature so thoroughly beaten to earth that nothing would seem to ever raise her up again. The dispassionate character of the narration moreover heightens the effect of the tragedy for it is born out of an inevitable numbness and resignation. One critic highlights Celie's need: "What she needs is to share her burdens, be taken off the cross, and find a way to save herself. Celie does find a way and it works because, as she discovers, God is herself" (Mari Evans 490).

Celie is the eldest child in a black household where the mother is physically and mentally deranged, worn out by years of child bearing and devoid of the sense and strength to offer succor to her children. Her husband, thus, manages to rape his eldest daughter successively and imposes on her a terrible silence. He warns her not to tell anybody about the rape. Celie, too, ashamed and too bewildered to tell anybody, confides in God through letters, the mute and impersonal stranger. Who has failed too in His task of protecting the innocent. Thus, at fourteen, Celie confronts a mother who never has the strength to protect the children she brings into the world, and a father who is so charged with evil that he is capable of physically and, therefore, mentally raping his child.



When Celie is violated, her only attributes are innocence, ignorance and helplessness the qualities of a child. The fact that these can be violated by the very few people, who, by law of nature, ought to conserve them, is an inescapable fact of life. On the other hand, society too chooses to ignore such violations. Barbara Christian explains this accomplishment:

"Through act, word, or dream, they naturally seek to be spontaneously themselves. In order to defend the selves they know they are, they must hold to what is difficult, often wishing, however, that they were not so compelled. Like all natural things, they must have themselves even in conflict" (34).

Celie, meeting her fate alone, watches her mother die "screaming and cussing". After she has been repeatedly raped by her father he takes her away from school in spite of her tears and protests. Celie tries to keep alive the curiosity for knowledge in her by studying her sister Nettie's lessons. Celie is in a futile struggle to conserve in herself the spark of healthy vigor that is necessary to acquire knowledge. She is prevented from sustaining this. Bewildered and ignorant, she watches her body swell and grow larger, and her surprise knows no bounds when a child comes out of herself, kicking and squalling. Celie faces her ordeals and her pregnancies alone. Nobody comes to the house to see her. While she puts up with physical violence in the form of whippings, beatings and rapes, fears lest her growing sister Nettie, should meet with the same fate at the hands of their father.

Celie, as she grows, develops an uncanny fear for men. She never dares to look at a man. "I look at women though", she says, "cause I'm not scared of them" (5). For years, Celie lives in terror of her husband. She is unable to name the men in her life. Her husband remains to her as 'Mr.'. He represents to her an impersonal force, as terrifying and as destructive as her father. Celie congeals into numbness and steels herself to meet her oppressors.

For Celie passivity is the only strategy available in order to keep alive. She begins to face the realities of life when she is still ill-equipped to face them. Celie is never given a respite to develop her faculty for fighting back.

All that she can do is to take Albert's blows without buckling under, and to accept without flinching her step children's violence and hatred for her. She becomes incapable of living or looking up to men. Men, to her, possess an undeniable capacity to hurt, physically, sexually and, therefore, mentally. Celie's love is, therefore, given to the women in her life, to her sister Nettie and to Shug with whom she later shares a lesbian relationship.

She effectively gets out of the way when her father palms her off to Albert. Albert marries her because he cannot win Nettie who is young and beautiful. Celie enters her husband's household as cook and servant to Albert and his children. On the very first day her head is broken open by Albert's son Harpo who resents her arrival. Celie faces years of cruelty from Albert who vents his frustration on her, his frustration at not having married the woman he loves, Shug Avery, blues singer and liberated woman. He marries his first wife, a young girl whose short and miserable married life culminates in her death, for the same reason. When Celie steps into her shoes, she takes the place of her predecessor and serves as the punching bag for her husband.

One of the first persons who sympathizes with Celie is her sister-in-law who visits them and approves of Celie's house keeping. She pursues Albert to buy Celie some clothing, and for the first time in her life, Celie experiences the joy of wearing new clothes and bright colours. Her sister-in-law tries in vain to make Albert and Harpo respect and cherish Celie. She looks on helplessly at the depths that Celie has been made to sink to. She feels the helpless anger and the furious indignation that Celie ought to feel. Celie, isolated and alone, thinks of Nettie's flight from her home where she was neither safe nor cherished. She wonders, "I don't fight. I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive" (CP 21). When she resigns herself to her unjust fate and accepts passively the violence of the two men close to her, her father and her husband, she struggles merely to live. She strives, not to transcend her fate or to overcome it. She needs all her strength simply to survive the battered soul and the ruined mind and body. Celie is incapable even of fighting her stepchildren. Here Walker says:



"Everybody say how good I is to Mr. \_\_\_\_ I be good to them. But I don't feel nothing for them. Pating Harpo back not even like patting a dog. It more like patting another piece of wood. Not a living tree, but a table, a chifferobe. Anyhow, they don't love me neither, no matter how good I is" (29).

From such a household Celie steps into another, equally arid, where the positive human qualities of love and honour are unknown. The atmosphere is mentally stifling. In Albert lies embodied the vices of cowardice, sloth and latent cruelty. He performs no act that can redeem him, however minutely, in his own eyes, or in those of his wife and children. He refuses to work. He makes Celie and Harpo till this land. He ruins his own life and the lives of those around him. Forbidden in his youth by his father to marry the woman of his choice, he has been too craven to stand up for himself. He vents his frustration on his two wives whom he enslaves, and on his children. Celie notices that Albert is worthless, even more worthless than she is.

Celie, in her apathy, grows from an innocent victim, to a human being responsible for her own life and actions. Though her life is almost wholly determined by circumstances beyond her control, Walker asserts the validity of the individual responsibility. Even Celie cannot remain apathetic for long. In her passivity, she becomes culpable. At a certain point in her life, the knowledge dawns on her that she has failed in the duty she owes to herself and to people around her. Celie, by letting herself be victimized sins against herself and against the laws of the world.

Celie is roused a little when she sees Sophia, Harpo's wife, who stands up for herself ceaselessly, and fights the men who all the time try to suppress her. Celie, notwithstanding her mildness, experiences a brief spell of hatred towards Sophia for displaying the courage she herself has never possessed. In a fit of jealousy, she encourages Harpo to beat her, and curb her spirit, which she does. Celie after these suffers the agonies of a guilty conscience. Sophia represents all that she herself ought to be, but is not. She sees with resentment that Sophia holds her own. She would rather die fighting the men around her than let them get away with laying a finger on her.

Sophia spends her whole life fighting the violence and cruelty that permeate her whole society. She makes Celie aware of her duty to herself. She helps rouse the militancy that lies dormant in her gentle nature. She initiates Celie into realizing that it is her duty to fight her dastardly husband and any person who tries to retard her freedom or growth. Sophia tells Celie:

"All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and uncles. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men. But I never thought I'd have to fight in my own house. She let out her breath. I love Harpo, she say God knows I do. But I'll kill him dead before I let him beat me" (40).

Celie's greatest influence is, however, Shug, the woman her husband loves and wants to marry. Shug makes no bones about loving Celie's husband. She is surprised to find in Celie a woman who has always been lonely, battered and ignored. She is wonderstruck to discover that Albert, the man she has loved, is a wife beater, a coward in his own home. Shug, probes into the matter to release Celie from the hell she has been living in and to teach her to liberate herself. Between the two women develops a lesbian relationship. Celie for the first time in her life experiences healthy love, from a person who has no complexes, who does not turn violent, and who does not ignore her existence.

Shug elicits from Celie the pathetic story of her life, of her horrific experiences, the terror, the helplessness of her life. Recalling her past life, Celie weeps afresh and unburdens her great sorrows on the broad shoulders of Shug. She speaks of her marriage, the beating that her husband gives, and the loss of the only person in the world who cares for her, her sister Nettie.

Shug performs the most important act in Celie's life that sparks off the vital change in her. She unearths for Celie and hands over to her the letters from her sister Nettie, written over the years from Africa, which her husband has hidden from her all along. The knowledge of his act of ultimate meanness sends Celie bouncing back to life burning with indignation and thirst for revenge: "I begin to feel a lightening in the head", she writes (120). But Shug counsels her into restraint. She teaches her that her life is too precious to be spent in hating or in intellectual apathy. She teaches her to live positively, to take from



past experience only the wisdom, and to leave the bitterness behind. To Celie, Shug's own life is a lesson and a source of wonder. Shug has always reached for what is natural and healthy, leaving morality to the winds. Shug never regrets her illegitimate relationship with Albert and the three children she has borne him. She never regrets the fact that she has consigned the upbringing of her children to her mother. Shug does the thing she loves best, sing.

Shug teaches Celie to shed her complexes one by one. All these years, whenever Celie thinks of her children, she has felt only shame, not love. She is still overwhelmed at forty by the incidents that took place at fourteen. Her mind and her life however begin to open up, as good fortune, bit by bit comes her way. Although Celie can talk with God in her own intellectual language, she also receives moral support as her letters become emotively personal when she gains a human response from Nettie. Celie learns through the letters that the man who has raped and beat her for several years and sired her two illegitimate children is only a stepfather and not her biological father. These children are the same ones who have been adopted by Nettie's new family and taken to Africa. Nettie describes the children to Celie in a letter:

"I know if she [Corine, Nettie's new adopted mother] can just recall your [Celie's] face, she will believe Olivia [Celie's daughter] if not Adam [Celie's son] is your child. They [Nettie's new family] think Olivia looks like me, but that is because I look like you. Olivia has your face and eyes, exactly. It amazes me that Corine didn't see the resemblance" (186).

This knowledge from Nettie's letters helps relieve tension and frustration for Celie as she tells her stepfather.

She learns, from Nettie's letters, the truth about her family. The man who has raped her is not her father but her stepfather. Her own father was a prosperous, enterprising black, lynched for his good fortune, by a white society. The incident has sent her mother crazy. Celie feels relief that her children are not the products of incest. Celie sets out with Shug to meet and avenge the man who has raped her and ruined her life. She tries to discover from him the whereabouts of her parent's grave.

Shug takes Celie to Tennessee and there gives her economic independence in addition to her physical and mental freedom. Celie begins to

make and trade in pants. She develops her natural flair for making pants. Celie's pants are symbolic. They symbolize the new freedom of movement she develops and the ease and comfort that go with freedom. Celie symbolically develops the attributes of a man. She gains freedom and responsibilities for her own life and those of others and discharges those responsibilities. Celie's pants bring her money and for the first time in her life she is totally free, nobody's wife and nobody's slave. Celie, who has merely survived so far, begins to assert the positive values of life. She searches for fulfillment, for completeness. She not only shakes herself free of her husband and family but she also begins to manifest a joy in life, a happiness in living and a fullness in existence.

Walker's heroine is, thus, an innocent victim of evil and fate. Celie consequently does not rise to confront her fate for a great many years. It needs all her faculties, in the mean while, simply to survive. Therefore, the effort has to be put to exemplify on the subject of *The Tenuous Tyranny on Female Gender* in *Alice Walker's The Color Purple*.

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