

Volume 1 No. 10 January-December 2020
ISSN 2231-0592

cenacle

Editors

Dr. Shubha R Mishra
Dr. Urmila Dabir
Dr. Priya Wanjari

cenacle

A Peer Reviewed Annual Journal of English

Editors : **Dr. Shubha R. Mishra**
Associate Prof. & Head, Dept. of English
Dr. Madhukarrao Wasnik PWS Arts & Commerce, College, Nagpur

Dr. Urmila Dabir
Principal & Head, Dept. of English
Rajkumar Kewalramani Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur

Dr. Priya Wanjari
Principal & Head, Dept. of English,
Santaji Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur

Consulting Editors : **Dr. Leela Kanal**
(Retd.) Reader & Head, Dept. of English,
Bundelkhand (PG) College, Jhansi

Dr. A. K. Singh
Head Dept. of English, R. B. S. College, Agra

Editorial Board

Dr. Prantik Banerjee
Associate Professor
Dept. of English, Hislop College, Nagpur

Dr. Pravin Joshi
Director,
Prema College of Commerce, Nagpur

Dr. Varsha Vaidya
HoD (Eng.) Taywade College, Koradi

Mr. Sudesh Bhowate
Assist. Prof. Dept. of English, Dr. Madhukarrao
Wasnik PWS Arts & Commerce College, Nagpur

Dr. Neehal Sheikh
Assistant Prof. of English,
Santaji Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur

Mrs. Anju Bhutani
Principal, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavans BP Vidya Mandir,
Civil Lines, Nagpur

Dr. Renu Dalela
HoD (Eng.)
Principal Arun Rao Kalode Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur

Dr. Alka Zade
HoD (Eng.) SGB Mahavidyalaya, Hingna, MS

Ms. Madhavi Pimple
Assist. Prof. Dept. of Eng. RKKM Nagpur

Dr. Vandana Bhagdikar
Principal, Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur

Dr. Kapil Singhel
Associate Prof. Vasant Rao Naik Govt. Institute of Arts
and Social Science, Nagpur.

Address for Communication :
Cenacle
Website: cenacle.in
Rajkumar Kewalramani Kanya Mahavidyalaya
Sai Vasanshah Square, Jaripatka Main Road,
Nagpur - 440 014 (Maharashtra State)

Subscription Rates :
Institutional Rs. 1500 (Annual)
Individual Rs. 1300 (Annual)

Cover Page Design : **Tripad Mishra**

Published by **Cenacle**
All rights reserved.

Printed by: Aastha Prints, Dosar Square, C.A. Nagpur - 18.

About Cenacle

Cenacle is a unique collaborative literary venture, which came into being in 2009. It is unique in many ways because it is a collaborative literary venture of three English departments of three different colleges: namely Dr Madhukarrao Wasnik PWS Arts and Commerce College, Rajkumar Kewalramani Kanya Mahavidyalaya and Santaji Mahavidyalaya, all affiliated to RTM Nagpur University. This group came together to promote teaching and learning of English through various activities. Collaborative literary and academic activities are conducted under the banner of “Cenacle”. The Departments of English of all the 3 colleges are bound by an MOU. They also publish this journal by the same name annually.

The word ‘Cenacle’ has its origin in Latin as *cenaculum* from *cena*. Latin *cenaculum* was used in the Vulgate for the “upper room” where the Last Supper was eaten. The earliest Cenacle was formed in 1824, as a literary coterie. This name was adopted by the group in a positive sense as the main objective is to promote academics. Since its inception, Cenacle has undertaken many activities. An overview is being given.

In Sept 2010, a National Conference on “Mediation: Literature and Films” had been organized under this banner at Rajwada Palace, Nagpur. About 215 delegates participated from all over Maharashtra, MP, Delhi, Chattisgarh and Rajasthan. Mr Sachin Kherdekar, renowned Marathi and Hindi film actor and director had been invited to give the keynote. Noted litterateur Dr Jasbir Jain, writer and critic from University of Rajasthan, had been invited as the Guest of honour. A panel discussion had been organized comprising of panelists from various facets of literature and cinema. A souvenir was also released during this Conference.

In Oct 2010, a Symposium had been organized to commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore at RKKM auditorium. Dr Amrit Sen from Vishwabharti Shantineketan, had been invited as the main speaker. He spoke on “Travel literature and Tagore”. The symposium was well attended by students and teachers in large numbers. A cultural programme highlighting the cultural contribution of Gurudev was also presented by students and teachers.

In Dec 2010 Cenacle had organized a one day Teachers Training Workshop on “Evaluation Techniques and Skills”, at RKKM. Dr Martin Wedell from London University conducted the workshop. Nearly 57 teachers participated in it.

In Jan 2012, Cenacle had jointly organized an International Conference with ELTAI and VMIT at Sharadchandra Arts and Comm College Butibori. It was a two day conference, with many participants from Sri Lanka, UK and Nepal. A Conference volume had also been published.

Research and related activities have been formally and informally promoted by Cenacle. The annual journal provides a space for well researched, peer reviewed papers. In Feb 2010, a lecture was organized at Santaji Mahavidyalaya on E-Journals for teachers and students. Dr Mangala Hirwade, of Library Science Dept of RTM Nagpur University was the chief speaker.

A lecture series on “Poetry and Soft Skills” had been organized in March 2015 at Santaji Mahavidyalaya. It aimed at promoting the importance of soft skills and poetry in teaching of English. The invited speakers were Dr Binod Mishra from IIT Patna and Dr. C. L. Khatri from T.P.S. College Patna.

An 8 day workshop on Research Methodology and Research techniques was also organized in March 2015 at Santaji Mahavidyalaya for teachers and research scholars. This eight day workshop was conducted as per UGC norms, with due permission of the RTM Nagpur University. It was totally a self funded activity in

which study material and certificates was also given to 58 participants. Participants from all over Maharashtra attended the workshop.

In January 2017 under the banner of Cenacle, the 61st All India English Teachers' Conference had being organized in collaboration with AESI (The Association for English Studies in India) and Hislop College at Chitnavis Centre Nagpur. The topic of the conference was "Emerging Trends in English Language and Literature". 516 Delegates from all over the country attended the conference. It provided a vibrant platform for academic discourse. This three day conference had many well known academicians from all over India as speakers in various sessions. More than 200 papers were presented in parallel sessions in 3 days.

On 25th April 2018, under the banner of Cenacle, one day national seminar on "Indian Perspective of Infringement of Intellectual Property Rights" had been organized at Siddarth auditorium at PWS College. 162 delegates from different parts of the country attended the seminar.

The MOU which binds the 3 English departments, of Dr Madhukarrao PWS Arts & Commerce College, Rajkumar Kewalramani Kanya Mahavidyalaya and Santaji Mahavidyalaya provides for faculty exchange and knowledge sharing regularly which takes place all the year round. Large number of students have have benefitted from this activities.

About the Journal

Cenacle is a peer reviewed annual journal of English, which is being published since 2011. It was started with an aim to provide a platform for teachers and research students who want to publish their research papers, book reviews and poems.

The first issue was a general issue with 20 papers on varied topics. The second issue published in 2012, had as its focus area: "Gender Issues and Female Consciousness in 21st century Women

Writers.” This issue had 17 papers, 5 book reviews and 8 poems. The third issue published in 2013 focused on “Diaspora and Diasporic writings”. The whole concept of Diaspora writing, dislocation and multiculturalism was evaluated in the well researched 15 papers. It also had 2 book reviews and 5 poems. The 2014 issue focused on “Revisiting Partition through literature and films.” This issue had 13 papers, 3 book reviews and 10 poems. The 2015 issue of Cenacle had its focus area as “Borders, Border Theories and Border Crossings.” This issue had 12 papers, 2 book reviews and 14 poems.

The sixth issue had its focus area as “Literature of War and Conflict.”. Many good reviews were received, on many of the papers. It contained 13 papers on various related issues. There were 4 book reviews and six poems. Ms Gurushree Ramesh had contributed interesting write up on Time travel.

The editors have continuously tried to improve the quality of the journal. The focus areas provide a scope for researchers to find material for further research. Each issue has tried to include a theme paper, which has bigger scope and provides a deeper insight into the focus area. There is also a link between the issues which have been taken up.

The 7th issue was an open ended one. There were 12 research papers on different facets of language and literature, 3 selected poems and a book review. Lord of Flies was topic for the section Time Travel.

The 8th issue was special because since now the Journal is recognized by the UGC and also has a web presence. Previous copies are also available on its website cenacle.in. The 8th issue focused on the modern trends in literature. In its 18 research papers various trends in different genres were traced. Topics like, ‘Impact of Translation on Literature’, Displacement and Identity Crisis to Women’s Literature very interesting and original papers were published. Poems, book reviews were also published.

The 9th issue focuses on “Short Stories today”. This volume also has a good spread of issues related to the genre of short stories and also a small collection of short stories written by our contributors. The first paper by Dr Kanal provides an overview of how the genre developed. It’s provide a detailed analysis, which can be used by researchers. Besides there are 12 other papers which dwell upon different aspects of short stories written by renowned writers like Clarrisa Estes, Bulbul Sharma, Paule Marshall Anita nair R.K.Narayan, Temsula Ao, Bharti Mukherjee, Anita Desai, George Saunders and Mulk Raj Anand. There are two well written papers on Flash fiction and the changing face of short stories. The issue also had the regular spread of poetry, book reviews and two short stories. The issue received a good response and feedback from our readers.

This is the 10th issue of Cenacle, reflects the persistence and zeal of our contributors and readers. We have come a long way from 2017 to 2020, with a website and an Impact factor. The editors would sincerely thank our regular contributors, many of them are with us from the first issue, and our readers who have given regular feedback.

We are also sincerely obliged to our peer reviewers, editorial team and the whole team which works tirelessly for the publication of the issue. Our consulting editors have also stood by us and guided us in many different ways. We would also like to thank Tripad Mishra for the cover design and Astha printers for the publication of the journal.



CONTENTS

	Page No.
1. Reading Literature of Protest as Testimonies of Courage, Resistance and Change - Theme Essay Prantik Banerjee	1
2. The Visuality of Protest in <i>Bhimayana</i> Sucharita Sarkar	11
3. Mother of <i>1084</i> as a Novel of Protest, Revolt and Rejection Shyaonti Talwar	23
4. <i>Quilt</i> (Lihaf) by Ishmat Chughtai as a Protest Text Mouli Chowdhury	36
5. Rebel Against the Encroachment on Women's Rights in <i>A Dolls House</i> Gurdeep Kaur Tripathi	45
6. Resistance against Colonial Misrepresentation of Africa: A study of Achebe's <i>Arrow of God</i> Surabhi Mukherjee	52
7. The Unchained Spirit of Draupadi: A Short-Story by Mahashweta Devi Anupam Soni	60
8. Protest through Performance and its Absence Kirti Y. Nakhare	69
9. The Sound of Silence: Protest, Poetry And A Nation on The Streets. Supantha Bhattacharyya	79
10. Theme of Protest in Toni Morrison's <i>The Bluest Eye</i> Priti Singh	90
11. Probing Racism and Decolonization in Toni Morrison's <i>Tar Baby</i> Vinod R. Shende	101
12. Silent Protest of Pecola in Toni Morrison's <i>The Bluest Eye</i> Meenakshi Kulkarni	108

13.	The Eternal Conflict: Mother-Daughter Relationship in Manju Kapur's <i>Difficult Daughter</i> Suchita Marathe	120
14.	Female Face of Patriarchy in <i>The Pakistani Bride</i> by Bapsi Sidhwa Madhavi A. Moharil	128
15.	Mahesh Dattani's <i>Seven Steps Around the Fire</i> : A Study as a Protest Play Archana A. Gupta	135
16.	A Critical Analysis of Selected Caribbean Short Stories: A Saga of Feminine Protest Renuka L. Roy	145
17.	Distress and Protest in the Select Dalit Women Autobiographies: A Brief Study G. R. Hashmi	155
18.	Unifying Marginalised Voices Through Literature of Protest Nandita Mane	163
19.	Dalit Short Stories: A True Picture of Protest Heena Kausar, Varsha V. Vaidya	170
20.	Protest Against Gender Discrimination and Plight of Eunuchs in Mahesh Dattani's <i>Seven Steps Around the Fire</i> . Reema Kharabe, Vandana V. Bhagdikar	175
21.	Female Protest Against Gender Stereotype in Bharti Mukherjee's <i>Jasmine and Desirable Daughters</i> Kanchan Joshi	186
22.	Women Empowerment in Girish Karnad's plays Madhuri Tayade, Priya D. Wanjari	193
23.	Anita Desai's <i>Cry, The Peacock</i> : A Tale of Martial Discord Vandana Bhagdikar, Renu Dalela	205

24. Social Protest in the Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa
and Boman Desai 212
Nisha M Sharma, Priya D. Wanjari
25. *Where Did I Leave My Purdah* 222
Urmila Dabir
26. Gully Boy & Super 30: Exteriorized Class
Conflict in Bollywood 229
Priya D. Wanjari

POEM

27. How much Land does a man need? 240
Shyaonti Talwar
28. Poetry in the Time of Pandemic 242
Supantha Bhattacharyya
29. Danse Macabre 242
Supantha Bhattacharyya
30. The River Godavari 243
Ranjana Sharan Sinha
31. Night Rain 244
Ranjana Sharan Sinha
32. Whither Are We Going? 245
Priti Singh
33. Planet Earth In Despair 246
Priti Singh

BOOK REVIEW

34. Halla Bol: The Murder of a Theatre Activist 248
Dr. Supantha Bhattacharyya



Reading Literature of Protest as Testimonies of Courage, Resistance and Change: Theme Essay

Prantik Banerjee

A few months after the infamous Peterloo Massacre in 1819, in which the British cavalry charged into a crowd of 60000 protestors who were demanding reforms in parliamentary representation, Shelley penned *The Masque of Anarchy*, a poem that advocates both radical social action and non-violent resistance: “Shake your chains to earth like dew / Which in sleep had fallen on you / Ye are many — they are few”. Warning the ‘adoring multitudes’ of his countrymen who he believed were being duped by the spirit of Anarchy, Shelley was also denouncing slavery and the postponement of its abolition by Britain and other European powers. Indeed, in his poetry Shelley was never an “ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain”, but more like the West Wind, “the trumpet of a prophecy”, a ‘destroyer’ of false beliefs and fake institutions, and a ‘preserver’ of truth, equality and justice. Shelley’s poetry is truly the poetry of protest.

One of the ways in which protest literature can be understood is by assessing its nature, purposes, impact, forms of expression, style and technique. In his foreword to *American Protest Literature*, John Stauffer states:

I define protest literature broadly to mean the uses of language to transform the self and change society. By

language I refer not only to words, but to visual art, music, and film. Protest literature functions as a catalyst, guide or mirror of social change. It not only critiques some aspect of society, but also suggests, either implicitly or explicitly, a solution to society's ills.

Protest literature may be defined as a sub-category of literature in which the works espouse protest explicitly, either as a major theme, a recurring motif, an overarching metaphor, or as a structuring device. It is a literature which is characterised by the existence of a clearly-defined viewpoint, strong moral convictions, an often strident tone, a pronounced sense of outrage, a clear perception of the issues at stake, and a usually optimistic belief in the ultimate triumph of justice.

Regardless of differences of culture, time and place, all protest literature seek a three-fold objective: *to testify, to indict and to seek redress*. In testifying, protest literature consciously aims to remember and commemorate acts of injustice perpetrated against particular persons or groups. The unjust acts may have been committed in the guise of racism, gender discrimination or social and class divisions. The act of remembering to honour those who suffered, celebrates those who endured, and enables future generations to have a proper understanding of their own history and culture. The act of indictment is protest literature's compelling motive, and in doing so, it seeks to expose those implicated in acts of oppression and injustice, identify and record the acts of oppression of which they are guilty, and, finally, highlight the social, political and economic contexts which led to such oppression. It is the defining quality of protest literature to symbolically and literally 'name' injustice and its perpetrators so that they stand condemned by all right-thinking people. In seeking redress, protest literature aims to end the injustices it portrays, as well as secure the punishment of perpetrators and provide restitution to the victims. Such restitution is often physical and psychological because it seeks to comprehensively repair the damage inflicted upon individuals,

institutions and society by an authoritarian power over a sustained period of time.

Amit Chaudhuri, the novelist, points out that protest is inscribed in the very idea of the literary which "in its resistance to interpretation, is a peculiar species of dissent" (2008: 14) The common ground of protest and dissent is, very generally, a disagreement with what *is*, and an expression of the need *for* some change which seems to be standing behind the very gestures of dissension or protestation. This expression may take various literary forms and make use of narrative modes unique to different cultures, countries and places. Protest and dissent may sometimes take the form of individual acts, such as Thoreau's essay on Civil Disobedience, or these might be the expression of collective anguish and resistance on the ground like the recitation of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's '*Hum Dekhenge*' in many parts of the country today. At the same time it is important to realize that protest and dissent do not always have to be an instrument of revolutionary change, but may testify to there being what Edward Said called simply "something beyond the reach of dominating systems".

In July 1993 at the height of the Serbian-Bosnian conflict (1992-1995), Susan Sontag, the celebrated feminist writer and thinker, staged a production of *Waiting for Godot* in the city of Sarajevo besieged by the Serbian militia. It was the longest siege of a city and its people in recorded history, and one also rare in the use of brutal force and extreme violence over innocent people caught in the fray of rabid nationalism and ethnic politics. The choice of the play was not accidental. In her New York Review of Books essay, "Godot comes to Sarajevo", which she wrote in September 1993, shortly after her return home from the trip to Bosnia, Sontag described her experience about the production, the context and the circumstances in which the performance was staged. In the essay she stated that "Beckett's play, written over forty years ago, seems written for and about, Sarajevo." (Sontag 1993:52).

What is the connection that Sontag saw between Sarajevo during the war and Beckett's play? Perhaps, she saw the connection between the characters waiting for Godot in the play, and Sarajevo with around 380000 people waiting for peace and help that never seemed to come. She recalled being asked if her choice of Godot was too pessimistic or depressing for the circumstances, "as if the representation of despair were redundant when people really are in despair". Instead, she pointed to the reparative possibilities of art: "Culture, serious culture, is an expression of human dignity – which is what people in Sarajevo feel they have lost, even when they know themselves to be brave, or stoical, or angry."

In fact, Sontag was openly in favour of American intervention in Bosnia and she criticized what she called the fence-sitting of the world's intellectuals while a terrible crime of ethnic cleansing was taking place right before their eyes. She saw herself in the tradition of writers like George Orwell and Ernest Hemingway who fought in the Spanish Civil War and wrote for freedom, equality and justice. Sontag said: "People told me they thought I was crazy to come here [to Sarajevo], but they didn't understand that I couldn't not come here. Once I understood what was happening, it was the obvious moral choice. It was the only choice." (Schreiber 2014: 202)

In the same essay, Sontag set out her view of the artist's role in the wake of an altered reality. "No longer can a writer consider that the imperative task is to bring the news to the outside world," she wrote, "The news is out." Her essay perhaps arose from the need and compulsion to address a terrible happening of the time: what can and should those whose business lies in the realm of creativity and the imagination do in the face of crisis and suffering? There on the battle stage of one of Europe's bloodiest ethnic purges, Sontag was using a piece of literature to protest by staging a 1953 play. This case gives testimony to the fact that literature from the past has often been recuperated in order to fight the battles of today. People reeling under the onslaught of war, conflict and atrocity have fallen back on writings from the past to understand, mobilize and resist

systemic violence and institutional oppression. They have derived hope from such writings in their darkest hour.

When analyzing Sontag's production of the Beckett's play, it is impossible to exclude any of the following factors that generated a veritable discourse: the arrival of a celebrity writer to the middle of the war zone in Europe; the city of Sarajevo known for its multiculturalism and its vibrant history; Sontag's decision to stage Beckett's absurdist and existential play; the time in which this event was situated; and the citizens on existential zero fighting to preserve their dignity. All these aspects intermeshed with each other to produce the play's contextual meanings, its multiple interpretations, and varied reception by local audiences. While some sections openly welcomed

Indeed, protest literature can take many forms. Writers from Herodotus and Pliny to Gide, Camus and Brecht, have made daring use of traditional forms and established genres; they have also invented radical and experimental modes of writing to voice dissent and resistance against injustice. Protest literature in its time line has found imaginative expression as war writing, women's writings, dalit literature, adivasi testimonies, underground writings and many more. Writers have employed narrative styles and rhetorical devices that include a strong emphasis on realism, the use of defamiliarisation strategies, the employment of satire, irony and paradox, the utilisation of anti-heroic characters, as well as unique methods of plot construction, structure and perspective. The effect of such writings has been to arouse feelings of pity, anger, disgust and rebelliousness among readers.

Taking liberties with the realistic mode of storytelling has often been a writer's narrative strategy to devise an uncommon method for capturing something uncommonly wrong happening in society. Writers have taken recourse to ingenious forms of non-realistic literature, like fable, allegory, speculative fiction, magic realism, apocalyptic writing in order to make sense of all kinds of oppression. They have created extraordinary characters and placed

them in fantastic settings to reveal crimes and atrocities perpetrated in society. Think, for example, of Jose Saramago's *Blindness*, a searing work where citizens of an unnamed city succumb to a freak epidemic of global blindness, or the seemingly innocent group of boys as castaways on an island who turn into cruel cutthroats in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, or Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*, in which a subterranean sci-fi plot erupts in an account of slavery. What can writers do when faced with a reality that seems stranger than fiction – perhaps, use improbable narratives in order to depict unimaginable atrocities?

Because the main aim of protest literature is to increase reader awareness, many works within this sub-category use techniques of demystification that are designed to unsettle long-held assumptions and attitudes about literature among readers. As the Russian formalist critic Victor Shklovsky pointed out, such techniques are grounded upon the capacity of art to delimit reality by disrupting the 'automatism of perception in several ways. Some protest writers use the technique of 'seeing things out of their normal context'; others deploy unexpected symbols and imagery, and the use of archaisms or dialect forms in the language of poetry. Bertolt Brecht's alienation theory or the 'V' effect, in which he tried to deny his audience the usual immersion in and identification with what was being enacted, is also used by writers of street plays as protest.

Many writers have also cast their narratives by combining the real, the allegorical and the fantastical to depict contemporary concerns. We need look no further than Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* or Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. And often such devices are useful precisely because they resist a literal interpretation of characters, events, themes or even mode of storytelling. Kazuo Ishiguro, in setting his novel *The Buried Giant* in an imagined ancient Britain, allowed the exploration of the effect of terrible atrocities on the characters, like inducing collective amnesia, in order to affectively draw readers

world-wide to forge an empathetic community and raise consciousness against state pogroms.

Consider the interesting case of Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. The book written in 1984 was recalled in the 1990s by women to protest against the US government's decision to cut funding to Planned Parenthood. The protesters were denouncing the state for what they alleged was the systemic denial of women's right to access safe and legal abortion services. Pro-abortion activists were held to rally against the criminalization of abortion as proposed in the Reproductive Health Act, citing it as another example of institutional violence with regard to women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. To fight back this decision, the activists appeared on the streets dressed in crimson robes and white bonnets like the handmaidens in Atwood's novel and carrying placards reading, "Make Margaret Atwood Fiction Again!". The sartorial symbolism the activists brought to their protest gained for the movement a lot of media publicity and public support. In appropriating the handmaid's dress code from Atwood's dystopian tale, the protesters were highlighting the draconian nature of the government's policies. In her novel, Atwood tells the story of a religious revolution in the US that gives rise to a theocracy in the future called Gilead, where women are stripped off their sexual rights and forced to get impregnated and deliver babies for the society's elite. The tale is set in a distant future where birth rates have declined dramatically in America due to some environmental disaster and women have been made the property of the state.

When in April 2016, an American television adaptation of the novel was released on Amazon Prime, the web series won instant fandom, bagging several prestigious international awards. The hit adaptation saw a revival in the popularity of the book *The Handmaid's Tale*, especially because its subject matter resonated with people upset at the Trump's administration sexist policy that delivered a major blow to women's health and reproductive rights, and directly impacting millions of women. In March 2017, before

the television adaptation was released, Atwood wrote an article entitled “Margaret Atwood on *What the Handmaid’s Tale* Means in the Age of Trump,” in which she reiterated the importance of her novel and the heightened interest in its subject matter:

Why [is *The Handmaid’s Tale*] interesting and important? Because women are interesting and important in real life. They are not an afterthought of nature, they are not secondary players in human destiny, and every society has always known that (Atwood, 2016).

Indeed, she added:

In the wake of the recent American election, fears and anxieties proliferate. Basic civil liberties are seen as endangered, along with many of the rights for women won over the past decades, and indeed the past centuries. In this divisive climate, in which hate for many groups seems on the rise and scorn for democratic institutions is being expressed by extremists of all stripes, it is a certainty that someone, somewhere — many, I would guess — are writing down what is happening as they themselves are experiencing it. Or they will remember, and record later, if they can (Atwood, 2016)

Moreover, since Trump was elected, literary works such as George Orwell’s *1984* (1949), in which a dystopian world that can be compared with the current political climate by parallels impossible to deny, became one of the most-purchased books on Amazon. Both Orwell’s and Atwood’s dystopian fiction are examples of literary works that have been used as rallying instruments to mobilize protest against various forms of authoritarianism.

Ideology is of particular importance in protest literature. The standpoints that writers take in protest literature are often scaffolded by a deep-rooted allegiance to a particular political philosophy. For instance, Marxism and socialism have significantly informed the radical outlook of many works in the long history of protest literature. Chief among them may be cited Nelson Algren’s

Somebody in Boots and James Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain*. Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* are examples of writings from the opposite ideological camp that have professed absolute faith in unbridled individualism and free market capitalism. Despite their different individual moorings, ideology helps protest writers to offer a clear understanding of the issues that embroil society, and to suggest ways in which they can be effectively resolved. However, there is sometimes a tendency to subordinate all aspects of particular social conditions to the dictates of the preferred ideology, even where they are not seen to be completely appropriate. Some protest writers may not espouse a particular ideology, preferring instead to work in a tradition of liberal humanism whose focus is more on the moral dimensions of the issue rather than the furtherance of a specific political agenda. The advantage of this approach is that it avoids the pitfalls of a narrow political ideology, and therefore, seems to be more sympathetically attuned to humanity's interest. On the other hand, a libertarian approach alone may lack the clear focus and groundbreaking impact of an approach hot spurred by a political philosophy.

"Literature is the question minus the answer", wrote Roland Barthes. It can be argued that literature, in its very essence, dismantles established beliefs and conventions, and thus does not act solely as mimetic, but as a disruptive force. It aims to question the 'givenness' of the so called essential truths. Consequently, literature holds the ability to incite change in thought, which then bring change through action in society. Fundamentally, protest literature with its power to upend fixed ideals and rigid hierarchies provides us with a chance to rethink and remould society and humanity. "Every beautiful poem is an act of resistance", said Mahmoud Darwish, "Wherever there is oppression there is resistance". And if as Shelley said, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world", then poets surely are also the unacknowledged law breakers of the world.

Works Cited

- Atwood, M. (1985) *The Handmaid's Tale*. Vintage 2010. London. Print
- Atwood, M. (2017) Margaret Atwood on What 'The Handmaid's Tale' Means in the Age of Trump (2017, March 10) Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/28/books/review/margaret-atwood-handmaids-tale-age-of-trump.html>
- Chaudhuri, Amit. *Clearing a Space*. Penguin 2012. India, Print
- Hauser, Christine. (June 29, 2017) A Handmaid's Tale of Protest. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/28/us/handmaids-protests-abortion.html>
- Sontag, Susan. "Godot Comes to Sarajevo." *The New York Review of Books*, October 21, 1993 issue. Online archive. 52-59.
- Sontag, Susan. "Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo." *Performing Art Journal*, Vol. 16. No. 2, May, 1994, 87-106. 08. Sep. 2014. [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3245764>]
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. London: Penguin Books, 2003. Print
- Trodd, Zoe (Ed.) *American Protest Literature*. The John Harvard Library, Belknap Press, 2008. Print

Dr. Prantik Banerjee

Associate Professor
Hislop College, Nagpur.

The Visuality of Protest in *Bhimayana*

Sucharita Sarkar

Abstract

Whereas Dalit writing has always been pivoted on protest and a vision of progress, in recent years, certain publishers like Navayana have reshaped the representation of protest by incorporating the visual along with the textual. In recent years, comics and graphic narratives have emerged as a versatile site for representing human experiences that are often regarded as marginal or non-normative or ‘inexpressible’. This paper looks at how *Bhimayana*, the graphic memoir by Navayana Publishing that visualizes incidents in B.R.Ambedkar’s life, articulates an aesthetics and politics of protest through its text and graphics that are rooted in Indian traditions. It explores the context, the content, the significance and the relevance of the protest and progress represented through word and line in this slim comic.

Keywords: Ambedkar, biography, caste, comics, dalit literature, folk art, gond painting, graphic narrative, India, protest.

In their review of 25 years of Dalit literature, scholars Veena Deo and Eleanor Zelliot frame Dalit writing within the two axes of “protest” and “progress” (Deo and Zelliot). Whereas Dalit writing has always been pivoted on protest and, as Deo and Elliot theorize, in many instances, have also expressed a vision of individual and social progress. A politics of resistance necessitates a goal of progress which is the desired result of the protest. Narratives of protest, thus, in order to resonate deeply with the oppressed, often

offer a vision of hope or progress. In recent years, certain publishers like Navayana have reshaped the representation of protest by incorporating the visual along with the textual. This strategy of using the graphic form to articulate narratives of protest can also be termed as a creative and expressional ‘progress’. Navayana has several such publications that deserve wide readership and serious scholarship, including a graphic biography of “Jotiba Phule’s Fight for Liberty” called “*A Gardener in the Wasteland*” (Natarajan). This brief paper, however, looks at *Bhimayana*, the graphic memoir that visualizes incidents in B. R. Ambedkar’s life through an indigenously Indian artistic lens, and explores how it articulates an aesthetics and politics of protest—and progress—through its text and graphics. As Deo and Zelliot state, “Even though he died in 1956, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Babasaheb Ambedkar, is a constant presence in the mind of Dalits. He represents all that they could become—writer, statesman, intellectual, decision maker, religious leader—spokesman par excellence for Dalits. He is credited with their progress, their spirit, their achievements, their opportunities with government reservations in administrative and educational institutions” (Deo and Zelliot 54). History books frequently do injustice to the inspirational value of Ambedkar’s life and achievements. *Bhimayana* mentions how Ambedkar’s “statues outnumber Gandhi’s and Nehru’s, but few people know about his work” (Natarajan and Anand 14). The onus to disseminate the story of Ambedkar’s life and his teachings, thus, falls on Dalit storytellers—through poetry, or drama, or, as the publishers Navayanahas done, through graphic memoir, in *Bhimayana*.

The selection of the title of the book, *Bhimayana*—a deliberate re-describing of the *savarna* epic *Ramayana*—hints both at the ambitious scope of the book, as well as to its radical subversive intentions. Manu had designated that a Brahmin’s son should have a name that connoted “auspiciousness; for a Kshatriya, strength; for a Vaishya, wealth; and for a Shudra, disdain” (Manu 25). The deliberate paralleling of Ambedkar’s biography with

Rama's epic is a strategy of protest against the ridiculing, delimiting and un-naming of the Shudra, and also an act of reclaiming Dalit names and re-inserting their stories. It is relevant here to recall how Ambedkar's protest against caste involved a rejection of Hinduism and a burning of the *Manusmriti* in the December of 1927 (Natarajan and Anand 53). Hinduism, however, is manifested at multiple experiential levels—both through and beyond organized religion—and is intricately interwoven into our existence, especially if we consider the reach of stories of Hindu gods and heroes. The artist Durgabai Vyam, who is one of the creators of *Bhimayana*, recounts how she felt that this book was “like the *Ramayana*,” while her partner and co-creator Subhash Vyam replied that “no, this is *Bhimayana*” (Natarajan and Anand 104). By referencing and renaming the Hindu epic, the creators here are responding to Manu's injunction about the naming of Shudras and to Ambedkar's subsequent rejection of Hinduism in their individual, creative, interpretative ways.

Effective protest narratives need to both historicize and contemporize their subject. Historicity is significant because it helps the reader to understand the context of oppression and subjugation from which the protesting subject rises; while contemporaneity enables the reader to realize the necessity of continuing protest, because—as it recurrently happens—the context may change somewhat, yet the deep-rooted oppressions continue to exist. *Bhimayana* expresses the dual process of historicity and contemporaneity through two conscious structural strategies. The first strategy is to re-present Ambedkar's life story within a frame story situated in contemporary India, where the reservation policy envisaged by Ambedkar and enacted by the government has often sharpened caste animosities and engendered a sense of victimization in the ‘upper’ or ‘open’ castes. *Bhimayana* opens with a scene set in “one day in the recent past, a bus stop in an Indian city” where a young man and a young woman are conversing: the upper-caste male laments his state of unemployment and

blames it on the “damn job quotas” as he believes that “caste isn’t real any longer,” it is a “non-issue,” while the woman reminds him of the “thousands of incidents of brutality against Dalits” (Natarajan and Anand 11-12). This frame story bookends the main biographical narrative (although the two characters sometimes appear within the pages as narrators of several events of Ambedkar’s life). This main narrative concludes with Ambedkar’s work on the constitution, his public embracing of Buddhism along with “more than half a million followers”—“the largest conversion in human history”—and a glimpse into some of his teachings (Natarajan and Anand 92). The two characters of the frame story appear again, with the upper-caste young man telling the young woman, “Can’t help respecting the man, though I don’t agree with him—or with you. I’m starting to see why he is such an icon for dalits today” (Natarajan and Anand 92). His words indicate the realistic aim of progress expressed by the book’s creators: they hope that disseminating Ambedkar’s story will make previously unaware readers engage in conversations across caste barriers, but they are aware that these barriers will not disappear overnight.

Within this frame story of progress is placed Ambedkar’s own biography, which incorporates both protest and progress. The young schoolboy Ambedkar protests through his questions: “why can’t I just open a tap and drink water like all the other boys?” (Natarajan and Anand 24). The adult Ambedkar protests through the mass movements he organizes and leads, like the Mahad Satyagraha, where he led “3000 dalits to the Chavadar Tank to drink a few sips of water” (Natarajan and Anand 48). Throughout the narrative, the creators deploy their second strategy: using snippets from contemporary media reports of caste violence to emphasize how caste persists as a major schism and source of humiliation in Indian society. For instance, the female narrator begins by mentioning the “Khairlanji” incident, where the “members of the Bhotmange family” were publicly “bludgeoned to death” for “their education and assertion of their right to a life of

dignity” (Natarajan and Anand 12). The narrative then shifts to a page showcasing stark headlines from media reports—all dating between 2006-2010—of Dalits being denied water or assaulted or raped (Natarajan and Anand 13). The narrative, after establishing this contemporary context, shifts to the historic details of Ambedkar’s life as a Mahar in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. To establish an immediate and poignant link between the contemporary documentation of Dalits being denied water and Ambedkar’s own life, the narrative recounts an incident in 1901 set in the school in Satara in Maharashtra, where the young schoolboy Bhimrao was denied water during school hours because the peon could not “let him near the tap like the other kids” (Natarajan and Anand 21). The narrative establishes clear and unequivocal links between the historic and contemporary contexts of the daily humiliation that Dalits continue to experience. For instance, immediately after describing the second Mahad Satyagraha of Ambedkar and his followers where he burnt copies of the Manusmriti, the writers insert a Tehelka report of 2008 which details how caste Hindus of Chakwara village in Rajasthan turned the village pond into a sewer when the dalits won the right to use it, indicating how “eighty years later, nothing seems to have changed” (Natarajan and Anand 55). Gopal Guru has theorized, “humiliation is almost endemic to social life that is active basically through asymmetries of intersecting sets of attitudes—arrogance and obeisance, self-respect and servility, and reverence and repulsion” (Guru 1). Apart from protesting at the arbitrariness of these binaries through his questions and his actions, Ambedkar’s own achievements chart an inspirational arc of progress that sometimes overcome those binaries and boundaries. His “final words of advice” to his humiliated dalit brethren, asking them to “EDUCATE, ORGANIZE and AGITATE” and to “have faith” in themselves; his framing of the Constitution with its focus on “equality and social justice”; and his lifelong dedication to the “battle for reclamation of human personality” operate as prescriptions for progress for any oppressed individual or group (Natarajan and Anand 88-89). This is

why his life and his words need to be circulated, understood and imbibed, both for protest and for progress.

While there is a large body of Dalit protest literature in the forms of poems and memoirs, graphic narratives offer a different perspective to protest—as it adds a visual dimension to the textual or literary one. Words are often powerful tools of protest, potent in their imagery and symbolism. Deo and Zelliot quote from Namdeo Dhasal’s poem on Babasaheb, *Atta (Now, now)*:

“Turning their backs to the sun, they journeyed through centuries.

Now, now, we must refuse to be pilgrims of darkness.

That one, our father, carrying, carrying the darkness, is now bent;

Now, now, we must lift that burden off his back.

Our blood was spilled for this glorious city

And what we got was the right to eat stones.

Now, now, we must explode that building which kisses the sky!

After a thousand years we were blessed with a sunflower giving
fakir;

Now, now, we must, like sunflowers, turn our faces to the sun.”

(qtd. In Deo and Zelliot 55).

In earlier eras of history and literature, poetry and drama have often been rousing vehicles for protest literature. John Berger, writing the Foreword for *Bhimayana*, laments the loss of the “stage” which has become a “shopping mall,” and he writes that a communally-created comic book like *Bhimayana*, offers an alternative space to “tell stories” about how “history continues and the struggles persist” (Natarajan and Anand 9). In recent years, comics and graphic narratives have emerged as a versatile site for representing human experiences that are often regarded as marginal or non-normative or ‘inexpressible’. Graphic narratives have moved beyond what is dismissively regarded as children’s literature, and have become vehicles for ‘serious’ subjects and scholarship. Graphic narratives offer a parallelly symbolic mode of protest, although its symbolism can be both verbal and visual. For

deeply-felt experiences like trauma, or humiliation, graphic narratives can often represent (or re-present) the unsayable or inexpressible. Hillary Chute writes that: “As a verbal-visual art form, comics is inherently about the relationship of word and image....It makes readers aware of limits, and also possibilities for expression in which disaster, or trauma, breaks the boundaries of communication, finding shape in a hybrid medium” (Chute 34).

From its inception, *Bhimayana* was intended to showcase a radically new approach to graphic narratives: it deliberately inserted the form of an ethnic folk art onto the printed page of what has predominantly been a borrowed-from-the-west formal comics tradition. This formal graphics tradition is the frame-gutter sequence, where the narrative is depicted through images and words within box-like rectangular or square frames, each frame representing a moment in time, and each frame separated from the next by a white space (which is called the gutter). According to Hillary Chute, “Comics is a form about visual presence, a succession of frames, that is stippled with absence, in the frame-gutter sequence. We can say that its very grammar, then, evokes the unsaid, or inexpressible.... The layers of meaning in handmade images often convey, strikingly, what words alone cannot” (Chute 34). In general, graphic narratives in India follow this west-evolved rectangular frame-gutter layout: one major reason for this is familiarity and ease of reception. Even traditional ‘Indian’ stories like the Amar Chitra Katha comics are always drawn in this format. This means, while the textual content of graphics narratives in India is often local/national, the visual format to represent this content is borrowed. This suggests a wide gap between the rich and diverse indigenous visual arts heritage that India has, and the visual content of its graphic narratives. To truly ‘Indianize’ the graphic narrative, this gap needs to be bridged. There are some local publishers, some of them working in the emerging areas of graphic—and what is reductively called ‘children’s’—narratives, who are actively trying to bridge this gap between Indian visuality

and Indian textual content. This has developed into a re-deployment of traditional or folk-art forms to tell or retell stories in contemporary print publications by Tara, Katha, Tulika, and others, including Navayana.

Bhimayana's significance as protest narrative lies not only in *what* story it tells, but also *how* it tells this story. It is a community-created narrative, combining the text created by its co-authors Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand (which is lettered through the type design created by Aparajita Ninan), with the Gond art of Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam, with Roshni Vyam designing the chapter headings. The traditional Gond art of the Vyams is situated in its traditional artistic lineage and context, as the book is dedicated to "the memory of Jangarh Singh Shyam (1960-2001), the sky that sheltered us": Shyam was the Pardhan Gond artist who mentored and inspired Durgabai and Subhash Vyam (Natarajan and Anand 5). The Gond artists creating *Bhimayana* transform the conventional, angular gutter-panel layout through their innovative use of traditional folk-art elements. Instead of "forcing people into boxes," the artists replace the conventional boxy panels with the decorative, curved lines of the *digna* ("the traditional auspicious design patterns applied to walls and homes in Gond homes") to divide the pages of the book: "the *digna* patterns... form a leitmotif in *Bhimayana*" (Anand 102). The dignas also transform the blank linear gutter spaces into vibrant patterned sinuous lines: an innovation that creates a completely new reading and viewing experience. As access to (or denial of) water is one of the gravest caste issues, there are several aquatic motifs that reference water: the thirst young Bhim is shown as a fish; his historic Mahad speech has loudspeakers imagined as healing water sprinklers (Natarajan and Anand 19; 48; Anand 102). Another interesting innovation—attesting to the symbolic rather representative quality of Gond art—is how the conventional speech bubbles are replaced with scorpion-tail-sting bubbles for speeches of upper caste persons, and gentler bird-shaped bubbles for speeches of dalit persons: this division

indicating the pervasive otherization that casteism perpetuates. The innovative, progressive ‘form’ of the book, thus, embeds and signifies the history of caste humiliation and anti-caste protest in its very layout.

As John Berger writes in the Foreword, “This book offers a prophetic answer [to the loss of the stage to commercial interests]... replace the stage of History with the Body of a community. A Body with a long past, a present of many voices, and vision of the future” (Natarajan and Anand 9). *Bhimayana*’s integration of art, storytelling and community is inherited from the tradition of the Pardhan Gonds of Madhya Pradesh, and this is referenced not only in the framing of the narrative or the dedication to Jangarh Singh Shyam, but also in an essay on the making of *Bhimayana* (which is the Afterword of the book). S. Anand writes how the Pardhan Gonds have for long served as “the traditional keepers of their people’s cultural heritage and lineages—remembering family genealogies, and transmitting legends, sacred myths and oral histories through songs and storytelling” (Anand 100). It is therefore, fitting, that Anand decides to collaborate with Pardhan Gond artists to transmute Ambedkar’s biography into a shared, mutually-generated narrative of protest and progress. When Anand first decides to work together with Durgabai and Subhash Vyam, they were unfamiliar with Ambedkar’s history as well as with the contemporary graphic art forms. It was during the creative process that they learnt about Ambedkar. Anand writes: “Soon, the Vyams were making Ambedkar’s story their own. The humiliations Ambedkar felt affected them deeply. They were moved and angered. They internalized the stories. They began cutting out reports of Khairlanji-like incidents from the local papers” (Anand 101). After the main narrative ends, and the frame story also finishes, there is an appended Book 4, called the Art of *Bhimayana*, where the creators insert themselves into the book. Here, the Gond artists narrate how they, too, despite being renowned folk artists, faced discrimination from the privileged castes, and they write, “We were

reminded of Ambedkar's plight in Baroda and could understand his hurt" (Natarajan and Anand 99). Here, the creators are triply functioning as narrative characters and as representative readers. Their humiliation, anger and pain echo the emotions of readers of protest narratives. The affective qualities of protest narratives and the humiliation experienced by their characters often bind creators and readers into such tight communities of shared emotions.

In conclusion, I would like to refer to the power of graphic narratives to inspire protest. The 10-cent graphic memoir, *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story*, published in 1957, inspired the American civil rights activists of the 1960s, including Senator John Lewis, and "eventually inspired anti-apartheid protests in South Africa before the government banned the comic book's possession" (Klein para.8). Limbale identified "Ambedkarite ideology" as the "true inspiration for Dalit literature," emphasizing how "The story of Babasaheb's life, his work, ideas and message awakened the Dalit society, the Dalit movement and Dalit writers" (Limbale 46). The need for awakening is still present urgently, as caste atrocities and inequities persist alarmingly. The book *Bhimayana* itself embeds the continuance of these atrocities—through the references to media articles on caste violence, and through the frame story of the young man and woman talking about the unfairness of reservation (Natarajan and Anand 11; 13)—in and around the Ambedkar narrative, thus, in a way, containing the reason for its creation within itself. For this awakening—and the resistant protest that accompanies it—to happen, Ambedkar's story needs to be disseminated, in multiple ways and across multiple readerships. Although there is yet no documented evidence of *Bhimayana* inspiring protest movements, it is still accessible as a potential, and potent, site of visualizing and envisioning a significant and relevant politics and aesthetics of protest rooted in the history of India—both the history of caste and the history of folk art. As Anand himself writes, "Bhimayana is a small effort to ... make Ambedkar's story universal. If the lives and experiences of Martin

Luther King and Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela and Malcolm X could resonate universally, Ambedkar's—and those of millions of dalits in India—ought to as well" (Anand 103). The discourse of caste is a complex reality rooted and routed through the dynamics of protest and progress, and one which is often suffocated into silence. Explaining this dynamic of protest and progress in the literature and politics of caste, Omvedt writes that "tomorrow's sun" as imagined by "Tukaram, Kabir,... and even in Ambedkar's dream of an 'enlightened' India or *prabuddha Bharat* remains as an essence of the 'dalit vision'" that is "still far away" but "very much on the agenda of a new Indian uprising" (Omvedt 105). *Bhimayana* articulates a necessary and urgent *protest*, while it represents *progress* through the fresh and visionary form and voice that it deploys to express this protest.

Works Cited

- Anand, S. Afterword. "A Digna for Bhim." *Bhimayana: Incidents in the Life of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar*, by Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand, Navayana Publishing, 2011, pp.100-103.
- Chute, Hillary. *Why Comics? From Underground to Everywhere*. Harper Collins, 2017.
- Deo, Veena and Eleanor Zelliot. "Dalit Literature - Twenty-Five Years of Protest? Of Progress?" *Journal of South Asian Literature*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1994, pp. 41-67. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25797513>.
- Guru, Gopal, ed. *Humiliation: Claims and Context*. Oxford India Paperbacks, 2011.
- Klein, Christopher. "The MLK Graphic Novel that Inspired Generations of Civil Rights Activists." *History.com*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.history.com/news/civil-rights-graphic-novel-mlk-john-lewis>.

- Limbale, Sharankumar. *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature*. Trans. Alok Mukherjee, Orient Blackswan, 2004.
- Manu. *The Law Code of Manu*. Trans. Patrick Olivelle, Oxford U.P., 2004.
- Natarajan, Srividya. *A Gardener in the Wasteland: Jotiba Phule's Fight for Liberty*. Navayana Publishing, 2011.
- Natarajan, Srividya and Anand, S. *Bhimayana: Incidents in the Life of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar*. Navayana Publishing, 2011.
- Omvedt, Gail. *Understanding Caste: From Buddha to Ambedkar and Beyond*. Orient Blackswan, 2011.

Sucharita Sarkar

Associate Professor
D.T.S.S. College of Commerce,
Mumbai.

Mother of 1084 as a Novel of Protest, Revolt and Rejection

Shyaonti Talwar

Abstract

The paper aims to engage in observations of elements at the level of the theme and the structure of the novel *Mother of 1084* by Mahashweta Devi which contribute to a discourse of protest against institutionalised discrimination, oppression and violence that leads to disintegration of families and prompt the onset of a large scale decadence. Protest manifests as much in the involuntary yet predictable alienated/outsider status of the female protagonist as in the metaphorical outlining of liminal spaces between two worlds, neither of which she can inhabit. Likewise explicit is a questioning and destabilising of socially sacrosanct institutions like marriage, family and the state and market driven patriarchal ideologies hegemonized for the benefit of the ruling class. Protest is also obvious in the subversion of traditional norms of story-telling and a deliberate and studied refusal on the narrator's part to be effusive, leaving a lot to be desired in terms of verbal articulation. Deliberately cryptic and resorting to non-verbal elements and motifs that define the structure of the narrative like the simultaneous existence of different worlds, polyphonic accounts of the truth offering multiple perspectives and persistent presence of the motif of pain as if to suggest the inadequacy of language powered by patriarchy to convey the poignancy and pathos of the situation, further accentuate the tone of dissent. Irony, economy of words and expression, third person account which denies complete access to

the protagonist's trauma and silence as words suffer ineptness clinch the text giving it the semblance of activism on paper.

Keywords: Women in literature, protest literature, subversion, feminist writing, alienation, structure of the novel

Mother of 1084 as a Novel of Protest, Revolt and Rejection

Mother of 1084 is a novel written by renowned Bengali writer, Jnanpith Awardee and a prominent and persistent voice of dissent in India, Mahashweta Devi who dedicated a lifetime to articulate the concerns and grievances of the oppressed, the socially excluded and the culturally marginalised. The Naxalite movement which took Bengal of the seventies and the eighties under its sway and which initially started as an anti-establishment movement rooted in Maoist ideology influencing thousands of sensitive and intellectual minds of the state was of special interest to Devi who committed herself to denuding the brutal face of the state and bringing to the fore the other side of the story: the viewpoint of the other as is poignantly underscored in the narrative of the novel: 'What has ended? Nothing. Nothing has ended. Only a generation between sixteen and twenty four was wiped out. Is being wiped out...'

Outline

Devi's *Mother of 1084* better known as *Hazaar Churashir Maa* written in the year 1974 which won her the Jnanpith Award and was subsequently adapted into a film by Govind Nihalani in the year 1998 which got him the National Award, has a very strong social and political message. It is the protest of a mother against the complacent bourgeoisie sensibility of the Bengali *bhadralok*, the smug stand of a family driven by self-interest, conveniently disowning their son for apparently dying a disgraceful death, that of a wife whose husband has invariably, categorically and time and again, commodified and exploited her, and against a social system that indiscriminately and ruthlessly comes down and doles out death to people for having defied the state and challenging the

status quo. It is ironical how law and lawlessness, on such occasions come together, as outlaws, habitual offenders and criminals are invested with the authority and power to go on a killing spree and remove 'Misguided youth' from the face of the earth, who are projected as 'a cancerous growth on the body of democracy' (29) and who ironically are presented as a greater threat to the state than the former lot.

The state forces people to act and go on as if everything is normal and the horrifying part is that people oblige and participate in this charade submitting to this narrative. The rot is from top down, visible in the elitist, highly urbanized class, the so-called intellectual, artistic, enlightened minds of the age who seem to be conveniently unmindful of this absurd saga of violence wanting to keep out of harm's way and steering clear of any controversy, focusing instead on things, not even remotely relevant or significant in the light of the brutal, tragic, mindless and unjustified killings of youth in their own homeland.

Sujata: The Outsider

Sujata, the protagonist of the novel and the mother of Brati (who is reduced to a number and becomes 1084 indicating the death count in a state-sponsored massacre), rejects the ideologies propagated by the state, endorsed by the likes of her husband and inherited and internalized by all her children (with the sole exception of Brati) and in turn faces rejection from them. Sujata exists as an obligatory, token and trophy wife of a rich and successful businessman. In this highly hierarchised family, Dibyanath the husband enjoys all the privileges, calls all the shots and even decides when and how many times he ought to impregnate his wife, reducing her to a functional existence of being just a reproductive machine. Bringing up the children too, is solely his wife's responsibility as he is meant for better things than being dragged into the messy affair of parenting; again and again he makes sure that she is in good health and physically fit to produce yet another offspring:

He would never come down to ask about the children. But he noticed things, he noticed Sujata, he had to be sure that Sujata was fit enough to bear a child again. (3)

Dibyanath portrays a kind of unscrupulous bourgeoisie capitalist masculinity, exploiting Sujata's reproductive ability to beget children, sons who will manage and increase his business and daughters who will look after him. Therefore he resents his younger son Brati because of the latter's unproductiveness in the light of his growing business empire which is probably why he is able to accept his son's death so easily.

It is evident from the narrative that Sujata gives up on her family. Unable to protest explicitly, she subverts the system reminding one of De Beauvoir's observation, in the introduction to her book, *A History of Sex*:

The terms masculine and feminine are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electric poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral...whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity (7).

The principle of abstinence and relinquishment becomes the mainstay of Sujata's life. She gives up her conjugal relation with her husband when he forces her yet again to have another child. Sujata never claims the central position of taking up domestic responsibilities and running the household as the hegemonic institution of the urbanized patriarchal family conditioned by market economy demands. Dibyanath never realises that he has ceased to exist for Sujata who has rejected him after Brati's death: 'He lay in a bed next to Sujata's but he never knew that he did not exist for Sujata from that day' (8) This is Sujata's protest, her resistance, her mute revolt.

The ironic absurdity of Sujata's situation is however underscored and her marginalized state highlighted when those

(like Shomu's family and Nandini) who have seen, experienced and endured as much as she has, reject and resent her, regarding her as vastly more fortunate and privileged than their lot, assessing her situation on the perks of being an upper middle class working woman married to a rich man. They see Sujata as someone who can never understand their situation or the cause for which young men like Brati died. This ironically makes Sujata more alienated and deprived of a voice as compared to them and also resonates with Greer's observations on the impact of a capitalist society on women:

The sudden death of communism... catapulted poor women the world over, into consumer society where there is no protection... millions of women saw the bottom fallout of their world... They had freedom to speak, but no voice. (12)

Sujata's marginalization and alienation also stem from the vastly different perceptions that people have of her from what she truly is. Sujata's daughter Tuli, accuses her of having turned the 'house into a tomb'(29) after Brati's death and forcing the other members of the family to feel guilt-ridden and awkward. Socialites like Molly Mitter sum and size up Sujata as a 'thoroughly unfeeling wife' who had completely 'spoilt her son' (112). What Molly means by 'unfeeling' is Sujata's indifference towards her social status and the need to preserve and appreciate it and in doing so, extend every service towards her husband that is expected of a dutiful and token wife who has been given a life of affluence, comfort and luxury by her husband and therefore needs to respect the marriage contract and abide by the unwritten rules of this contract. This infact is a nominal return for all that he has done for her. On this, Firestone observes:

Women today still live under a system of patronage...they have the choice, not between freedom and marriage, but between being either public or private property. Women who merge with a member of the ruling class, can...hope, some of his privilege will, so to speak, rub off...To participate in one's subjection by choosing one's master,

often gives the illusion of free choice. But a woman is never free to choose... For her...the two things, love and status, must remain inextricably intertwined... In their precarious political situation, women can't afford the luxury of spontaneous love. (139)

Ironically, when Brati dies, Sujata's profound loss is felt only by Hem, the family help (who Brati bonded with). What possibly alienates and unnerves Sujata more than her son's death is the complicity which her family shows when they join hands in their effort to disown Brati and efface him completely from the familial space and conversations. This becomes more than evident with each action and finally in Tuli's outburst who expresses open embarrassment on her brother's death for having been killed for being a Naxal - an enemy of the state: 'Everybody tries to hush up an incident like the one we had. That's natural. Brati is dead' (29).

Fiction foregrounded against Fact to critique state-sponsored atrocities

The narrative of the novel presents partly as a mother's recollections of her dead son and partly as reporting on a prevailing political scenario with Devi successfully foregrounding fiction against a political backdrop. A major part of the novel makes manifest a mother's anguish, loss and her silent resistance, whereas a lot of it appears like objective reporting with a strong and unmistakable undercurrent of irony exposing the state's monstrosities and simultaneously seeming to suggest that this is precisely the way of the world. The narrative becomes cryptic and emotionally threadbare as it relates nightmarish and repulsive incidents like when it offers detailed accounts of the mutilated bodies of Brati and his friends. Information is presented to the reader in a matter-of-fact manner using the factual and objective language of reporting that alludes to or perhaps mocks the smugness and the indifference of the middle-class world:

Somu had twenty-three wounds on his body. Bijit sixteen. Laltu's entrails had been pulled out and wrapped around his body. All this surely could not have smacked

of barbarity, of bestiality. If it had, then the poets and writers of Calcutta would have spoken...Sujata's vision was surely wrong. Surely. (50-51)

The brutalities and the immoral and unlawful activities the state resorted to, to safeguard its interests is exposed by the narrator, coming down on expendable people, are seen and shown through the eyes of a bereaved mother. So, the textual economy is so arranged that what the reader might perceive as the personal afflictions of an aggrieved mother and her interior monologue also becomes a strong critique of the state.

One means through which this critique and the alternative narrative clearly unfolds is through the newspapers of Calcutta which only Sujata and Brati read, indicating a deep sense of increasing alienation between the citizen and the state, the individual and the city:

Sujata read the papers before she left for the bank. The city of Calcutta seemed wrong to her... She did not recognize, did not know this Calcutta. (49)

This parallel narrative likewise unfolds through the slogans written on the walls:

The Red Blood of our Red Comrade Red Tapan of Red Bengal...Burn the Police Headquarters to...

The sentence remains unfinished as Kalu is hit by a bullet. It stays like that (19).

Kalu's unfinished slogan is symbolic of the unfinished outcome of the Naxalite movement. This alternative narrative likewise unfolds through the internalization of the poems that Brati reads in his childhood, in the unheard conversations he has with Hem and the unmentioned and unseen world he visits unknown to his family which Sujata encounters only after his death and in the occasional eruption of the other voices like the conversation between Nandini and Sujata, two women who belong to different spaces and classes in the same society.

Sujata and Nandini (the woman Brati loved and who is also committed to the cause) embody different kinds of suffering and dissenting femininities. Sujata is alienated from her immediate family and Nandini is at war with the social system. Sujata makes a dedicated effort to piece together the memories of her dead son and forge his identity anew thus trying to reconstruct reality and bring him back to life by resurrecting him with the help of the scraps of information she manages to glean. Nandini is physically blind now (owing to the third degree torture she underwent) and mentally exhausted, grieved and angry at the death of her comrades and disillusioned with the turn things have taken.

There is a constant juxtaposition of these two stories. One story is that of Brati being influenced by ideologies that cannot be in the best interest of the state and the ruling and moneyed class he belongs to. This is implied in the reactions of the family and the conversation which takes place amongst the guests during Tuli's engagement party. This story logically heroes Saroj Paul and the likes of him in the police force who practically carried out the orders of killing Brati and who is therefore among the list of esteemed invitees to Tuli's engagement party.

The other story is that Brati's is an ideological battle, a war for equality and against state oppression, that he and the thousands like him died for a cause, that he was selfless enough to have pledged his life to the cause of the proletariat and that his loss is irreversible for Sujata. The thousands like Brati who were massacred on the streets of Calcutta had dreamt a dream which was inclusive and protective of precarious lives and therefore earned the wrath of the state machinery. In presenting a perspective on a political event through fictive reconstruction, Devi exposes hegemonic capitalist patriarchy at the domestic and state level and also a counter perspective on a politically engineered massacre of the youth; undoubtedly one of the most heinous and condemnable instances of organized genocide in independent India.

Stream of Consciousness to juxtapose dichotomous worlds and negate linear time

The element of pain becomes a prominent signifier of inert protest that runs like a thread in the narrative joining fragments of memory with reality, picking up loose ends and tying them up so that incidents are evoked and unraveled through these painful knots. The fifty-three year old Sujata of real time is juxtaposed with the thirty-one year old Sujata in the dream packing her bag to go to the hospital to deliver Brati. The connecting link is pain in the abdomen which connects 'now' with 'then'. The labour pain in the dream and the stomachache in reality interfuse. The narrative takes the reader to the hours preceding Brati's birth and the injection the nurse gives to Sujata to induce labour pain. 'The pain pierced Sujata's stomach through and through' (4) and goes on to describe her physical agony linking the pain of unwanted childbirth with the fatal pain of appendicitis which 'pierced her stomach through and through' (4) and compelled her to wake up 'dripping with sweat, her hands clutching the bed sheet...' (4) thus bringing back the reader into real time. The pain is not merely a malaise which needs medical attention. It is a visible, tangible manifestation, a symbolic projection of the helplessness compounded with powerlessness which Sujata experiences every moment of her life and which infests her system and becomes rabid.

It seems labour pain has been appropriately substituted by the pain of appendicitis where pain remains a constant and the cause variable. Brati who had entered this world by bringing immense pain to his mother has made an exit, again causing her excruciating pain. It is the pain that fills up the void created by his absence and her alienation:

She was in terrible pain the day before Brati was born. Why did she not remember the other births she had labored through?...Was it because Brati would remain forever close to her heart as a bitter pain? (96)

Sujata's perennial preoccupation with her son and his death surfaces with the feel of the cold water running over her body that only succeeds in reminding her of the cold touch of Brati's corpse:

The cold water soothed her. The water was ice cold. Ice.
Slabs of ice. The blood stops flowing when a
bloodstained, freshly killed corpse is laid on a slab of ice.
(102)

Stream of consciousness is thus used effectively not only to negate the fundamentally linear progression of time but also to show the radically different and dichotomous nature of the worlds which Sujata simultaneously or alternately cohabits as the layered concept of time underscores the poignancy of her condition. The generally perceivable, easily interpretable reality of the world which is intelligible to one through its order of actions and events is categorically deconstructed and translated into episodes pregnant with emotional turmoil.

The indifference of the external world is invariably juxtaposed with Sujata's inner turmoil. Her calm exterior is juxtaposed with her turbulent interior foregrounding what Laing calls the 'inner self in the schizoid condition' describing it as:

...temporary states of dissociation of the self from the body occur(ring) in normal people... it is a response that appears to be available to most people who find themselves exposed within a threatening experience from which there is no physical escape. (78)

By juxtaposing these two worlds, one indifferent and explicit, the other highly reactive and repressed, the writer exposes the stifling boundary situation the individual and moreso, the woman finds herself in and the resulting discontent and disconnect she experiences with everything around.

Suppressed Neurosis Depicting a World Falling Apart

Underneath the stable, reflective narrative one can sense the protagonist slowly falling apart. Beneath the steady, seemingly

cohesive family unit, the family too is falling apart. There are ruptures visible in the narrative that will eventually lead to Sujata's psychic suicide; similarly there are ruptures visible in the family relations that will eventually lead to the family falling apart.

The metaphor of carcasses surfaces every now and then as Sujata finds the people surrounding her, increasingly insufferable. Her daughter Neepa's perfunctory relationship with her husband and her extra marital affair with her husband Amit's cousin Balai repulse her and evoke the image of 'festering, malignant cancer...They were contaminated and diseased from the very womb' (115). To her everyone present at the party are 'vermin', 'putrefying cadavers' and 'corpses with their putrefying lives' (126).

Throughout there is a strong focus on the past, a reluctant living in the present without any visible projection in the future. The covertly neurotic narrative slowly moves towards disintegration. One sees it especially towards the end in the verbal exchange which everyone participates in but which appears to be nothing more than nonsensical chatter to Sujata as she loses track of who is saying what and finds the world closing in on her as the pain increases. Who speaks who responds no longer seems to matter. In its incessant persistence it is almost like rappers spinning out raps in the background:

Tony is a great boy.
Tuli is a great girl.
Jackie is a great son.
So is Jyoti.
Nargis is a great girl.
Neepa too.
You have a great family.
So have you. (121)

In the midst of the cacophony is the announcement of Saroj Pal's arrival. Till the very end there is a staged adherence to formality as Sujata proceeds to greet Saroj Pal her son's killer and

give him a box of sweets. The narrative indicates that she stumbles. Whether Sujata stumbles because of the pain or at the prospect of meeting her son's killer, the agony manifests itself at the physical level. Earlier in the bathroom too, a cornered Sujata senses a desperate urge to give up. But the final forced meeting with Pal is the point of culmination. Her mind snaps as a torrent of memories rush back in a surge once more. The rapid succession in which his statements come back to her mind coupled with the persistent hammering of his refusal to hand over Brati's body make her snap.

In him she sees the archetypal persecutor of hundreds like her son who have perished mercilessly under his vigil. The entire unfortunate scenario which had engulfed Calcutta around her son's death which saw 'shop shutters slam shut, the house doors close, pedestrians, cycles, street dogs and rickshaws scatter in panic...' and heard, 'the clomp clomp of boots, the roaring of vans, the rat-a-tat of shots' (125) comes alive as a terrified Sujata desperately seeks out a hiding place for her son. This seems to be exactly the point when her worst fears and fantasies fuse threatening to blow up the Brati she has so painstakingly and so carefully reconstructed ever since his death and throughout the day, bit by bit. Petrified at the prospect of losing him again and this time for good (as by now she cannot tell reality from fantasy) she collapses. She has been living in a world of wishful thinking and imagination for so long now that the very sight of Saroj Pal is enough to blow up her alternate universe. Unable to prevent it and unable to rationalize, she collapses, succumbing to her fear, her loss and her pain.

Sujata's years of silent protest and mute resistance culminate structurally into one heart-wrenching cry when she finally collapses giving in to her pain and her loss and rejecting the world of power-driven, indifferent puppets of the state: 'Sujata's long-drawn-out, heartrending, poignant cry burst... it was a cry that smelt of blood, protest, grief' (127). The cry exposes the linguistic inadequacy the impoverished and patriarchal symbolic order which gives no language to woman relegating her to the realm of chaos,

defining her as 'absence of meaning, irrationality... darkness... neither inside, nor outside, neither known, nor unknown' (Moi, 127).

Works Cited and Consulted

Beauvoir, Simone de. *A History of Sex*. London: Four Square Books Limited, 1961. Print.

Devi, Mahashweta. *Mother of 1084*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1997. Print.

Firestone, Shulamith. *The Dialectic of Sex The Case for Feminist Revolution*. Bantam Books, Inc., 1970. Print.

Greer, Germaine. *The Female Eunuch*. US: Harper Collins e-books, 1991. Print.

Laing, R. D. *The Divided Self An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*. England: Penguin Books, 1990. Print.

Moi, Toril. *Sexual/Textual Politics Feminist Literary Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 1988. Print.

Dr. Shyaonti Talwar

Assistant Professor of English
ELT Consultant and Trainer
RNC Arts, JDB Commerce and
NSC Science College Nashik.

Quilt (Lihaf) by Ishmat Chughtai as a Protest Text

Mouli Chowdhury

Abstract

Protest Literature consists of a language which has the ability to instigate change in the society and within the readers. Though every literary text comes under Protest literature but its primal aim is to bring change in the society. Ishmat Chughtai a prominent Urdu littérateur is an ardent social critic who displays sympathy for the oppressed and radicalism for the erroneous rules of the human society. Her most controversial short story The Quilt (Lihaf) is an important text in the Urdu Literature which suggests homosexual relationship in an era when open discussions on man-woman sexual relationship was considered a taboo. Since ages the quilt has always been a medium of protest and political statement. This research paper aims at understanding the concept of Protest Literature and how Ishmat Chughtai through her controversial short story The Quilt (Lihaf) uses it as symbol to create social and political unrest within the then society emerging as a prominent writer under this genre.

Keywords: Protest Literature, Ishmat Chughtai, quilt, change, Urdu literature, social unrest, homosexual, oppression, society, taboo.

Introduction

This research paper focuses on one of the most prominent

texts of Urdu Literature which created waves for its way of showcasing sexual relationship among same sex individuals. A short story which led Ishmat Chughtai reach to the courts of Lahore for spreading vulgarity through her pen. This paper tries to establish Quilt (Lihaf) as a protest text which has aided in portraying those relationships which has always been kept under the quilt for the fear of the society.

Literature is a medium of expressing emotions, values and concerns. Protest Literature generally consists of a language which has the ability to instigate change in the society and within the readers. In the forward to *American Protest Literature*, John Stauffeur provides several definitions about Protest Literature. According to him, there are three requirements of protest literature which consists of empathy which causes encouragement, shock value which inspires emotions, desires and symbolic action which promotes interpretations. Though every literary work comes under Protest Literature, but a literature which aims to be a protest literature focuses on bringing a change which can be a prominent need of the then society as it has always been a mere reflection of the society. History and literature goes hand in hand. Culture can be separated at times wherein the authors abstains themselves on writing on certain beliefs which has been the part of society but politics is an inevitable part of literature, despite of induced political pressures it will always seep through its literature and show its real color. It is a medium for searching the truth as it has been the cornerstone for the creativity of all fine arts. Truth has constantly inspired all artistic creativity whether a singer, painter or author, they will always devote themselves towards the discovery of truth through their chosen medium. It is imperative that this search for the truth can either be aesthetic or spiritual idea or it can just be a desire for humanely perfect social order that can generate happy conditions of life for every member of the society.

Ishmat Chughtai

One of the most prominent female Urdu writers who have

always used truth of the society to be the subject of her stories is Ishmat Chughtai. She was born in a middle class family in Badayun district of Uttar Pradesh and was a rebel from her childhood days. She was a part of an age which held the view that education for girls is inconsequential and had to struggle through her way of receiving her formal education. She started writing at an age when women writers were known for their romantic and sentimental vein but the realism of Russian Literature and radicalism of Rashid Jahan who is well known for the publication of a collection of short stories called *Angaaray* inspired her writings which displays sympathy for the oppressed and a radicalism for the erroneous rules of the human society. She was the most courageous and controversial Urdu woman writer of the twentieth century during the period 1911 till 1991. She created a niche for herself amongst other contemporary fiction writers such as Rajinder Singh Bedi, Sadat Hasan Manto and Krishna Chander by introducing areas that were never explored by Urdu literature, it created a change in attitude when she vehemently spoke against the orthodoxical and inflexible nature of the society. As an ace feminist writer she explored female sexuality while exploring other dimensions of social and existential reality. She once said that she always thought of herself as a human being first than a woman sharing similar views with the French existentialist writer Simone de Beauvoir, who said that all human being irrespective of a man or a woman should be regarded as a human being first in her most celebrated book the *Second Sex*.

The Quilt (Lihaf)

Ishmat Chughtai's most controversial short story which created a furor in the Urdu literature was *The Quilt* originally titled as *Lihaf*, which was published in the year 1941. It was published in the Urdu literary journal *Adab-i-Latif*, which led to various controversies, uproar and an obscenity trial at the Lahore court, where Ishmat Chughtai successfully defended herself. She refused to apologize to the court as her lawyer defended her saying that the story makes no suggestion of any sexual act as no obscene words

could be pointed out, as the story is completely suggestive and narrated from the perspective of a small girl. "I am still labelled as the writer of *Lihaaf*. The story brought me so much notoriety that I got sick of life. It became the proverbial stick to beat me with and whatever I wrote afterwards got crushed under its weight." said Ismat Chughtai in her book *A Life in Words: Memoirs* on how the short story changed her life. Tanvi Khanna in her article on *Gender, Self Representation and Sexualised Spaces* writes that even though, outwardly she (Begum Jan) abides by the patriarchal norms and possesses all the traits necessary for a virtuous woman in a patriarchal set-up, it is within the zenana that she refuses to give up her needs and desires for sexual satisfaction even if the only way left to her is to fulfill them by resorting to a deviant way of sexual relationship.

Quilt has always been a medium of protest and political statement for ages. For example *Crazy quilt* by Queen Liliuokalani of the kingdom of Lolani Palace in Hawaii (1895). She crafted a quilt while she was kept under house arrest in a room in her own palace almost for ten months while she protested against the United States government. She reigned from January 29, 1891 until January 17, 1893, when pro-American forces overthrew the Kingdom of Hawaii and proclaimed a provisional government in its place. Hoping to avoid bloodshed, Liliuokalani had no choice but to surrender her throne. She made a plea to the United States government to be reinstated and a representative of President, Grover Cleveland found the overthrow to be illegal, but the provisional government refused to do anything. In literature quilt has been used as a symbol of expression by many writers. It is also used to celebrate relationships. Even the act of making quilt provided an outlet to women characters to express themselves for example in the novel *The Colour Purple* by Alice Walker "First time I think about the world. What the world got to do with anything. I think about the world. Then I see myself sitting there quilting tween Shug Avery and Mr..... Us three set together against Tobias and his fly speck box of

chocolate. For the first time in my life, I feel just right”.

The story of the Quilt is told from the point of view of a small girl who attempts to come in terms with realities that she could not comprehend. She is the niece of the protagonist, Begum Jan who is a victim of social circumstances and is married to the Nawab Sahib who was much older than her and was thought to be extremely respectable for never having had any encounters with prostitutes “Begum Jaan’s poor parents had given her marriage to the Nawab Sahib because, although somewhat ‘advanced’ in age, the Nawab was a very pious man”. But it is soon revealed that it is because his interests lie in the other gender as *his only pleasure was to have students around him, young, fair-faced boys with slim waists, whose expenses were generously borne by the Nawab Sahib*. The lonely Begum starts to wither but is saved by Rabbo, her masseuse who is not pretty but very deft with her hands. When the young narrator is left at Begum Jan’s place by her mother, she realizes that despite her past admiration for Begum Jan, there lies many secrets within her. At night, the elephant like shadows formed by the quilt of Begum Jan and her odd behavior in the absence of Rabbo when she tries to hug and squeeze her like a plaything traumatizes the narrator.

The Quilt (Lihaf) as a Protest Text

Women in India have always been a part of male subjugation. Female infanticide, dowry deaths, child marriage, rape are few of the named atrocities against woman. Literature on woman challenged the conventional feminine qualities of obedience, abstinence and modesty in patriarchal society and emphasized womanhood with emotions and desires which are not to be discussed. Though our ancient scriptures have books on sexual acts but talking about it openly can be termed as going against the Indian age old traditions while a dialogue concerning female sexual desires can create a squeamish sense even in the female population. Female sexual desires exist and are a strong powerful force which can even surpass male desires. Women have always been

considered as objects for procreation and sexual gratification by men. Though in the recent times, the situation is improving and women are becoming comfortable to talk about their orgasmic desires in print and social media but are also facing an outpouring of negative criticism alleging such conversations as going against conventional wisdom and arousing redundant sexual desires in young women.

The Quilt which rocked at night as if an elephant was caught inside was used by Begum Jaan and Rabbu to hide their sexual acts. It also symbolized how Nawab Sahib used Begum Jaan as a quilt to cover his sexual orientation against the society. Identification of oneself as homosexual has made men uncomfortable as the conservative idea of loosing 'masculinity' was associated with it. Every society has been though such situations wherein under the pretext of identifying as a 'man' or 'woman' individuals have gone through the crisis of self identity. As a text of Protest Literature it was a symbolic text representing the quilt of the society which wanted to hide conversations majorly related to sexual orientation. This story portrays the negative aspects of women's sexuality and power which is balanced by positive representation of empowerment. The story focuses on a woman's quest for self and a description of her tumultuous married life whose husband used her as a garb to hide his sexual identity. Ishmat Chughtai subverts the patriarchal norms that she had to adhere by recognizing sexuality and sexual desires. The constant reference to "the elephant" under "the quilt" which caused wakeful nights for the narrator, serves as a metaphor for the sexual desires and relationships that are either not spoken of or only talked about in terms of metaphors and are not addressed directly. Injustice has been an integral part of human society right from its inception. Every age in history has witnessed rise of people who have promoted social astigmatism and to counter that there emerged thoughtful and sensitive souls to voice concerns about such unjust practices. Ishmat Chughtai's story is deeply rooted to the society which is still prevalent and tries to hide sexual desires

and conversations under the quilt. Homophobia is prevalent in India. Though it has been mentioned in many of the ancient Hindu scriptures like Rigveda and Kamasutra and was considered normal till 18th century. After the colonial rule which subjected Homosexuality as a punishable offence, it became a common phenomenon and discussions on sexuality became a topic of taboo. Society has always tried to put conversations related to sexuality under the quilt. *The Quilt* (Lihaaf) was written at a time when sexual relationships between people of the same gender were not a subject for open discussions. Though there was an acceptance for its existence but it was something that was kept under careful concealment and so the narratorial voice in the story uses metaphors so as to not address it openly. The unknowingness of the whole truth can also be seen in the narratorial voice. The distance in addressing it but not saying it out loud is visible. The same aversion to addressing sexuality in general can be seen even now. It has taken us too many years to even acknowledge the existence of homosexuality.

Conclusion

The Quilt (Lihaaf) not only re-presented the unspoken but also brought to light the taboo subject of female sexuality and the presence of female desires in a heteronormative marriage. It is also a story of women's sexual liberation while hiding under the quilt. Though homosexuality is common among animals and is considered to be a natural human phenomenon it has always been a topic which gathered protest both from the political and cultural arena. But, in the recent years when Universities started prescribing texts like *The Quilt* (Lihaaf), slowly and steadily Homosexuality became a topic of discussion among young minds. Texts like *The Quilt* (Lihaaf) are considered as Protest Literature because through the acquaintance of such texts people started thinking within such contexts and will always be a pivotal content for understanding Queer Literature. Thus, Ishmat Chughtai emerges as a literary activist who is quick to observe anomalies and inconsistencies in the

system around us and churns out stories which attract attention of serious, sensitive and people who matter. Changes within the society cannot be brought about by political actions accompanied by violence. Every revolution is preceded by psychological evolution in which literature plays an important role. Ishmat Chughtai uses her stories to protest, to highlight and to bring about positive, constructive and creative change in the mind set of people so that they can become more responsive, sensitive, sensible and accountable in their action and behavior.

On 6 September, 2018 Indian Supreme Court legalized consensual gay sex under section 377; while the entire country celebrated, there were still some parts of India where elation was felt under cocoon as the fear of being shunned by the society lingered in their minds. The law and the punishment for its violation becomes only a matter of putting pen to paper if the society does not change to accept and embrace all kinds of sexual identity. There can be hundreds of laws to liberate people identifying with different types of sexual choices, but if the society consisting of thinking, feeling and understanding humankind does not change its criteria of acceptance many more lives of such Begum Jaans and Nawab Sahibs will be trampled and choked to death while constantly hiding their real selves under *the Quilt*. Literary works penned by Ishmat Chughtai has always been a source of unveiling the mask of the society and giving a chance to its readers to relive, empathize and take actions against veiled issues of the society thus emerging as one of the prominent writers of Protest Literature.

Works Cited

- B, Darsana. "The Quilt and the Furore." 26 October 2019. Jabberwock Online. 31 January 2020 <jabberwockonline.wordpress.com/2019/10/>.
- Chughtai, Ismat. "Lihaf (The Quilt)." Trivedi, Harish. Modern Literature. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999. 115-117.

- Clay, Rebecca A. "Decriminalizing homosexuality in India." American Psychological Association (2019): 24.
- India Today. 21 August 2018. 31 January 2020 <www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/ismat-chughtai-1319789-2018-08-21>.
- Labry, Suzanne. We Are Quilts. 30 January 2020 <www.quilts.com/sfancy/suzy-s-fancy-a-queen%E2%80%99s-protest-quilt.html>.
- Sengupta, Ishita. The Indian Express. 15 October 2018. 31 January 2020 <indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/books/ismat-chughtai-lihaaf-feminist-novel-birth-anniversary-5318096/>.
- Trivedi, Grishma. "Review: Lihaaf." 15 October 2018. In Plainspeak. 31 January 2020 <www.tarshi.net/inplainspeak/review-lihaaf/>.
- Trodd, Zoe. American Protest Literature. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.

Mouli Chowdhury

Assistant Professor

School of Humanities

K.R Mangalam University

Rebel Against the Encroachment on Women's Rights in *A Dolls House*

Gurdeep Kaur Tripathi

Abstract

Pioneer of the new age modernist drama, Ibsen has pushed the envelop ever since he emerged on the literary terra firma. Ibsen handled the traditional marriage sample of a Norwegian society and the role of a woman in the traditional Scandinavian society in his play *The Doll's House*.

The female protagonist and the lead character of the play, Nora, is a representative of the conservative society that did not give women her dues as an individual. She is not seen at par with her male counterpart and suffers in the hands of her own near and dear ones. The ultimate goal of every women's life back then was considered to be married and raise children. Ibsen's female protagonist however, is not ready to take everything that is served on her platter mutely. Unlike the other women of her times she is not the one to play a second fiddle to anybody. She is aware of her duties and responsibilities as a wife and mother and does not step back when it comes to playing her role meticulously. However, the moment she realises the double standards set by her husband for himself and for her, she was aghast to see his real, self centered self. She then and there, decides to leave that house.

Nora's decision of leaving her house and trying to realise her own self came as a shock and stroke to the conservative society and raised controversies. Ibsen, however, continued his streak as a

writer who dealt with the rebellion of the real life people in the pages of his books through his mighty pen.

Keywords: Norwegian, Scandinavian, Feminism, Suffragette, Victorian.

Considered a hero of the Norwegian literature, Henrik Ibsen did not always enjoyed this status. Before getting his dues as a modern writer who thought beyond his time and had a much progressive thinking, Ibsen had to face serious criticism from both his audience and contemporary writers as the reformist ideas that Ibsen portrayed in his plays did not go well with the traditional thinking of his times, which, however, could not impel the forward looking writer to mince his words when it comes to giving a mordant commentary on the mid nineteenth century society or portraying the backward, ignorant and obtuse ways of the people. He lashed weighty comments on the conservatism, entrenched beliefs and constraints of strict Victorian traditions especially towards women.

Ibsen wrote at a time when feminism had become an issue in Scandinavia, a time when the society was transforming itself from its rural conceptions to modern thinking, at a time when the traditional feminine values took a U-turn and was reshaped. His writings were instrumental in getting this new wave of women emancipation. The old concept where girls were not able to develop their abilities and were only seen as an object to be married and to look after others in their families was now slowly changing to advanced thinking. Before it the girls were sent to schools not for their own sake but for the sake of becoming better wives and mothers. the women had no control over her property and marriage was seen as a ritual that held a woman responsible towards the members of her family. However, women's role in decision making and ability to have a say on many a matters was still under check.

Established as the father of realism, Ibsen had modified the way drama was perceived. He determined the rules of playwriting and was instrumental in getting drama its modern contour. The

elements of realism that he brought to drama were followed by writers to till date. He contrived life like characters for the new age audience unlike the larger than life personage framed before him. The earlier exaggerated style written in elevated language changed to unadorned day to day dialects exchanged between real people in real environment. His writings were a rebellion against the old romantic traditions and paved way for the issues faced by the contemporary society. He effortlessly portrayed contemporary realistic social problems experienced by the world. Apart from this Ibsen introduced to the European stage a new order of moral analysis that was placed against a severely realistic middle class background and developed with economy of action, penetrating dialogue and rigorous thought.

A Dolls House, a classic expression of the theme of women's rights can truly be termed under protest literature. A novel that draws attention to feminism in the late nineteenth century when the people still needed to wake up towards the rights of women in the society. Henrik Ibsen portrayed a women who leaves her husband in order to learn to become a person in her own right, an idea that was way ahead of its time.

Set in the Norwegian town Circa 1879, the play is about the awakening of a middle class wife towards her rights, her thoughts and her free spiritedness. At a time when women were expected solely to marry and run a house, at a time when women were often denied the opportunity for a plethora of reasons to seek higher education, at a time when the conservative Scandinavian bourgeois society of the nineteenth century witnessed suppression of women at the hands of their male counterpart, the female protagonist of *A Dolls House*, Nora, the doll of the title of the play takes decisions for herself. She is not ready to subdue herself at the hands of her husband throughout her life and therefore after a point of time, she feels like breathing in fresh air, she likes to live in a domain where she can take decisions for herself, she wants a place for herself as she realises that despite being a wife to her husband and a mother of her

child, she is also Nora, an individual who might not matter to others as an entity, but surely to herself.

Nora, the representative character of the mid nineteenth century Norway society, is a dutiful lady who knows her role well and is happily married to her husband, Torvald, and meticulously performs her duty as a mother too without any reproach, grumble or whine. Like the other women of the contemporary age, she is also treated like a doll who can be taken to big society parties like a status symbol but is an idol of silence with no voice of her own like a dumb cattle. She is to look after the kitchen, the home and the hearth but is not considered to be capable of making decisions for the family as women back then were not given proper education and is not deemed fit to play any role outside the four walls of their house which is their sole premises.

Nora, one such woman, is happy in her own self-sacrificing her dreams, her identity and her aspirations for the sake of her family until the day when she takes a decision on behalf of her husband and her whole life changes. Torvald was seriously ill and the doctor had advised a change of environment in order for him to survive. Nora took two hundred and fifty pounds from Mr. Krogstad, a money lender. Albeit the decision was taken for the well being of her husband, but, decision? And her? How come she takes a decision? Who is she to decide?, were all the questions she knew she would face one day. Nora never wanted her husband's self esteem to be hurt, therefore when she had to borrow money from Mr. Krogstad instead of her father, she forged her father's signature to avoid letting Torvald know the fact. Her intention was only to make her husband get well sans any loss to his ego. However, despite her good intend, all that proved arduous to her cause as a woman, she belonged to the fairer gender who can be adorned like a doll but can not take decisions and she dared to do exactly the same. She had a mind of her own and to top that, she used it as well, made things go against her and left her in distress. She was in troubled waters when Mr. Krogstad threatened to tell her husband the whole truth.

Actually, Mr. Krogstad wanted Nora to force her husband not to dismiss him from the bank in which Tovald was the manager. Nora, tried to convince her husband not to oust Mr. Krogstad from his services, but in vain as Tovald was not a man who gives any value to a woman's opinion. As a result, and as he had threatened Nora, Mr. Krogstad wrote a letter addressed to Tovald revealing the whole details of the forgery done by Nora. Nora, tried hard to dissuade her husband from seeing the mail box that day by diverting his attention towards other things. What bothered Nora more, was not her own fate but her husband's crushed ego which she knew would not be able to digest the fact that his wife had borrowed money from somebody.

On the other hand, Mrs. Linde, a friend of Nora, with whom Mr. Krogstad was once in love promised Nora to help her in the matter. She successfully persuaded Mr. Krogstad to withdraw all his accusations against the Helmers. However, before he could write that letter acquitting the Helmers from all the charges, Tovald read the first letter dropped by him. On reading the letter, Tovald lost his temper and accused Nora of being a hypocrite, a deceiver, immoral and senseless person with no sense of duty. In his fit of rage he also mentioned that she was unfit to raise their children. He further declared that after all this, she may remain in the house but would no longer be a part of her life.

Soon after this Tovald received another letter from Mr. Krogstad that declared that he had no intention of taking any action against the Helmers. As soon as he read that letter, Tovald realised that he was no more under threat. This brought about a sudden change in his attitude. Nora was aghast to see this abrupt shift in his demeanour. Nora realised the hollowness in their relationship. She felt that all those years, she had been living with a person who is narcissistic and pretentious. She immediately decides to leave the house, as a house that does not provide her an equal status with her counterpart can not be her's. She reminded Tovald that she is not an inanimate doll, but a living person in flesh and blood who has her

own identity and personality that she would not like anybody to subjugate making her a second fiddle to her life partner. She leaves the house slamming the door behind her.

The female protagonist's gusty step of leaving her husband bewildered the conventional audience. Nora's decision of stepping out of her house, leaving her husband and children in her effort to search her true identity was something never heard of before. In the traditional Scandinavian society women were supposed to stay at home and look after the household chores and children's needs. The nineteenth century can also be seen as an oppressive era for women especially with regards to society, marriage and the household. Her role was confined to cooking, teaching etiquette to her children and maintaining the home. Women worked tirelessly without recognition as these duties were considered insignificant. Thus, the treatment of his female protagonist and her resolute step put Ibsen's Nora in the league of modernist females, much ahead of her times, making her a revolutionary figure in world's drama.

A Dolls House examined the life of a middle class married women of the Victorian era as never seen before. Nora's decision shocked the viewers as it criticises the traditional gender roles and the holy covenant of marriage. Ibsen illustrated Nora's struggle with the traditional role of wife and mother in the Norwegian society through which he had raised questions on the accepted social practices of the society puzzling his audiences and stirring up debates. This brought about enormous controversies, not only literary but also social and cultural scandals about the changing role of women in society.

James Joyce says that "Ibsen has provoked more discussion and criticism than of any other living man." Continuing with the trend of stirring up controversy, Ibsen continued raising questions through his other works as most of his works were ahead of the turn of the development of modernist and expressionist theatre. *The Dolls House*, which is a marriage drama has become the Bible of the suffragette movement across the literary arena of the world. Ibsen's

works are continued to be read and admired over the years because he portrayed universal themes and explored the human behaviour in a way no one could do before him. On the whole Ibsen has left a legacy not only on the Norwegian society but also on the literature of the world. The protest of Nora, is still the protest of women in many parts of the world and right now some or the other woman in one or the other part of the globe is deciding to change the equations for herself standing at the outer side of her door ready to slam it.

Works Cited

Bonnie G. Smith, A Doll's House, The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Women in World History, Vol.2, Oxford University Press.

Gail F, McFarlane J (2004) Ibsen and Feminism, The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen. Cambridge University Press, New York, USA.

<https://www.britannica.com>. accessed on 17th December 2019.

<http://www.lifeinnorway.net>>henrilbsen. Accessed on 15th January 2020.

Dr. Gurdeep Kaur Tripathi

Asst. Prof; Dept of English,
Bundelkhand University, Jhansi.

Resistance against Colonial Misrepresentation of Africa: a study of *Achebe's Arrow of God*

Surabhi Mukherjee

Abstract

Africa and Africans have always been misrepresented in western literature, including travelogues and movies. The purpose of the colonizers to distort the history and culture of the Africans lies in creating a new inferior image. Europeans have always considered Africa as a land with history of savagery and took a responsibility, on God's behalf, to tame them. Chinua Achebe is sincerely dedicated to make his fellow African and the entire world understand that they had a past with rich cultural rituals and traditions. He strongly resists the misrepresentation of his native land by numerous European and non-European authors and comes forward to bridge the drift between his rich cultural past and western readers.

Keywords: Colonization, savagery, Igbo culture, self-denigration, Orientalism.

Postcolonial era is known around the globe for a period where one's misfortune was delight for other. The colonizer's fortune was the result of the sufferings and traumatized condition of the colonized, especially when it is about a continent like Africa, which was known for its distinct cultural history. Like any other colonized country, Africa was also plundered and exploited and more importantly they were alienated from their roots and rich cultural past. As a result the real image of Africa was obliterated.

Africa, prior to the arrival of the Europeans on their land, had a glorious history of their rich and distinct culture. But with the growing dominance of the colonial rule, Africans were made to believe that they are inferior and savage. This continent has encountered various kinds of dark practices like slavery in the era of colonization. Europeans gradually succeeded in minimizing the sense of pride of African people on their customs and rituals and enhancing the acceptance of their inferior position in the world. The best description of this amazing continent can be found in the works of Muoneke, where he elaborates:

Africa is a continent torn apart by the aftermath of colonialism. Though rich in natural resources, Africa has remained insolvent even after independence. Devastated by internal wars, ravished by greedy and corrupt politicians, shamed by her people's inability to manage their own affairs and recently subjected to the pairs of fascist repression from political and military adventures, the continent is left to deal with the disastrous effects of hunger, disease, malnutrition, and general unrest. [Muoneke, 5]

Resistance is a complex act of expressing protest against oppressors. In African context, it also stands for reviving African cultural past and reshaping the African history from the dark era of slavery, by questioning and challenging subordination. Exploring entire history of Africa, it is found that they have always struggled to express their protest against the dominant forces. Starting from the very dark decades of the slave trade, to the colonial era, they have continuously been resisting against various forms of subjugation and injustice.

This act of protest took the form of cultural resistance in Africa and took the responsibility of reviving and reshaping age old rich cultural practices its uniqueness and primitive rituals. This feeling paved the way to a movement in West Africa called 'Negritude' movement. It originated with an intention to awaken people of Africa about their rich cultural history. In a way this

movement was a desire to regain whatever had been taken away by the colonizers and restore pride in their own primitive cultural practices.

Chinua Achebe is a Nigerian novelist, short-story writer, essayist, poet, editor, and author of children's book. He belonged to the Igbo community of South-East region of Nigeria and is considered to be one of the most renowned figures of African literature. He is also known as the founder of the Modern African Literary Movement. His contribution is well acknowledged in the sphere of African writings. Achebe, as a writer, is of the view that various western authors have always presented a distorted picture of Africa, where the natives are portrayed as savage and primitive people. As a modern African writer, Achebe realizes the responsibility to restore the pride of African culture.

After a dark period of colonization, the continent was left in state of bewilderment and confusion. This situation aroused a need for commitment to restore the consciousness of the natives for their rich cultural heritage. He stood up to encounter the unjust evils spread in the colonial era like colonialism, slavery and racism. In order to protest against the colonial misrepresentation and distorted European narratives about Africa, Achebe utilized his deep cultural faith to give an authentic and clear picture of the African life, before the arrival of the colonizers. He declares a prolonged war against the European texts written on Africa, portraying African characters in true colours. When asked about the reason for this prolonged protest in an interview, Achebe said:

As an African, I have been given a certain role in the world, a certain place in the world, a certain history in the world, and I say, 'No', I don't accept these roles, these histories-distorted, garbled accounts. I am going to recreate myself. I'm protesting against the world.
[Ogbaa,10]

The works of Chinua Achebe has created a wave of literary revolution in the history of Nigeria, and its repercussions have

encouraged numerous writers to affirm their African identity. In spite of being born in a Christian converted family, he always refused to follow imperialistic notions and turned to his roots embracing the rich oral tradition. It is well evident in his early works where he uses the Igbo proverbs and oral traditions in abundance. In this context, Bruce King, in his work *Introduction to Nigerian Literature*, opines:

Achebe was the first Nigerian writer to successfully transmute the conventions of the novel, a European art form, into African literature. European character study is subordinated to the portrayal of communal life; European economy of form is replaced by an aesthetic appropriate to the rhythms of traditional tribal life. [King, 10]

Achebe's resistance against the stereotypic portrayal of his motherland continues in *Arrow of God* also, his third novel published in 1964. This novel is considered to be an endeavour by Achebe to artistically refuse the colonial suppression of African culture and values. It also brings out the failure of the colonizers to respect and appreciate native cultures and the breakdown of the traditional African values as a result of westernization.

Arrow of God explores the impact of the Europeans and their culture on the traditional African society during the period of colonization and the traumatic experience of the natives. Here, Achebe recreates the rich cultural past of his motherland in order to regain the confidence of his men. The plot is woven around the character of Ezeulu, chief priest of Ulu and the principal deity of six villages of Umuaro. He stands firmly fulfilling all the requisites of an Igbo man. He is endowed with both sharp intelligence and physical vigour. Even Achebe, himself considers this novel as a piece, he likes to read again and again. About the protagonist he says:

We should be ready at the very least to salute those who stand fast, the spiritual descendants of that magnificent man, Ezeulu, in the hope that they will forgive us. For had

he been spared Ezeulu might have come to see his fate as perfectly consistent with his high historic destiny as victim, consecrating by his agony- thus raising to the statue of a ritual passage- the defection of his people. [AOG, vii]

The colonizers consider Igbo as primitives and therefore they showed it as God's command to civilize them without knowing their consent. This novel explores the tragedies resulted for their influence on Igbo religion. Achebe tries to recreate the entire traditional Igbo world in order to end this traumatic condition of Africans. Here, Captain Winterbottom, is the face of colonizers, who considers Igbo men savage and corrupt while ignoring their cultural distinctness. To any European men, Igbo are savage and psychologically corrupt. But Achebe rejects such claims and clears the true intension of the colonizers to rule Umuaro, not to educate or civilize them. Due to this Igbo people were torn between two beliefs, the temptation to follow the new and the promise to stick to their roots. Achebe takes the reins in his hands to give importance to their traditional ways and depicts this through the character of Ezeulu:

Listen to what I shall say now. When a handshake goes beyond the elbow we know it has turned to another king. It was I who sent you to join those people because of my friendship to the white man, Wintabota. He asked me to send one of my children to learn the ways of his people and I agreed to send you. I did not send you so that you might leave your duty in my household. Do you hear me? Go and tell the people who choose you to go to Okperi that I said no. Your people should know the customs of this land; if they don't you must tell them. [AOG, 14]

The novel highlights a significant era of 1920's when the traditional Igbo life was undergoing some radical changes. Through the character of Ezeulu, Achebe tries to destruct and destroy the colonial representation of the Igbo society in order to regain confidence. The life of Umuaro depends on Ezeulu's time-keeping.

He is considered as a bridge of communication between the human world and the world of spirits. He has experienced a battle against his own people who want to throw him out of his position of Chief Priest and he has also encountered a war with the colonial intruders like Captain Winterbottom. He decides to provide missionary education to his son Oduche, not with an intention to surrender but a will to learn their language and ways of living which might help Umuaro to gain power and save its people in future:

At first he had thought that since the white men had come with great power and conquest it was necessary that some people should learn the ways of his deity. That was why he wanted him to learn the white man's wisdom; for Ezeulu knew from what he saw of Wintabota and the stories he heard about his people that the white man was very wise.
[AOG, 43]

Achebe is of the opinion that Ezeulu's wrong decisions and friendly attitudes towards the colonial intruders led to the decline in faith of Igbo people. His fall as a protagonist begins first by his son, Oduche, when he tries to kill the sacred python in order to gain Captain Winterbottom's admiration. He was asked to do so by Mr. Goodcountry in order to show disrespect to the Igbo cultural faith and sacred symbols, which will wage an internal war among the tribes. It is an age old practice of the colonizers, known as 'divide and rule policy', which they had been practicing in each and every colonized piece of land, including India, in order to get a grip over the country:

He turned to Oduche. 'As for you they may call you peter or they may call you Paul or Barnabas; it does not pull a hair for me. I have nothing to say to a mere boy who should be picking palm nuts for his mother. But since you have also become our teacher, I shall be waiting for the day when you will have the courage to kill a python in this Umuaro. A coward may cover the ground with his words but when the time comes to fight, he turns away.
[AOG, 51]

The religion of the Europeans made lasting effects on the Igbo people. For them, Church is the most holy and divine place on this earth, while Igbo religious practices were considered primitive and superstitious. Many Igbo people who converted themselves later into Christianity gave importance to institution of Church and followed prayer assemblies leaving their fields whenever the Church bells rang. Ezeulu's son Oduche was one of them:

Oduche saluted his father and set out for the mission because it was Sunday morning. The bell continued ringing in its sad monotone. Nwafo came back to the *obi* and asked his father whether he knew what the bell was saying. Ezeulu shook his head. 'It is saying: Leave your yam, leave your cocoyam and come to church. That is what Oduche says'. [AOG, 44]

It was their aim to defame pagan rituals of the Igbo community and replace it with their Christian faith. This was fiercely attacked by Achebe in this novel. Anyone from the community who stood up to protest was considered obsessive and often scolded by his teachers. They fractured the confidence of the Igbo people making them believe that they are not trustworthy until they completely forsake their primitive religious practices. Achebe attempts to unveil this ugly practice of the colonizers to rule over Nigeria.

Achebe's purpose both as a writer and a teacher is loaded with the felling of resistance against the savage and primitive image of Nigeria as portrayed by the colonizers, doing unjust to his motherland. The arrival of the colonizers disturbed the calmness of the community. Achebe recreates the hidden past of his culturally rich country. He depicts Igbo culture undergoing transformation under the influence of the Europeans. This streak of resistance is common in all the fictional works of Achebe.

Works Cited

- Muoneke, Romanus Okey. Art, Rebellion and Redemption: A Reading of the Novels of Chinua Achebe. Peter lang, 1994.
- Ogbaa, Kalu. Understanding Things Fall Apart: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents. Greenwood Press, 1999.
- King, Bruce (ed). Introduction to Nigerian literature. University of Lagos, 1971.
- Achebe, Chinua. Arrow of God. Penguin Classics, 2010.

Surabhi Mukherjee

Research Scholar,
Department of English,
Bundelkhand P.G. College, Jhansi.

The Unchained Spirit of Draupadi: A Short-Story by Mahashweta Devi

Anupam Soni

Abstract

Mahashweta Devi is considered to be most widely read and translated author. She has always stood up for tribal people of India, especially of West Bengal and Jharkhand, and used her pen as a weapon to express their resistance against the atrocities inflicted upon them by other forces. Her involvement centers more on the tribal women who always remained unheard. *Draupadi* was originally written in Bengali, later translated in English by Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak. It centers on a tribal women Dopdi Mejhen, who after being tortured by infinite lustful men does not break down. On the contrary, she stands stern refusing to cover her body, leaving the patriarchal authoritative system powerless. This paper attempts to discover the strength of resistance and refusal of living as a pity figure.

Keywords: Resistance, Patriarchal authority, Tribal subjugation, Molestation.

Literature has always helped in moulding a society by works of social relevance. The expectations of a reader, from an author, had changed rapidly in terms of the modern scenario. Now, any piece of literature is valued on the basis of its authenticity and nearness to contemporary life. Our history has witnessed several instances where men refused to succumb to the oppressive forces

around him. They expressed their resistance with whatever means they had. To understand this more clearly, we need to go back to the era when Western Europe started taking socio, economic and political control over other countries, turning them into European colonies in order to establish cultural dominance. This wave of oppression was severely protested by numerous national leaders in the form of national liberation struggles.

This spark of revolt against the European dominance gave birth to a significant category of literature called the “Resistance Literature”, in most of the continents of the world. The will to express resistance needs a lot of courage to stand against power structure. Barbara Harlow, a well known critic, has elaborated this issue in her work *Resistance Literature*:

The struggles for national liberation and independence have not only sought socio-economic control and cultural dominance but have also produced a significant corpus of literary writing, both narrative and poetic, as well as a broad spectrum of theoretical analysis of the political, ideological and cultural parameters of their struggle. (Harlow, xii)

Therefore, literature has always played a significant role in revealing the protest of an individual against the authority. There is almost a galaxy of authors who gained their identity as a renowned writer by expressing their resistance against the hegemony in their writings. For instance, Nicolas Guillen from Cuba, Edward Dorn from Latin America, Kanafani from Palestine, Chinua Achebe from Nigeria and others.

In the context of India, apart from writing against the colonial subjugation, there were also many social evils like caste system, gender inequality, class exploitation, which found expression in the form of ‘Resistance Literature’. The desire to obliterate the demarcations of an unjust society gives birth to a literature that maintained its existence even after the colonial powers left us. Harinder A. Singh, a well known Indian critic has

talked about this sense of resistance in his book, *Theme of Protest in Indian Fiction*, where he says:

The sense of protest usually springs up from an extreme sensitiveness to the disparity between ideals and practices.... They fight a fierce battle with the cruel systems that deny life to others and rise in revolt against the exploiters and a hostile social environment that belittles the exploited. (Singh, 11)

Mahashweta Devi, as an author, is considered synonymous with the struggle and revolt against injustice, oppression and exploitation. She was a tireless spirit, working continuously for the exploited tribal and other subjugated communities. The bitter side of their struggling life has always found expression in her writings. She is a novelist, playwright, short-story writer, essayist, magazine editor as well as cultural activist who believe to find salvation through her writings.

Mahashweta Devi was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 1926 to a family of intellectuals and social workers. In the mid 1960s, she started working as a journalist and also started teaching at an affiliated college of Calcutta University. As a journalist, she explored the realistic side of tribal communities of West Bengal, which were subject to oppression and marginalization. These tribal groups were mainly Santhals, Lodhas and Mundas, which were pushed down in the hierarchical social order, therefore living on the mercy of the powerful and influential sect of the society. Her sincere documentation of the tribal life made her renowned in the literary world.

Even after so many years of gaining independence, a very big section of our society is still living in same situation as they were in colonial times. Least has changed for them, as they are deprived of basic necessities in modern days also and the atrocities inflicted upon them has sustained. Mahashweta Devi boldly highlights all these issues through her writings. In an inaugural speech of Frankfurt Book fair in Germany in 2006, she throws light on the purpose of her writing:

I claim elsewhere to have always written about the 'the culture of the downtrodden'. How tall or short or true or false is this claim? The more I think and write and think some more, the harder it gets to arrive at a definition. I hesitate, I falter, I cling to the belief that any culture as old and ancient as ours to have survived over time and in time, there could only be one basic common and acceptable core thought: 'humaneness'. To accept each other's right to be human with dignity. This then is my fight. My dream. In my life and in my literature. (Devi, 12)

Most of her works are written in her mother tongue Bengali, which were later translated into other languages.

The government of India has honoured Mahashweta Devi with various honours and awards namely Sahitya Akademi Award in 1979, the Jnanpith Award, in 1996; Magsaysay Award in 1997; Padma Vibhushan in 2006 and Padma Shri in 1986. She died in 2016, at the age of 90, in Calcutta, due to multiple organ failure.

In major arena of her writings Mahashweta Devi has focused on the sufferings of down-trodden tribal women. She explores the miseries inflicted on women in a male dominated society. In an interview with Sue Dickman, she said:

I am a woman, and I am writing. But, I am not writing of women alone. What I am writing, most of my books, it is about class exploitation, the underclass is exploited, men, women together. Of course, women get worst part of it, but not always. Definitely, I am interested in women's positions, women's thought. But I am more interested in active work. (Dickman, 33)

Most of Mahashweta Devi's works revolves around women physically assaulted and raped by the patriarchal authorities.

Draupadi, a short story, was earlier published in her renowned work *Agnigarbha* in 1978. Later it was translated into English by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and published under her collection *Breast Stories* in 1997. There are two other translated stories in the same collection: *Breast-Givers* and *Behind the Bodice*.

As the name suggests, all these stories are woven around female organ, the Breast, discovering its different aspect of treatment. In *Draupadi* it stands for an object of inhumane torture and revolt.

Draupadi is considered to be an extra-ordinary and realistic document of severe physical atrocities inflicted upon a tribal woman and her resistance against the Feudal masters and officials. This story is centered against the Naxalite Movement of 1967 to 1971, leading to the Bangladesh Liberation war. There was a tribal uprising against the atrocities of the feudal lords, which called the attention of the government and they started 'Operation Bakuli' to crush this revolt.

It is the story of a woman Dopdi Mehjen, belonging to Santhal tribal community of West Bengal. She is a courageous figure, who murders cruel landlords of the area with her husband Dulna and usurps their property for the poor tribal. Gradually, it became a threat for the cruel land owners and they asked the government to intervene and crush the uprising. As a result, many were killed, kidnapped and raped to break their spirit of revolt and torture with Dopdi was no different. The story documents the social and sexual molestation of tribal dalit women, who are bound to suffer not only on the basis of class and caste but also on gender. It is set in the background of 1967 peasant rebellion in the 'Naxalbari' area of West Bengal. In the *Foreward* of the translated version, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak comments on the setting of the story:

In the spring of 1967, there was a successful peasant rebellion in the Naxalbari area of the northern part of West Bengal. According to Marcus Franda, "unlike most other areas of West Bengal, where peasant movements are led almost solely by middle-class leadership from Calcutta, Naxalbari has spawned an indigenious agrarian reform leadership led by lower classes" including tribal cultivators. The target of these movements was the long established oppression of the landless peasantry and itinerant farm workers. (Spivak,xii)

The center of the story, Dopdi, is introduced by Mahashweta Devi in the very opening line of the story, saying: "Name Dopdi Mejhen, age twenty-seven, husband Dulna Majhi (deceased), domicile Cherakhan, Bankrajharh, information whether dead or alive and/or assistance in arrest, one hundred rupees..." (Devi, 19). This introduction says a lot about her popularity, as a tribal rebel woman, who has waged war against the landowners.

There was a severe drought in Birbhum and poor people of that area were struggling for a drop of water. They were compelled to live on the mercy of Surja Sahu, a cruel landowner who refused to give water to the villagers from his well. Dulna and Dopdi decides to kill him and give those wells to the villagers:

Surja Sahu's house was surrounded at night. Surja was tied up with cow rope. His whitish eyeballs turned and turned, he was incontinent again and again. Dulna had said, I will have the first blow, brothers. My great-grandfather took a bit of paddy from him, and I still give him free labour to repay that debt.

Dopdi had said, his mouth watered when he looked at me. I will pull out his eyes. (Devi 30)

To crush this rebellion of the tribal, operation Jharkhani was launched by the government under the supervision of Senanayak, who was considered to be an expert military strategist, excelled in adopting tribal languages and customs in order to capture them. Her valour as a leader is evident with her act of alarming her fellow comrades that she will be apprehended:

Now Dopdi spreads her arms, raises her face to the sky, turns towards the forest, and ululates with the force of her entire being. Once, twice, three times. At the third burst the birds in the trees at the outskirts of the forest awake and flap their wings. The echo of the call travels far. (Devi:34)

After her arrest, she was treated not as a courageous leader but a body of a tribal woman. After official process of interrogation,

Senanayak ordered his men after the dinner to: “Make her. *Do the needful*”. From here the process of brusing her soul and dignity commences, as she is repeatedly and brutally raped by various men, nights after nights. A woman is often victimized through her body, outraging her dignity. Her hands and legs were tied apart and cloths stripped off. She undergoes inhumane treatment which leaves her body is fiercely bitten and bleeding:

Then a billion moons pass. A billion lunar years. Opening her eyes after a million light years, Draupadi, strangely enough, sees sky and moon. Slowly the bloodied nail heads shift from her brain. Trying to move, she feels her arms and legs still tied to four posts. Something sticky under her ass and waist. Her own blood. Only the gag has been removed. Incredible thirst. In case she says "water" she catches her lower lip in her teeth. She senses that her vagina is bleeding. How many came to make her?

Shaming her, a tear trickles out of the corner of her eye. In the muddy moonlight she lowers her lightless eye, sees her breasts, and understands that, indeed, she's been made up right. Her breasts are bitten raw, the nipples torn. How many? Four-five-six-seven-then Draupadi had passed out. (Devi, 35)

But unlikely any other rape victim, Draupadi refuses to suffer in silence and succumb to the patriarchal authorities. With unconquerable spirit Draupadi decides to walk naked to the Senanayak and confront him. The policemen, after ‘making her up’, take her back to the tent and tell her to put on her clothes, and get ready to meet the Senanayak in his tent. At this point her character transforms completely and a resilient Draupadi is born from the ashes of raped and tortured Draupadi. The guard offers a bucket of water to clean the blood matted body, but she mocks at them, throws the water down and tears her clothes into pieces, refusing to get dressed. With her tears, she has also wiped out her shame as a woman and proceeds to walk towards Senanayak, naked and bruised, with her head held high:

Draupadi stands up. She pours the water down on the ground. Tears her piece of cloth with her teeth. Seeing such strange behavior, the guard says, She's gone crazy, and runs for orders. He can lead the prisoner out but doesn't know what to do if the prisoner behaves incomprehensibly. So he goes to ask his superior.

The commotion is as if the alarm had sounded in a prison. Senanayak walks out surprised and sees Draupadi, naked, walking toward him in the bright sunlight with her head high. The nervous guards trail behind. (Devi: 37)

Senanayak is shocked at this sight and asks her to cover herself but she refuses boldly and says: "There isn't a man I should be ashamed". (Devi: 37) She continues to express her agony by refusing to behave like a helpless victim, leaving the entire patriarchal order speechless. The men who succeeded easily to strip her off and outrage her modesty, could not cover her again. Her naked and bruised body becomes a weapon of resistance against the patriarchal dominance. Her bold and shameless laughter terrifies the Senanayak, who gave orders to torture her in the dark and now unable to confront her naked body:

Draupadi comes closer. Stands with her hand on her hip, laughs and says, The object of your search, Dopdi Mejhen. You asked them to make me up, don't you want to see how they made me? Where are her clothes? Won't put them on, sir. Tearing them. Draupadi's black body comes even closer. Draupadi shakes with an indomitable laughter that Senanayak simply cannot understand. Her ravaged lips bleed as she begins laughing. Draupadi wipes the blood on her palm and says in a voice that is as terrifying, sky splitting, and sharp as her ululation, what's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?... Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid. [Devi, 37]

Mahashweta Devi, through the character of Draupadi gives voice to the unheard subalterns who often suffer in silence, with an intension to awaken the conscience of the citizens. This text loudly raises a traumatized condition of any marginalized tribal women who is exploited on both social and physical grounds and later compelled by the hegemonic patriarchy to take revenge and stand out as the most powerful figure. Their endless fight for survival against victimization as a woman calls for attention of the society.

Works Cited

Harlow, Barbara. *Resistance Literature*. Methuen, 1981.

Singh, Harinder, A. *Theme of Protest in Indian Fiction*. Prestige, 2005.

Devi, Mahashweta. "Mahashweta Devi's Inaugural Speech at the Frankfurt Book Fair". www.indiatribalheritage.org/p=7298.

Dickman, Sue. "In conversation: Sue Dickman with Indian Women Writers". *The Book Review*, Vol.19, no. 4, 1995.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Translator's Forward". *Draupadi*. Seagull Books, 2010.

Devi, Mahashweta. *Breast Stories*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Seagull Books, 2010.

Dr. Anupam Soni

Associate Professor,
Bundelkhand P.G. College, Jhansi.

Protest through Performance and its Absence

Kirti Y. Nakhare

Abstract

This paper aims at taking a closer look at two pieces of works; one from the collection titled, *White As Milk And Rice-Stories of India's Isolated Tribes* by Nidhi Dugar Kundalia, a journalist by profession, who has documented the narratives of six tribes in this melange of life stories. 'The Halakkis of Ankola', is the chapter chosen for comparison with the eponymous short story 'The Adivasi Will Not Dance', from the collection of Santhali short stories titled 'The Adivasi Will Not Dance' written by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar. The tenacity of Sukri; the female protagonist of the chapter on the Halakkis is compared with the defiance displayed by Mangal Murmu the Santhali protagonist of 'The Adivasi Will Not Dance'.

Keywords: Adivasi, Folk Heritage, Social Message, Performance, Protest

Protest and performance go hand in hand, the urge to be 'heard', forms the basis of protest. Protest can be articulated through words, by setting these words to a rhythm and performing these words that are rhythmically set, on stage. Protest can be expressed by refusing to conform, it can be expressed physically, especially, when the words of the protestors aren't effective enough to be heard. This paper deals with two creations; one a piece of

fiction, a short story titled, 'The Adivasi will not Dance' and the other, a chapter titled 'The Halakkis of Ankola' which is a piece of non-fictional journalistic writing that deals with the lives led by the Halakki tribe.

1: Writers and their Social Responsibility:

In the book entitled *Imaginary Maps* (2001), Mahasweta Devi mentions, 'The tribal population of India is about one-sixth of the population of the total population of the whole country and the tribes are divided into many groups. India belonged to these tribals long before the incursion of the Aryan-speaking people.' (i). Devi geared her journalistic writings to fight their case. She formed the AdimJatiAikya Parishad - (Tribal Unity Forum) thus ensuring that a Santal will not kill a Lodha anymore. She believed that the system that brands them as Criminal Tribes and disunites them and uses them as target is the real criminal.

In the essay 'A Nomad Called Thief', G.N. Devy, introduces us to the social category in which the Adivasis are included today. They are generally known as the Denotified and Nomadic Tribes of India which covers a population of approximately six crores. The Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) were branded as 'born' criminals. The British had prepared an official list of Criminal Tribes by 1871, and also an act to regulate criminal tribes was passed that year. The Bhils that fought the British rule in Khandesh and on the banks of Narmada were convicted under section 110 of the Indian Penal Code and were recognised as Criminal Tribes. (ibid, 21) Even today post-independence and the substitution of the Criminal Tribes Act that is replaced with the Habitual Offenders Act, that has preserved most of the provisions of the former CT Act.

Nidhi Kundalia draws attention to the more recent PESA (the Panchayats [Extension to the Scheduled Areas] Act), 1996, and the Forests Rights Act, 2006, which she states have made a difference. However, tribals in the interiors are unaware of their rights, in spite of the well-meaning acts, that are passed for their

well-being, these policies have in one way or the other only complicated their circumstances. (Location 112 of 2916, Kundalia 2020)

Dispensing their social responsibility, Hansdah Sowendra Shekhar a Santhal himself has etched the lives of the Santhal tribe in *The Adivasi will not Dance* while Nidhi Dugar Kundalia has written about six different tribes in the book titled *White as Milk and Rice*.

2: The Adivasi Will Not Dance

“We are like toys-Someone presses our ‘On’ button, or turns a key in our backsides. And we Santhals start beating rhythms on our Tamak and Tumdak, or blowing tunes on our Tiriyo while someone snatches away our very dancing grounds. Tell me, am I wrong?” (p.170, 2015) So says, Mangal Murmu an ex-farmer and dance master speaks poignantly in the eponymous story, *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*.

Written by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar published by Speaking Tiger in 2015 this book opens up a literal ‘Can of Worms’. A Santhal by birth with Santhal blood coursing through his veins Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar constructs the Santhaliethos in the present day, through this collection of stories that has characters of Santhali origin. The stories in the compilation help break stereotypes of the Adivasis that hold sway over public memory. Shekhar is successful in bringing them out in the arena of day-to-day life.

The first story of the collection, *They Eat Meat!* deals with Biram Soren and his wife Panmuni. Biren Soren, Director with the Gramin Vidyut Nigam, is transferred to Vadodara which is a ‘clean’ city. It is difficult initially, even impossible for Panmuni for whom ‘food’ is central to life. In spite of all restrictions on her diet, Panmuni falls in love with Vadodara with the clean Vadodara. Shekhar juxtaposes the mindless killing of Godhra that take place as against the ‘clean’ image of the city. Lastly, the solidarity shown with the Muslim family that lives in Subhanpura is exemplary!

Sons, the next tale is about two cousins, one is married into a well-off family, while the other is not as fortunate. A quirk of fate, the 'not-so-well off' cousin's son becomes a doctor, whereas Kalpana Di's son, a wastrel. Kalpana Di's husband is caught under charges of corruption and embezzlement. Sowvendra Shekhar makes a scathing commentary on the inability of the Santhalis to be corrupt. "We Adivasis are very bad at stealing. Corruption is not in our blood. And even if we do commit a crime, we are pathetic at covering our tracks." (p.36, 2015)

November is the Month of Migrations: is about the annual 'pilgrimage' undertaken by the Santhals to the Bardhaman district of West Bengal. Twenty-year old Talamai is part of the group. She makes a 'quick buck' in exchange of a small sexual favour.

"She knows that on their way to Namal, Santhal women do this work for food and money at the railway station too." (p.40, 2015)

The other stories similarly deal with a gamut of emotions, throwing light on various aspects of Santhali culture. The eponymous tale *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* is a monologue captured by the author. Mangal Murmu a Santhali musician and an ex-farmer is the main protagonist of this story. The plight of the Santhalis is captured in a moving manner through Mangal Murmu's monologue. Dispossessed, disowned and deprived from his culture, self-hood and livelihood. Mangal Murmu speaks up at the gathering, where the president of India has arrived to lay the foundation stone for a thermal power project. He musters the courage to present the 'real' state of the Santhalis bereft of land and livelihood!

All-in-all a powerful narrative, Shekhar has been successful in breaking stereotypes. By bringing Santhal narratives to main stream. At the same time, he isn't overtly emotional while talking about 'his' people! The tone is very calculated and sends across a strong message.

Eunice de Souza aptly mentions about this book in an article in *Mumbai Mirror*:

“Among other things, it made me curious about aspects of Santhali culture about which I knew nothing. I discovered there are more than a hundred Santhali writers, that they have an all-India conference of writers every year-a bi monthly Santhali journal and B.A. course at the University of Burdwan on Santhali literature and language.” (October 15, 2015)

3: *White as Milk and Rice-Stories of India's Isolated Tribes* by Nidhi Dugar Kundalia, a journalist by profession has documented the narratives of six tribes in this collection. Early on in the book, as part of the introduction, Kundalia follows a lone protesting Maria¹ woman amongst men, who calls herself Birsu (which Kundalia later finds is not her real name). Kundalia however states, she couldn't gather much from the week that she travelled through Chattisgarh about the Marias. Back home, “...she found that the material available was either a record of their cultural history before Independence with a focus on overly decorated dance and song, or miserable pictures of their dismal conditions.” (Loc 62 of 2916, Kundalia, 2020)

This stereotypical representation of the tribes is what the author aims at circumventing through this work. Kundalia aims at more 'humane sketches' of these people, about how they grappled with the changes post-independence; was it at the cost of their own identity as a tribe? Kundalia has thus tried to present the tribals not as:

“...socio-political subjects or cultural objects, but (has) delved deeper into the lives they have lived in the past few decades-a history of their emotional evolution post-Independence, their changing relationship with outsiders, their relationships with the environment and with their own people: husbands, wives, lovers, parents and children. In short, their life stories.” (ibid: Loc 71 of 2916)

Kundalia found that several tribes adapted to the changing times' at the cost of their traditional lives and livelihoods' (ibid: Loc 79 of 2916) To meet this end, she chronicled the lives of six tribals, representing those many number of tribes, over a few weeks.

The six tribes that have been dealt with in this work are the Halakkis of Ankola, Kanjars of Chambal, Kurumbas of Nilgiris, Marias of Bastar, Khasis of Shillong and the Konyaks of Nagaland. Amongst these, 'TheHalakkis of Ankola', is the chapter chosen for comparison with the eponymous short story from the collection *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*. The tenacity of Sukri; the female protagonist of the chapter on the Halakkis is compared with the defiance displayed by Mangal Murmu the Santhali protagonist of *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*.

3.1: The Singing Halakki Women of Ankola:

Kundalia has subtitled this chapter on the Halakkis of Ankola as, 'The singing women of the Halakki tribe'. Clearly, her intention is to focus on Sukri, the female representative of the tribe. Sukri's journey through her childhood is traced from the word go, in this chapter. Singing folk songs is part of her life, in fact she mentions that the Halakkitribals sing, so often not realizing that they are doing so.

"They sing when they are content, when they are anxious, when they are sad; many songs in the same tune, with no formal knowledge of music." (ibid: Loc 175 of 2916) She further states that the Halakkis'sjanapada, or folk songs, were never accompanied by instruments. They were always sung by women in groups of three or four. Thejanapadas had their own versions of the epics: *Mahabharata* was known as *Pandavakami* and the *Ramayana* was called *Seethekami*. Sukri identified with the glorious protagonist of *Seethekami*, Seeta, in this version, it is her story of love and struggle. The songs that Sukri sings from this version of the epic describe Seeta's fondness for trees, animals and forests in an oracular way. This reveals how the epics were adapted to suit the needs of the tribes and were set in their specific milieu.

Sukri got initiated in the song creating and song singing to express day-to-day experiences as a child while helping her mother with weeding on the fields, she composed songs that expressed delight to her innermost fears. Sukri's mother Devi was protective about Halakki songs, so much so that while travelling by bus, post visiting the Dussehra celebrations at Mysore they whispered songs, so that non-Halakki on the bus couldn't hear them sing and parody their heritage, she was careful to keep her songs inside her ribcage.

Women sang songs together as they walked to their workplace, songs that were their companions through all the chores all through the day. These songs were handed down orally, often the meaning of colloquial, ancient words were not known, notwithstanding these songs were passed from one generation to the other.

3.2: The Genesis Myth of the Halakkis:

According to the Halakki elders opines Kundalia, the term originated from the word '*holati*' meaning an outcast woman, who held control over the Konkan's coastal lands. Lord Shiva killed this woman and obtained a caste from each of her body parts, but forgot to create the Halakkis. The 'uncreated' Halakkis complained and that is when he created from the milk and rice that he was eating. Another genesis myth related by Kundalia which is sung by the women, attributes the origin of the Halakkis to being created from the pudding of milk and rice that accidentally falls on the ground when Parvathi trips and falls, this food is meant for lord Shiva. Parvathi gives shape to the mud-mixed pudding, and creates a male and a female doll, Lord Shiva stumbles on these idols when he travels back home in search of Parvathi, when he touches these idols, within minutes they come to life. Shiva assigns them to continue with the job of ploughing fields as they were born while he was ploughing fields. Thus, agriculture became the main occupation of the Halakkis. The tribes name is attributed to the rice that they grow, which is white as milk, *halu* means milk and *akki* means rice.

The Halakkis lived near the foothills and forest borders depending on hunting and slash and burn farming. The ban on slash and burn farming pushed the Halakkis out in search of occupation, they resorted to agriculture, hunting and forest gathering. They also mixed with other communities. Mostly doing odd jobs and tilling the land of landlords on daily wages, lack of education and access to good lawyers enabled only a few Halakkis to lay a claim on the share of the land that they tilled, under the scheme of 'tiller is the owner' of the sixties and seventies.

3.3: The Protagonist Sukri:

Married to a man much older than her Sukri is used to leading a hard life. She loses her husband early on in her life and has adopted her brother's son, hopeful that she could lay a claim on the land her deceased husband tilled under the 'tiller is the owner of the land scheme', but that remains a vague, unfulfilled dream. Sukri worked hard on other's fields to feed her adopted son's children. Having led a sorrowful life, there is no hope for Sukri as she sees her adopted son follow the same path of intoxication and losing his senses, lying all day at the same place, where her husband would lie. However, hope comes to Sukri in the form of H.C. Boralingaiah, a folk expert who knocks at her doorstep to tap her knowledge of folk songs. Sukri's songs are recorded at the Dharwad radio station AkashvaniKendra. The Halakki songs are unabashed, they speak about everything, the birds and the bees with no bars held, without a distinction between the everyday and the exotic. The pretty and clever songs are handed down to her by her ancestors, her aunts, mother and grandmother. The songs fetch Sukri the prestigious Padma Shri, she also gets an opportunity to perform at the Rajyotsav award ceremony in Karnataka where she is rewarded and revered.

After returning from Delhi after receiving the Padma Shri and having lost her adopted son in the meanwhile to alcoholism, Sukri is more than willing to join Dr Kusuma Sorab, a medical doctor who was going around the village and insisting the gramsabha to ban spurious liquor. Sukri was convinced about

Kusuma Akka's authenticity, she plants herself forcefully at Sirsi and supports Kusuma Akka's speech with her gumte songs (that are usually sung by men). Thus, joining hands with Kusuma akka, Sukri sings against the ban on spurious liquor all over Uttar Karnataka, these are songs of struggle of women helping to spread revolutionary message. Thus, putting her heritage to appropriate social use.

3.4: Sukri and Mangal Murmu:

It can be witnessed through characters like Sukri and Mangal Murmu, when the subaltern 'speaks' in order to be heard and gets into the structure of responsible (responding and being responded to) resistance, he or she is or is on the way to becoming an organic intellectual. Sukri is a bright girl born in the Halakki tribe, having no access to education, to the written word, yet, she takes forward the singing legacy and puts it to good social use. She makes her point of raising her voice for the right cause, using the right platform, that's her way of registering protest against the social evil of sale of spurious liquor and of course alcoholism, that renders the men of her tribe useless.

Mangal Murmu, hits the nail at the right time by refusing to dance at the function that is presided over by the president of the country. By refusing to be a puppet at the hands of the government officials that are blind to the problems of the Adivasis, Mangal Murmu stages his protest by refusing to entertain by staging 'a slice of his culture', the subaltern thus refuses to perform to the tunes of bureaucracy, which is the force behind evicting them from the land that was theirs, to set up a thermal power plant.

The subaltern thus can speak, can register protest, it's upto the discerning audience to listen and pay heed to these voices that bear the potential to create history.

Note

1. Maria is one of the tribes that Nidhi DugarKundalia has dealt with. This tribe belongs to the Bastar region of India.

Works Cited

Devi, Mahasweta. *Imaginary Maps*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak. Thema, Calcutta, 2001.

Devy, G.N.A *Nomad Called Thief-Reflections on Adivasi Silence*. New-Delhi, Orient Longman, 2006 [2007].

Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*, Speaking Tiger Publishing Private Limited, 2015

Media reference

Eunice de Souza, 'A Fine Book of Stories', Mumbai Mirror, October 15, 2015.

Web references

Dugar Kundalia Nidhi' *White as Milk and Rice-Stories of India's Isolated Tribes*, March 2020 March. (e-book).

Dr. Kirti Y. Nakhare
SIWS College, Mumbai.

The Sound of Silence: Protest, Poetry And A Nation on The Streets.

Supantha Bhattacharyya

Abstract

Mass rebellion is on the rise since c. 2008. While socio-cultural disruptions inspire writers with social conscience into creativity, impassioned social protest writers inspire writers to relieve injustice, empathize with its victims, and consider redemptive action. Protest art and poetry became a national phenomenon in late 2019. Indeed, apart from identity questions, protest poetry in its various forms in India also discusses memories, love and angst. Urdu ghazals, lokshahiri, miyah poetry and other forms intermixed traditional and modern idioms and styles to create new forms of protest. Even if they failed to secure the reversal of multiple grievances or a repeal of the problematic acts, the movements succeeded in the compilation of an outstanding body of protest poetry and black humour.

Keywords: Protest, Deprivation, Unrest, Hegemony, Subversion, Identity

Waves of rebellion have occurred around the world since the financial crisis of 2008. In his incisive article “Trouble in Paradise” (Žizek, *London Review of Books*), social theorist Slavoj Žižek observes that analysis of the demonstrations occurring around the globe encounter both an epistemological and an ontological dilemma. First, it is not obvious how to interpret the

mobilizations. Second, the marchers themselves are not entirely clear on what unifies them. Žižek notes that the answer to the second query depends on an ongoing political process; he himself contends that the common dragon that links far-flung mobilizations -- whether the Green Revolution in Iran, the protests in Greece, the Arab Spring, Taksim Square in Turkey, the uprising in Brazil, and Occupy Wall Street, is that “they are all reactions against the different facets of capitalist globalization. The general tendency of today’s global capitalism is towards further expansion of the market, creeping enclosure of public space, reduction of public services (health care, education, culture) and increasingly authoritarian political power.” However, Thomas Ponniah believes that despite his many insights Žižek misses a key aspect of the mobilizations: activists around the world are not simply fighting against economic deprivation, the enclosure of public space and the reduction of public services. More significantly, they are battling for their right to participate in determining economic priorities, choosing public space and influencing the content of public services such as health care, education and culture. The innovation of the protests does not lie simply in their criticism of neoliberalism, but in their escape from an illusion and their consequent demand for substantial participation in their political systems. From one perspective these movements are primarily reformist but from another they are not: they recognize that both the state and the market are potentially authoritarian and the only way to democratize them is to increase public participation in all major political and economic decisions. The call for genuine democratization – which began years before the financial crisis – is what unifies and inspires social movements participating at the World Social Forum, Tahrir Square, Zucotti Park, Taksim Square and Shaheen Bagh. (Ponniah. *Rabble*)

That social unrest and literary production have a symbiotic relationship has been long asserted by critical tradition. While socio-cultural disruptions inspire writers with social conscience into

creativity, impassioned social protest writers inspire writers to relieve injustice, empathize with its victims, and consider redemptive action. In her seminal encyclopedia, Patricia Netzley traces this phenomenon in the western canon to the days of early Greek playwrights like Aeschylus (Netzley: Introd.). Absolute power fears nothing but subversion, whose sharpest weapons are poetry and humour. Poetry helps, a lightning rod for dissatisfaction and anger that touches everyone, and ignites whatever it touches. The nameless can only be named with poetry. It gives courage in the face of nameless dread and rallies hearts and minds against the violent might of governments. "I am the people — the mob — the crowd — the mass," wrote Carl Sandburg, reversing the power differential, and pointing out that Napoleons and Lincolns are born among the people. Movements can be kept going when they flag in the face of insuperable odds with the help of Poetry, which provides a lightning rod for dissatisfaction and anger that touches everyone, and ignites whatever it touches (Indian Express). In India, the suppressive measures against students agitation in various universities, the movement against the Citizenship Amendment Act and the application of the National Register of Citizens [CAA and NRC] nationwide raised a fresh crop of protest poetry, mostly from younger voices like Amir Aziz, Varun Grover and Sabika Abbas Naqvi. In Assam, which encountered the NRC first, it re-energised Miyah poetry, an age-old tradition, which expressed the angst of immigrants from across the eastern border. Within the span of a few weeks, protest poetry became a national phenomenon in late 2019. Along with new work, old favourites like Rahat Indori, Basheer Badr and Ram Prasad Bismil became audible presences from public address systems. Protest signs and public art projects also saturated the social media in unprecedented ways. Interestingly, even classics from Pakistan were received by crowds at least as well as domestic poems. Even if they failed to secure the reversal of the students' grievances or a repeal of the problematic Act, the movements succeeded in the compilation of an outstanding body of protest poetry and black humour. It was impossible for any internet blockage to be able to stop the trend. Protest performance in the 21st

century is designed to go viral. Bodies animate ideas, gestures fuse with words: Far from being ephemeral, such performances circulate and change, making new meaning with each repetition (Mitra).

Poetry, in these few months, once again became a public phenomenon. Far from being private work, published verse or invited mushairas, they were akin to traditions of oral literariness where rhyme is realised in performance. It is actually interaction between the poet and her audience which shapes the poem. In such an inverted context, the revolutionary poem is what linguistic philosopher J L Austin would call the performative utterance, where the performing is the doing (Mitra). One striking instance of this would be the now-ubiquitous, *Hum Kagaz Nahin Dikhayenge* – We will not show papers – by comedian, lyricist and screenwriter, Varun Grover. In his original posts on Facebook and Twitter – on December 21, 2019, ten days after the CAA was passed on December 11, Grover exhorted – “There is no copyright on these words: feel free to use them, adapt, sing, modify, create.” And people did. From Shaheen Bagh in Delhi to Azad Maidan in Mumbai to Park Circus Maidan in Kolkata to Sabzibagh in Patna: within the span of a few days, the crowds knew and recited these words. On January 12, in a supercut by director Ronny Sen, a slew of Bengali film personalities across generations including Sabyasachi Chakravarty, Suman Mukhopadhyay, Konkona Sen Sharma and Tillotama Shome recited *Amra Kagoj Dekhabo Na*, a Bengali version of the poem, expanding and dramatising Grover’s original minimal and memorable verse.

A sign of going viral in the digital age is when a meme becomes so popular as to have its origins obscured. *Hum Kagaz Nahi Dikhayenge* was in reality an exercise in futurity, a promissory gesture of resistance in the face of autocratic power. This spirit of resistance could be found in another immensely popular poem from those months, *Tum Kaun Ho Be?*, a title while in itself was not profane, was probably best translated in tonality to “Who the hell are you?” Poet Puneet Sharma first released a version of this on

YouTube in April 2019. But the poem surged in popularity following a performance of it in Azad Maidan in January 2020, captured on video. A quietly defiant poem, it cast love for one's country as private, not demonstrative: "Look! I would tell you, but the land herself is restless / What is between her and me, is somewhat personal". It also cast the patriotism that was the order of the day — the kind that required an individual to show papers and sing national anthems in movie theatres by mandate, as *sasta nasha* [cheap high]. Another pertinent example in poetry was *Un violador en tu camino* – A rapist in your way – a Chilean poem about sexual assault and rapists being held accountable with the memorable first lines: *El patriarcado es un juez* – The patriarchy is a judge. First performed in Santiago in November 2019, on 'International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women', it was then translated and performed in English at a downtown Manhattan court house — at the beginning of Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein's rape trial on January 9, 2020; and, the next day, 8,000 miles away in Kolkata, in Bengali by a women's collective in a flash mob. They rendered the poem's anthemic chorus as, *Ami ki porechi, kothaye giyechi, dosh ta amar noye* – What I have worn and where I have gone cannot be my fault. Present day protests also strike directly at hyper masculinist, brahminical ethno-nationalism: Women are at the frontlines, after all, facing police action, mob violence (Mitra). In this context, veering away from any paternalism or sentimentalism, poet Amir Aziz composed, *Yeh Hai Jamia Ki Ladkiyan* – These are the Girls of Jamia – where the women: "They unmask tyrants/with gestures bring revolution/the girls of Jamia / shredding the cloaks of patriarchy". Rather than viewing women as sisters, mothers, wives or daughters, Aziz viewed them as individuals: "They live their lives / they also smoke cigarettes / Some are drifters / These are the girls of Jamia / And Keep your opinions to yourself / Keep a hijab handy if you need".

Decades-old poems by Pakistani poets Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Habib Jalib, both known for their revolutionary ideas, resurfaced at

this time. Faiz's poem, universally known as *Hum Dekhenge* – We will see – ran into controversy, online and offline, while Jalib's poem, *Dastoor* – Constitution, was made famous by JNU student and councillor of the university students' union, Shashi Bhushan Pandey: the video where he sings it in Jalib's style went viral. Faiz's poem was recited by the students of IIT Kanpur during a protest on December 17 to express solidarity with their peers at Jamia Millia Islamia. The poem was termed anti-Hindu and a 'war cry' by Muslims because of its contents and metaphors drawn from Islamic history. An inquiry committee was set up by the institute to investigate whether the poem was inflammatory. The actual title of Faiz's poem was not *Hum Dekhenge*: it was rather the Arabic, *Wa yubqa wajho rabboka*. Urdu scholar Ashfaq Hussain wrote in a recent article that Faiz had written this poem in 1979 in celebration of the Iranian revolution during his stay in the U.S. When it was first published in his book, *Meray Dil, Meray Musafir* (1981), it caught the public imagination in a major way. Later, it became a voice against the autocratic regime of General Zia-ul-Haq. The poem was deemed so dangerous that the government removed it from the collected poems of Faiz, *Nuskha Hai Wafa* (1984) during Zia's regime. The missing poem could only be republished in the 2006 pocketbook edition of Faiz's collected works twenty two years later when General Pervez Musharraf was in power. Interestingly, a poem banned in Pakistan became capable of inciting similar sentiments in India (Aslam).

Habib Jalib's poem *Dastoor* was also a rallying point for protesters in those turbulent months. The poem starts with, *Deep jiska mahallat he mein jallay / Chand logon ki khushyon ko lay kar challay / Aisay dastoor ko / Subh-e-benoor ko / Mein nahi manta, mein nahi manta* – The constitution whose light only enlightens the rich / That which gives happiness to the select few / Such a constitution / Such a dark dawn / I refuse to accept. Here, Jalib rejected not just law but the entire constitution if it provided "happiness to the select few". No wonder it resonated with Indians

in the context of the CAA. The poem was a clear call for rebellion, which always resonates with the youth. Jalib had written this poem to protest against the constitution of 1962 enforced by the military dictator, General Ayub Khan, to serve his own interests. It touched the right cords in people's hearts when Jalib read it. He faced persecution and imprisonment because of his activism. Incidentally, Jalib was born and spent his youth in India: he migrated to Pakistan after Partition. Appropriately, his poem spoke for the right to coexist in India, years after his death in 1993 (Aslam).

One of the poet Rahat Indori's Urdu ghazals also became omnipresent, from the social media to the Parliament. The cognoscenti discovered two couplets of this ghazal which sound like a warning to hegemony of power: *Jo aaj sahib-i-masnad hain, kal nahi hongay / Kiraay daar hein, zaati makaan thodi hay* – Those holding the reins today won't be in the chair tomorrow / They are just tenants, not owners – and *Sabhi ka khoon hain shamil yahan ki mitti mein / Kisi kay baap ka Hindustan thodi hai* – Everybody's blood is in this soil / Hindustan isn't anyone's paternal property.

Sumangala Damodarn suggests that many of these protest songs, which have occupied a prominent place in the anti-CAA protest movements, drew from a tradition whose history can be traced back to the late anti-colonial period (Damodaran). The lokshahir tradition in Maharashtra emerged as the 'people's version of an old *shahiri* tradition. The shahirs were medieval poet-singers who travelled across the Marathi-speaking regions, singing ballads called *powadas* about adventure and heroism, where dramatic episodes were related through rhythmic meter, and familiar refrains would be combined with colloquial speech-song. Lokshahirs, or people's poets, like Amar Sheikh, Annabhau Sathe and D.N. Gavankar, who were the trailblazers in pre-Independent India, explicitly brought the idea of the 'people' or '*lok*' into the shahiri tradition. This breed of firebrand poet-singers – mostly from the Mahar and Mang communities – lent their voices to the independence movement, allied with communists in movements

for social transformation and also later to several socio-political movements such as the ones for the linguistic rights for Maharashtrians and the 'Free Goa' Movement. In more contemporary times, Sambhaji Bhagat, Sachin Mali and Sheetal Sathe have emerged as very important lokshahirs who perform music around themes of caste oppression, labour and work, the state and repression. Bhagat, a Dalit singer who associated with what he refers to as Marxist-Ambedkarite politics, emerged as a major lokshahir in Maharashtra in the 1980s. Lokshahir songs, in Marathi and Hindi, contain scathing critiques of caste and class hierarchies: *Inko dhyaan se dekho re bhai / Inki soorat ko pehchano bhai / Inse sambhal ke rehna hai bhai* – Look at these people carefully, brother / Recognise their faces carefully, brother / Beware of these people, brother. Sung in Hindi, about those in power who, according to Bhagat's song, are 'setter' (fixers) and 'chor-chitter' (thieves), warning people that their oppressors – *zaalims* – will not be overpowered if they do not call them out. The oppressors could be varied – politicians, people belonging to the upper castes, the police – depending on where the songs are being performed and how audiences interpret it. Sheetal Sathe, the powerful lead singer of Pune's Kabir Kala Manch, a group which considers itself part of the lokshahir tradition in Maharashtra and has composed topical protest songs since 2005 the group, sang, referencing the anti-colonial sources mentioned above: *Angrezon se lade the hum, kaun yeh desi sahab hai / Azadi hamaara khwaab hai, yeh gulab nahin inquilaab hai* – We had fought against the British, who is this desi White Man / Azadi is our dream, this rose is the revolution (Damodaran).

Miyah is a term used for Muslims who trace their roots to East Bengal. The term basically means a 'gentleman' and Miyah poetry depicts the pain and anguish of Muslims being branded as Bangladeshis. It started in the summer of 2016 in Assam. The genre being just four years old, its poets are young, educated, modern and secular, and do not carry any baggage or prejudice. Amit Sengupta

believes that just like the topography around the Brahmaputra and its sandbars – *chars* – the poetry too has originated from this fluid landscape, with migrations, roots, exile and longing intertwined with multiple languages and dialects. In these four years, Miyah poetry has taken different directions. It has talked about the lived experiences of the poets, their struggle with constant demands to prove their citizenship and to spread the message of the need for a more inclusive and equal Assam. The NRC process, in fact, first triggered the poetry as an assertion of the Miyah identity, both as a resident of Assam and a citizen of India. The president of the Char Sapor Sahitya Parishad, Hafiz Ahmed wrote a poem and posted it on his Facebook page. This poem, among others, became a trendsetter: Write / Write Down / I am a Miyah / My serial number in the NRC is 200543 / I have two children / Another is coming / Next summer. / Will you hate him / As you hate me? One of the most prominent faultlines in this identity battle is language. Indeed, apart from identity questions, Miyah poetry also discusses memories, love and angst. It also speaks of empowerment, gender justice, education and social harmony. As a young genre, it is still struggling to find its own, deepest sensitivity. It is still raw and intrinsically rooted in the multiplicities of Bengali, Assamese, and the other languages and dialects of Eastern India (Sengupta).

To conclude one's treatise on the correlation between events and poetry in these troubled times, one could not do better than summarise the venerable poet-critic Keki Daruwalla: Is protest the best way to 'use, deploy, handle or mishandle' poetry? Is poetry a gun, a Webley Scott, or a Smith and Wesson to be brought out of the armoury at chosen moments, not when a guy is having a good time with his wife, but when politics is involved? Does poetry get a look-in during the heat of battle? You leftist scum! You rightist nerd! You commie! You urban Naxal! What happens when each side uses rhyme to slam the other? Poetry always turns into a vehicle of protest. Doctrines can betray you. Don't rule through doctrines: Doctrines are fads which last for a while and then vanish. When

critics write about electoral victories, I hope they won't restrict themselves to bijli, pani and the freebies. They need to talk about the political ambience, starting from August 5 when J&K was turned into union territories, leaders jailed, and still rotting, and three unpopular legislations which the people have agitated against, mostly youngsters of all faiths. I hope they talk not just about what the Aam Aadmi Party did, but also what the BJP central leadership did. Not a ticket given to a Muslim by the party in the 2019 elections, and the beating up of students by the police in JNU, Jamia, and AMU, and speeches by Yogi Adityanath and the 'sexologist' minister warning Delhi people how their daughters and sisters could be raped if certain people enter Delhi. And Shaheen Bagh became both a beacon and rallying cry (Daruwalla).

Works Cited

- Aslam, Irfan. *Till Hate Do Us Part*. <https://www.thehindu.com/books/till-hate-do-us-part-poetry-has-brought-together-people-across-the-border/article30533509.ece> 11 January, 2020 [Accessed 15 March, 2020]
- Damodaran, Sumangala. *Yeh Gulab Nahin, Inquilab Hai: The Tradition of Protest Music in Contemporary India*. <https://thewire.in/culture/yeh-gulab-nahin-inquilab-hai-the-tradition-of-protest-music-in-contemporary-india> 04 March, 2020 [Accessed 15 March, 2020]
- Daruwalla, Keki. *The entanglement of poetry, protest and politics*. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/the-entanglement-of-poetry-protest-and-politics-42381> 16 February, 2020 [Accessed 15 March, 2020]
- Indian Express (Editorial). *Free verse: Poetry is metrical emotion, and protests like those unfolding today its most productive nurseries*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/citizenship-act-nrc-protest-poetry-6183377/> 25 December, 2019 [Accessed 15 March, 2020]

- Mitra, Shayoni. *Protest poetry defies conventional barriers, leaves lasting impact in digital age*. [https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/citizenship-amendment-act-cao-poetic-protest-poetry-anti-cao-nrc-protest-6259673/](https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/citizenship-amendment-act-caa-poetic-protest-poetry-anti-cao-nrc-protest-6259673/) 20 February, 2020 [Accessed 15 March, 2020]
- Netzley, Patricia D. *Social Protest Literature: an Encyclopedia of Works, Characters, Authors and Themes*. ABC-CLIO, Calif. 1999. Print
- Ponniah, Thomas. *Slavoj Zizek on Global Protest*. <https://rabble.ca/columnists/2013/09/slavoj-%C5%BEi%C5%BEek-on-global-protest>. 04 September, 2013 [Accessed 15 March, 2020]
- Sengupta, Amit. Miyas' verse of protest. *How Miyah poetry came about as a genre and what it says*. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/features/miyas-verse-of-protest-48033> 01 March, 2020 [Accessed 15 March, 2020]
- Zizek, Slavoj. *Trouble in Paradise*. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v35/n14/slavoj-zizek/trouble-in-paradise>. 18 July, 2013 [Accessed 15 March, 2020].

Dr. Supantha Bhattacharyya
Associate Professor, Dept. of English,
Hislop College, Nagpur.

Theme of Protest in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

Priti Singh

Abstract

Protest is the awareness that arises when man confronts an unjust and inhuman situation, and decides to get rid of it by way of raising his voice against it and acting to remove it. It has the quality of identifying itself with the downtrodden and the oppressed. The awareness of protest thus arises when man confronts an unjust and inhuman situation. It takes birth when man decides to get rid of his slave mentality. The novelist as a socio political being uses the medium of writing to transform the society to a large extent. Toni Morrison, in her debut novel *The Bluest Eye*, has voiced her protest against the racialized community very effectively and expressed various significant issues related to the life of the blacks, their psyche, society and plight through the character of Pecola.

Keywords: Protest, oppressed, downtrodden, unjust, inhuman, racialized, blacks.

Introduction

Protest means objection, complaint or revolt. Protest literature refers to works that address to real socio-political issues and express objection against them. The definition of protest literature is fluctuating and variable. It may have different connotations for different people. For the deconstructionists all literary writing is eventually a form of protest. In literary history

protest literature has continued to exist in diverse forms. In a society, protest provides human alternatives for safeguarding not only ones natural rights but also to ensure social change. The protest of an individual is often reflected as social protest. Protest is the awareness that arises when man confronts an unjust and inhuman situation, and decides to get rid of it by way of raising his voice against it and acting to remove it. According to Douglas O. Willium, "Protest is not ideological in its orientation, but is, essentially activist" (9). The basic ingredients of protest that naturally comes into conflict with the establishment are a consciousness regarding fundamental rights, a tendency to struggle, and a sense of independence and liberty. Protest is, thus, primarily the result of intense human consciousness, which involves values. It is both a manifestation of human concern and an endeavour to add meaning to human existence by strengthening the concepts of social justice, equality, and liberty. Protest has the quality of identifying itself with the downtrodden and the oppressed. We can say that it is a process of upholding human values as they cannot be taken as eternal and unchanging. Emmanuel G. Mesthene states that "Most frequently we make rearrangements in our value hierarchy; values once considered crucial become less relevant and, therefore, less important while others, once relatively lower in our estimation take on new importance. Values do not have to be eternal and unchanging in order to be values" (47- 48). Protest as a value and as an effective medium will serve its purpose only if it is used with relevance to real situations obtained in actual life processes. Literature is a good medium to reflect such values through protest. A writer who while struggling or confronting the condition of his times and society, earns values in a new and fresh way and explores them in the context of real life situations. The result is that new values emerge when one is imbued with new consciousness, with an understanding of the prevailing social norms and belief structures of the individual and society. Some writers by rebelling try to bring in new forces of social change as Albert Camus commented 'Man, by rebelling, imposes in his turn a limit to history and at this limit the

promise of a limit is born'. Protest in literature is a kind of evolution. It is a course of change and the need for reform.

The awareness of protest arises when man confronts an unjust and inhuman situation. It takes birth when man decides to get rid of his slave mentality. Literature has always been suffused with vestiges of social realism in fiction which gained prominence in the writings of Charles Dickens (1812- 1870), Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960), Richard Wright (1908-1960), Ralph Ellison (1913-1994), Attia Hosain (1913-1998), Kushwant Singh (1915-2014), Toni Morrison (1931-), Bapsi Sidhwa (1938-), etc., to mention a few. Social realism is suggestive of the acute awareness of the various social, political, economic and religious forces that the individual is entrenched in, and their power to affect the lives of men and women for better or for worse and the overall interaction of the individual. With the progress of civilization and development in technology, the scientific temper affected the human psyche to a large extent. The dawn of democracy brought in its wake a sense of individualism and protest became a means to voice the need for equality and reaction against injustice. The novelist as a socio political being uses the medium of writing to transform the society to a great extent. This paper analyses Pecola's protest against racial discrimination.

Toni Morrison, known to be one of the most inspiring writers of America, has voiced her protest against the racialized community. She has very effectively expressed various significant issues related to the life of the blacks, their psyche, society and plight. Her themes mainly determine her protest against the adverse effects of race, gender or class. She also explores the theme of sexism which is integrally connected with racism in the black society. Racism involves the belief in racial differences which acts as a destructive element for the members of the other race. The term is commonly used pessimistically and is usually associated with race-based prejudice. Therefore, racism may be defined, according to Hernton as: All of the learned behaviour and learned emotions on the part of a group of people towards another group; whose physical

characteristics are dissimilar to the former group behaviour and emotions that compel one group to... treat the other on the basis of its physical characteristics alone, as if, it did not belong to the to human race (Hernton 175).

The *Bluest Eye*, published in 1970, deals honestly and unflinchingly with the internalized pain and ruinous impacts of racism in the U.S. The seeds of racism were sown in America when the white masters started to bring the Africans in chains and used them as slaves. They also started treated these black people in a very dehumanizing and degrading manner and which ultimately resulted in the rise of racism in the United States. The white imposed their values on them robbing them of their African souls leaving them shattered and broken with feelings of inferiority. The plight of Toni Morrison was no different and she gave vent to her feelings of racism by way of protest writing against the idea of race, gender and class which were the three major forms of oppression of the blacks in America. The novels of Toni Morrison are predominant with the themes of oppression and exploitation revealing at the same time her grave concern of the inter relationship of race, gender and class, though the emphasis on these three elements of race, gender and class varies in each novel. The *Bluest Eye*, Morrison's first novel is a poignant story of the condition of a black girl's quest for white values. Pecola is black girl, an abandoned, ill-treated and hateful child who has a very poor opinion about herself. Along with others around her, she herself thinks, that she is repulsive and worthless. However, Pecola protests against her ugliness by finding the way to her happiness. Pecola yearns to have blue eyes because for her blue eyes symbolise beauty and being loved. Innocent as she is Pecola believes that the mere possession of blue eyes will replace all the cruelty in her life with affection and respect.

It had occurred to Pecola some time ago, that if her eyes, those Eyes that held the pictures and knew the sights – if those eyes of Her were different, that is to say beautiful, she herself would be Different (TBE 46).

In the blue eyes, the aspiration is for identity and selfhood. Pecola's aspiration of attaining the bluest eyes is in itself a kind of protest though she is condemned to be black by her birth and colour. It is her struggle to go beyond the existing condition and discover her identity and selfhood. "Pecola desires blue eyes, the symbol of white beauty; she feels that such eyes could make her beautiful, acceptable and admirable and she could restore her self-respect" (Pathak 43). The ideals of the country in which she is born, do not apply to her. Moreover, all the images on billboards are the images of white people. Pecola's conviction of becoming loveable by changing her eyes is altogether an evidence of racial self hatred. The girl believes that only blue eyes can alleviate her desperate situation. She is a very lonesome and rejected child and even her family does not support her. "Her parents treated her as an outcast and put her outdoors where neither her mother not father ever bothered to enquire about her living conditions in the neighbouring family of Mc Teer where they had dumped her" (Kant 47). Her strong craving to possess blue eyes is because she wants to protest against the attitude of her family towards her. The discrimination on the basis of race from the society may be tolerated but there is no escape from the pain when the shock comes from one's own family. Pecola thinks,

"If she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. Maybe they'd say, "Why, look at pretty- eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes" (TBE 44).

This indicates that her primary concern is to escape the abuse and neglect within the home. Pecola tries to acquire people's love and attention by getting blue eyes because she sees that little girls with blue eyes are accepted and respected. The choice of blue eyes is due to the racist society she has grown up in and to show her dissent against the racist society: Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something as wonderful as that happen would take a long, long

time. Thrown, in this way, into the binding conviction that only a miracle could relieve her, she would never know her beauty. She would see only what there was to see: the eyes of other people (TBE 44). Since Pecola has not received love and affection at home, she has a somewhat hazy idea of what it would like to be loved, "What did love feel like? She wondered. How do grown-ups act when they love each other? Eat fish together?" (TBE 55). Unknown to the idea of love, Pecola can discuss about love only with the prostitutes living upstairs at Mrs. Mc Teer's. Since Pecola does not have any knowledge as to why people feel love and affection for each other, she decides that it certainly has to do with the colour of the eyes. Both the communities associate blue eyes with beauty, and the fact that Mrs. Breedlove, Pecola's mother, is so fond of the blue-eyed fisher girl, and showers her ultimate nurturing care to the little white girl leaves Pecola only with this choice. This reaction of Mrs. Breedlove is her protest as a victim of being black: When she bathed the little Fisher girl, it was in a porcelain tub with slivery taps running infinite quantity of hot, clear water. She dried her in fluffy white towels and put her in cuddly night clothes. Then she brushed the yellow hair, enjoying the roll and slip of it between her fingers. No zinc tub, no buckets of stove heated water, no flaky, stiff, grayish towels washed in the kitchen sink, dried in a dusty backyard, no tangled black puffs of rough wool to comb (TBE 125). This statement is proves that she likes the Fisher home with all its modern amenities and actually prefers the Fisher girl to her own. Pecola and the rest of the family appear to be insignificant to Pauline as they are "the early-morning and late-evening edges of her day, the dark edges that made the daily life with the Fishers lighter, more delicate, more lovely" (125). The white girl becomes superior in comparison to her own daughter that the black mother belittles her. The white girl can call her Polly while Pecola, her daughter, has to call her Mrs. Breedlove, may be considered as her remonstrance against her desperate and disgusted situation: Her attitude of discrimination in rejecting her own daughter in the face of the white girl may have another angle that could have been perceived not out

of the curse of poverty but as a natural reaction of a desperate, disgusted and dissatisfied mother-woman who has been consistently denounced, beaten and tortured by her husband (Kant 49). Pauline also ascribes society's love of white beauty to such a degree that she views herself as worthless unless she achieves that standard. She cannot relate to any of the women in the North hence Pauline frequently visits the movie theatre "along with the idea of romantic love, she was introduced to another---physical beauty. Probably, the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought. Both originated in envy, thrived in insecurity and ended in disillusion" (TBE 120). For this reason it can be believed that, "...black represents the shade of evil, the devil's aspect, night, separation, loneliness, sin, dirt, excrement, the inside of the body, and white represents the mark of good, the token of innocence, purity, cleanliness, spirituality, virtue and hope" (Kovel 232).

The ultimate act of deceit and betrayal that finally pushes Pecola over the edge comes when Cholly, her own father rapes her. According to some social psychologists, frustration is the only, or even the most important reason of aggression. Others believe that it is simply one of many factors that have led to aggression. In Cholly's case, frustration is manifested in the form of sexual aggression because when he was sixteen, he was caught by the two white hunters while experiencing his first sexual pleasure with a country girl named Darlene. At the time he was forced by those white hunters to repeat the same act while they watched. This repetition of the humiliation Cholly had experienced under the gaze of the two racist whites, caused hatred in him for the black girl. Hence, "The entire situation, however, culminates into a silent revolt that would sustain his soul till he finds a favourable occasion to wreak his revenge" (Kant 52). Later, in the novel, he demonstrated it through domestic violence toward his wife and the molestation of his daughter. In this way, Morrison condemns racism and shows that the person who is subjected to it, internalizes the shame and bitterness and when those feelings are let out, others get hurt.

Pecola's brother, Sammy, remains away from home most of the time to show his dissent against the racist society. So he is not there to protect Pecola when she is in need. The common feature in the Breedlove family seems to be that every member of the family feels hideous because "You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction" (TBE 37). Pecola is made a scapegoat in the school. The children at school would taunt her primarily because she was dark skinned "Black e mo. Black e mo. Yadadd sleeps nekked. Black e mo black e mo ya dad sleeps nekked. Black e mo..." (TBE 63). The "Black e mo" part of the quotation means that Pecola was even blacker than they were. As a result, even those who were not particularly light-skinned themselves took the chance to mock and make fun of someone who was darker than they were: They had extemporized a verse made up of two insults about matters over which the victim had no control: the colour of her skin and speculations on the sleeping habits of an adult, wildly fitting in its incoherence... It was their contempt for their own blackness that gave the first insult its teeth. They seemed that taken all of their smoothly cultivated ignorance, their exquisitely learned self-hatred, their elaborately designed hopelessness and sucked it all up into a fiery cone of scorn that had burned for ages in the hollows of their minds---cooled---and spilled over lips of outrage, consuming whatever was in its path. They danced a macabre ballet around the victim, whom, for their own sake, they were prepared to sacrifice to the flaming pit (TBE 63). Claudia Mac.Teer, is the only character in *The Bluest Eye* who is not affected by the mainstream culture. Claudia is disgusted when Pecola and Frieda discuss about the beauty of the white movie star, Shirley Temple. The disgust and contempt is so pronounced that when she is gifted the present of a blue eyed and blond haired doll from her parents at Christmas, she destroys the doll by tearing holes in their eyes. Other than Pecola, it is Geraldine, the mother of Louis Junior, who is obsessed by the colour of her skin. Though she herself is light-skinned Geraldine hates darker- skinned black and tries

hard to be much like a middle class white woman. Geraldine and her peers are willing to do anything to differentiate themselves from darker-skinned blacks and to resist being with them. Geraldine serves as the best example in this regard, who, despite being a coloured woman, maintains distance from the entire nigger community. This sort of behaviour is the result of her own despair and anger. After becoming pregnant by her father, Pecola goes to Soaphead Church, to take help from a “faith healer.” He asserts that he talks to God. Pecola pleads him to grant her blue eyes, but he was misconceived by the belief that the girl would be helped by living with the illusion that she had blue eyes. “I, I have caused a miracle. I gave her the eyes. I gave her the eyes. I gave her the blue, blue, two blue eyes. Cobalt blue. A streak of it right out of your own blue heaven. No one else will see her blue eyes. But she will. And she will live happily ever after. I, I have found it meet and right so to do” (TBE 180). Thus by helping Pecola, in getting the bluest eyes he applies balm on the injuries inflicted on him due to racism. The real reason for Soaphead Church’s actions can be found in his own family background where members of his family have tried their best for generations to marry someone whiter to improve upon the family features like, nose, lips, etc; and become whiter with each generation. In the Soaphead Church family, every success is attributed to the white strain of the blood. All these instances show that blacks reject their own racial identity due to self loathing or hatred. Thus it can justly be said that: It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question. The master had said, “you are ugly people.” They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement; saw, in fact, support for it leaning at them from every movie, every glance. “Yes,” they had said. “You are right.” And they took the ugliness in their hands, threw it as mantle over them, and went about the world with it (TBE 37). In this manner, Pecola protests against all the acts of ill treatment by remaining mute and goes mad, believing that her long cherished dream of possessing blue eyes has been fulfilled. In

this novel other characters also protest against racism, such as, Mr. Breedlove who reacts against it by abusing and ill treating his wife and children. Claudia defies it by destroying the white dolls. Mrs. Breedlove speaks against it by humiliating her daughter and working in Fisher's home and Geraldine, by keeping away from the nigger community. In other words, it can be said that the novelist too expostulates against it by showing the repulsive effects of racism on the life of the Afro- Americans.

Conclusion:

Toni Morrison's singularity lies in protesting against the inhuman treatment on the blacks by the whites, and, at the same time, revealing the beauty and the hope beneath the surface of the Black America. In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison has tried to convince the readers to re-read the questions of racial identity, class and culture in order to rethink about the black identity in nationalist terms. Pecola the ugly black girl was humiliated and insulted because of her skin colour. She does not meet the society's standards is expunged from the human society even before realising the consciousness of self. Pecola stands for the triple indemnity in the female black child: children, blacks, females and the poor are devalued and pushed to the margins of an already marginalized society. Both male and female characters are victimised in the white society and they protest throughout the novel.

Works Cited

- Butalia, Urvashi. *The Other Side Of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Penguin Books, 1998.
- Calvin, Hernton. *Sex and Racism in America*. Grove Press, 1965
- Carmean, Karen. *Toni Morrison's World of Fiction*. Winston, 1993.
- Kant, Vishnu. *The Fiction of Toni Morrison*. Satyam Publishing House, 2009.

Khan, Fauzia. Theme of Protest in the Selected Novels of Toni Morrison and Bapsi Sidhwa.

https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/230633/14/14_summary.pdf

Kovel, Joel. White Racism: A Psychohistory. Columbia U P, 1984.

Literature of Revolution, Violence and Protest <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/55914/10/10%20chapter%204.pdf>

Morrison, Toni. The Bluest Eye. Vintage, 1999.

Pathak, Sandeep. Feminist Consciousness in Toni Morrison's Fiction. Prestige Books, 2007.

Peach, Linden. Toni Morrison. St Martin's Press, 2000. Portales, Marco. "Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye: Shirley Temple and Choll.

Mrs. Priti Singh

Assistant Professor,
Department of English,
Dr. Ambedkar College,
Deekshabhoomi, Nagpur.

Probing Racism and Decolonization in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*

Vinod R. Shende

Abstract

Toni Morrison, the first black American to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature, is a widely acclaimed African-American writer. In her works, Morrison has explored the experiences and roles of black women in a racist and male dominated society. Morrison was born and brought up in Lorain Ohio. Her family had migrated North to escape the problems of Southern racism and poverty and to find educational and employment opportunities. Her family were migrants, sharecroppers on both sides. Morrison peoples her fictional world with the black people in contemporary America influenced by its racist and sexist values. Sometimes they embrace the values of a culture into which they have been transplanted. Hence, they suffer the consequences. This paper attempts to define the irony of condition by exploring the decolonized space in the lives of the black women.

Keywords: Racism, decolonization, irony, domination, migrants.

The greatest contribution of Morrison is turning the world focus on the lives of black Americans who were looked down upon by the Whites. Criticism surrounding Morrison's work has so far focused on the African American perspectives. These perspectives tend to define Morrison in national terms of modern American literature and more specifically African American and women's

literatures. Morrison states in *Playing in the Dark*, she writes in a “genderized, sexualized, wholly racialized world” (4). Indeed, the racialization of society is not just an American or African American problem, but a transnational or global problem created by colonialism. What this leads to is the estimation that the writer has a profound responsibility and power both to chronicle and critique the racism and oppression inherent to the colonial cultures that have created such a world system. For Morrison, the most pressing concern is the “four hundred year old presence of, first, Africans and then African Americans in the United States,” which though invaluable and pleasant to the face of the nation, has for much of history been largely absent from “canonical American literature and culture (*Playing in the Dark*, 5).

Morrison refers to an absence of blackness in American literature and other iterations of American society or culture. Far from being elective, this absence is the product of white hegemony. It is “four hundred years of silence” imposed upon “blackness” by “whiteness” (*Playing in the Dark*, 9). This forced silence is not the literal muting of voices but the long standing agreement of the hegemony that ‘black’ is invalid, insignificant and unwanted entity. As Morrison says, the great population in American history resides in the fact that “a nation of people decided that their world view would combine agendas for individual freedom and mechanisms for devastating racial oppression” (*Playing in the Dark*, xiii). The decision is not only to exclude an entire group of people from the face of the nation and the national culture, but also to implement system and mechanisms to prevent even development within the limits of their own space and culture.

The works of Morrison deals with the mechanism of oppression and their lasting effects. Postcolonial discourse concerns itself not only with the exposure and promulgation of the problems created by colonialism, but also with their amelioration through the recognition and deconstruction of colonial powers and ideologies. One of the critics of Morrison says that it is a “failure to

not address the processes of colonization on which the foundation of the United States rests" she calls specifically for the inclusion of "African American histories in postcolonial discourse is a postcolonial society can no longer be in question" (Keenan, 45). In fact, Morrison's own words, when she describes "the invention and development of whiteness" and its role in the construction of an American identity, presuppose that the fundamentals of a colonizing national structure exist in America (*Playing in the Dark*, 9).

The United States practices a different form of colonization, in which the movement, action, and exploitation are internal. this 'internal colonization' complicates the nature of space in America. One of primary methods that the America hegemony employs, then, in distinguishing center and margin in America in the absence of physical boundaries, is the creation and management of space, such as with the practice of segregation, with which it can define itself against other the other, in the case of internal colonization, is undeniably the black presence in America.

Space within the discourse of postcolonial studies takes such varied meaning that it is necessary, for my purposes, to focus on the specific iteration that apply within the America and the African contexts. The primary areas of my focus on space are on the physical space and place in terms of geography or perhaps, more specifically, the initiative of cartography and the negotiation and appropriation of space. Because the object of the colonizer is to control space, the postcolonial subject must reclaim and re-appropriate space, through the act of renaming, remapping, or other means of appropriation. This situation, then, is a unique part of the African Diaspora, which in the first instance is a part of a larger displacement of blacks from Africa across the Caribbean, the Americas and Europe, and secondly, in the case specific to blacks already in America is part of a movement within the limits of national borders. (Arafat, 196-97)

In *Tar Baby* Morrison deals with a different kind of conflicts and cruelties. The six major characters are her most diverse, and the

conflicts are both realistic and symbolic, embodying the opposition of wealth and poverty, youth and age, male and female, black and white in a microcosm of society found in a Caribbean island. The novel is also a complex examination of the dilemma of blacks in contemporary America. *Tar Baby* attempts to subvert normal human emotions and relationships in order to lay bare the complexity of human life in the twentieth century. Morrison deals with the psyches of both black and white characters. Jadine, though is the protagonist of the novel, Margarate Lennox too, occupies a significant space in the text. The suffering and the pain in the life of the one affects the life of the other. *Tar Baby* is packed with a series of happenings recorded as it happens without regard to proper sequencing. Khayati argues that Morrison “negotiates a very complex matrix of reality in which the articulation of antagonistic or contradictory elements becomes the possibility of opening up a new space of cultural practice” (313-24).

Morrison’s narrative participates not only in a historical struggle among subaltern communities but also in forging a new non-hegemonic realm of being and meaning. Margarate Lennox is a white woman of Italian origin and a former beauty queen from Maine. Valerian Street, a candy baron from Philadelphia falls in love with her, twenty years his junior, and marries her. She is his second wife, she fills the place left by the first wife in his house but is not able to fill the void neither in his life nor in her own. She is an object of beauty, to be admired and savored, and in the main, her purpose in life for the Street family has been to produce a male heir to the candy kingdom. Margarate functions appropriately. She worships her candy magnet husband, living only for the concerts Valerian takes her to dinners at restaurants. She becomes a captive in golden cage from which she is unable to escape, she merely beats around fluttering her wings and in the process hurts herself. Her husband Valerian has no time for her, being too busy with his candy business and making money. The only company she has at home is that of Ondine, the African American maid servant.

Tar Baby has a richer literal relationship between the American or African American colonized space and global colonial space. A large part of *Tar Baby's* primary setting is the French colonial Isle des Chevaliers. This imagined Caribbean island, near Dominique, is representative of the prototypical European colony or colonial space and of European colonialism in general. The setting, because it involves chiefly American characters entangled in a traditional colonial structure, exposes the colonizing structure of America itself. This island, this colonial space to Son (a black boy) gives the feeling of oppression. Even when he first sees it he realizes he is "gazing at the shore of an island that three hundred years ago, had struck slaves blind the moment they saw it" (*Tar Baby*, 8). The treatment of the land is similar to the treatment of the blacks on the island. First, they are 'imported' for manual labor and after that relegated to positions that do not rise above house or yard work for the island's white inhabitants. (Arafat, 198)

These expectations for the people that surround him (Son) and the reality of their shared situation on the island identify the novel with the archetypal colonial primer in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The setting, as mentioned is inherent to this reworking as it is seated, in the French Caribbean, 'within colonialist dynamics'. In this model, Valerian is a Prospero character. He has come to the Caribbean, a wealthy American of white European descent, and brought with him his two lifelong black servants. These servants Sydney and Ondine, follow the Ariel archetype. In Valerian and the Principal Beauty's eyes, they are unfailingly loyal, but in reality they share sort of ambivalence towards their master. Essentially, like Ariel, they do not have their freedom. They also, in the model of Ariel, find themselves acting the colonizer in many situations. In staying with the model of *The Tempest*, Son is a Caliban figure. After he is discovered hiding in the Principal Beauty's closet, Son is variously characterized in the terms of a 'savage'.

The way Morrison describes Jadine and Son, "Each knew the world as it was meant or ought to be [...] each one bore the

culture to save the race in his hands” (*Tar Baby*, 272). Son who grows up in the South, has s seemingly inborn distrust of everything white, while Jadine, a member of the clan of so-called ‘philadelphia negroes’ and the partially adopted daughter of servants to white household is the beneficiary of silver spoon held by white hands and is duly reluctant to bite the hands that feed her. The fact is, though that Jadine is so shaken because she is becoming consciously aware, for the first time, for her denial of her own black presence and in her act of running, she is escaping from the black presence. In exploring Jadine’s appreciations about her own black presence, the novel is also decolonizing the psychological space of blackness. The novel critiques the notion that these two cultures cannot coexist in a hybrid fashion. Each culture on its own is tragically flawed, Jadine’s because it does not represent the history and struggle of African American and it denies the rural past and Son’s because it struggles with the modern and the urban, identifying them but never coming to terms with them. In this respect neither culture can reach a ‘postcoloniality’ that “enables the authentication of histories of exploration and the evolution of strategies of resistance” (Bhabha, 6).

This conflict and the decolonizing space that the novel subsequently proposes are brought out by the space within which it takes place. Putting these American characters in *Tar Baby* in an outside the United States setting, a global setting allows not only the exposure of the colonial practices in American culture, but also an identification with the colonial and the postcolonial culture around the world. In essence, it moves the African American struggle into the realm of the postcolonial, which far from diluting either, serves to expose the global nature of the African American struggle in America. In forming this understanding and interpreting colonial space in America, postcolonial discourse in not only instrumental for the terminology and theory that it provides, but also for the identification of and with literatures and cultures of other oppressed people that it proffers.

Works Cited

- Arafat, Afia. Decolonizing Space: Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby & Love*. *Literature in Times of Violence*. 1999. Print.
- Bhabha, Homi. K. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Keenan, Sally. "Four Hundred Years of Silence: Myth, History and Motherhood in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *Recasting the World: Writing after Colonialism*. Ed. Jonathan White. Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1993. Web.
- Khayati, Abdellatif. "Representation, Race and the Language of the Ineffable in Toni Morrison's Narrative" *African American Review* 33.2, 1999. Print.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. New York: Vintage, 1993. Print.
- Morrison, Toni. *Tar Baby*. New York: Vintage, 2004. Print.

Dr. Vinod R. Shende

Assistant Professor
Seth Kesarimal Porwal College,
Kamptee.

Silent Protest of Pecola in Toni Morrison's Novel *The Bluest Eye*

Meenakshi Kulkarni

Abstract

Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* is woven around the concepts of Feminism, Racism and Marginalisation. The Afro-Americans became a victim of racism and were marginalised in American society. The suffering of female slaves is twofold in *The Bluest Eye*. Not only has their skin colour pushed them towards margin, but also their gender causes them being doubly marginalised.

Morrison explains her goal in writing the novel. She wants to make a statement about the damage that internalized racism can do to the weakest member of a community—a young girl and how her life gets shattered as she pines for blue eyes and comes out of the angst of oppression by her mother and the society at large.

The present paper is an attempt to understand the literature of the marginalised groups, Afro-Americans in USA. It shows how the affluent American society USA is constituted by comparable hegemonic, social, economical, cultural and political structures of oppression that define and delimit the identities of the subaltern in the society. The superstructure of race in USA deforms and complicate the identities of the marginalised along the lines of gender, class and family structure. Afro-American women, children and men negotiate their national identities in USA. While historically emasculated subaltern men may vent and represent

their rightful frustration and wrought against the oppressors, they may be simultaneously silencing their own doubly oppressed women. Thus by analysing the first novel of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the concept of Black Feminism scripts its strong presence in the literary arena.

Keywords: Racism, Protest, Anguish, Cultural identity, Struggle, Racial Bigotry, Black feminism, Oppression, Marginalized

Introduction

Toni Morrison is among the pioneer of the contemporary black writers who have redefined African-American writing in several ways. The Black women in America are doubly marginalized, being black, female and poor have been victimized by racism, sexism, and classism, not only from the white world, but also from their own men. These women have faced the problems of race, class and gender, which have pushed them towards the periphery. Being the best student in her class, Morrison experienced the effects of racism early in her age. She herself was a victim of racism, marginalization and patriarchal family and a combination of all these three effects are felt in her first novel *The Bluest Eye*.

Toni Morrison believes that survival of black women in a white racist society certainly depends upon their emphasis on adoring their own race, their own culture and loving themselves as they are, and not on fascinating themselves in white beauty standards.

Margaret Burnham University Distinguished Professor of Law and Director of the Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project at NorthEastern, said "*Toni Morrison's fictive work about black life lies at the intersection of memory, history, and trauma*".

Morrison's ground breaking novels about black history and identity opened the door for scores of authors who followed and also helped to advance issues of civil rights and racial justice. She is a

torch bearer to many black writers. Morrison taught For Coates, author of the novel *The Water Dancer* and non fiction *Between the World and Me* and *We Were Eight Years in Power*, that “*Black is beautiful, but it ain’t always pretty*”, and that good work sometimes required ugliness. Morrison’s characters combine Americanism and Africanism, but sometimes the pressure from White society forces them to succumb to White culture.

In her novels, Morrison focuses on the experience of black Americans, particularly emphasizing black women’s experience in an unjust society and the search for cultural identity.

Racism in North America

Racism is a systematized form of oppression by one race against another. Racism in the United States has existed since the colonial era, when white Americans were given legally or socially sanctioned privileges and rights while these same rights were denied to other races and minorities, especially the blacks were meted out inhuman treatment. The women were brutally raped by the white, that time they did not take into consideration the colour of the women, but treated *it* as an object for their carnal pleasures. According to Calvin C. Hernton, Racism is imprudent domination on the basis of colour and caste, because of some physical characteristic, the dominant race is compelled to believe that they are superior and have full rights to oppress the dark race and meat out all inhuman treatment to them.

Calvin C. Hernton was a scholar, critic and poet, whose work explored the terrain where American race relations collide with American sexual politics. He has authored several significant books of social and literary criticism, including the landmark study “*Sex and Racism in America*” (Doubleday, 1965). He used personal essays about his experience as a black man in America as a window on the larger workings of race, sex and class.

The basic myth of Racism is that white skin colour brings with it superiority and white is more virtuous and intelligent.

Blackness is associated with sin, dirt and cultural inferiority.

Class exploitation is perhaps the greatest source of oppression of blacks in White America. The class issue is an important one as it is linked to Capitalism, the system which divides society into two classes: 'master' and 'slaves.' The whites have been the Monopoly Class under this system while the blacks have been the Marginal Class. The blacks have suffered due to their status in society, as a poor, marginal group. The black women, like the black men were also working women. The black women had to work on plantation farms as labourers and also as 'mammys' or maids in the kitchens of the white households. They were generally looked upon as menials.

Black Feminism

Victor Turner, defines marginality in terms of W.E.B. DuBois' concept. He holds that the marginal is one who suffers from an inferiority complex in the domain of his own culture and is always obsessed with the cultural myths of the major (White) culture. This kind of definition does not hold good as far as the Afro – American women novelists are concerned.

Black Feminism is the process of self-conscious struggle that empowers women and men to realize a humanistic vision of community. Afro-American women's experiences with work and family during slavery and after emancipation led them to develop a specific perspective on the relationships between multiple types of oppression. Black women experienced not just racism, but sexism and other forms of oppression. This struggle fostered a broader, more humanistic view of community that encouraged each person to develop his or her own individual, unique human potential. Such a community is based on notions of fairness, equality and justice for all human beings, not just for Afro-American women. Black feminism encompasses a comprehensive, anti-sexist, anti-racist and anti-elitist perspective on social change.

The legacy of struggle, the search for voice, the

interdependence of thought and action and the significance of empowerment in everyday life are core themes in Black Feminism. The legacy of struggle against racism and sexism is a common thread binding Afro-American women regardless of historical era, age, social class or sexual orientation. The struggle against racism and its resulting humanistic vision differentiates black feminism from historical expressions of white feminism in the United States. Black feminists' central concern has been the transformation of societal relations based on race, class and gender.

The search for voice or the refusal of black women to remain silent constitutes a second core theme of black feminism. In order to exploit black women, dominant groups have developed controlling and stereotyping images by claiming that black women are inferior. Because they justify black women's oppression, four interrelated controlling images of black women—the mammy, the matriarch, the welfare mother and the jezebel—reflect the dominant group's interest in maintaining black women's subordination. Challenging these stereotypes has been an essential part of the search for voice. For Afro-American women, the search for voice emerges from the struggle to reject controlling images and embrace knowledge essential for their survival.

Moreover, if Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is viewed from the perspective of Black Feminism, it is an attempt to reflect the powerlessness, inhumanity and pains that coloured women went through.

All the black women in *The Bluest Eye* experience dependency, repression, internal racism and alienation. All these women try to find meaning and fulfilment in different ways. All these women on account of their race and gender are marginal groups "*moving at the helm of life*". Claudia explains the reality of her mother and other women in the community. "*Being a minority in both caste and class we moved about on the helm of life.*" (1970: 11) She dreads being put "outdoors", the way Cholly has put the women in his life outdoors.

Pecola, the ugly black girl who does not meet society's standards is expunged from human society even before she has awakened to a consciousness of self. Pecola stands for the triple indemnity in the female black child: children, blacks, females, and the poor are devalued and pushed to the margins of the already marginalized community.

Silent Protest of Innocent Pecola

Over the centuries, one of the most important tools available to protesting groups was literature. Some of the most famous protest literature in the world has its roots in American history. For example, some great American authors of protest literature include Thomas Paine, Thomas Nast, John C. Calhoun, and Martin Luther King. Through eloquent, sometimes subtle means, these authors became the spokesmen for their particular protest movements.

The innocent Pecola being a black girl in the dominant white society, was in a state of muddle, and imagined that getting blue eyes will end her tragic condition. But she lives in an imaginary realm. The good things don't happen to her, but she lands in the most despicable illness. Thus her protest turns pointless and she goes to the farthest futile lunatic fringe, from where there is no point of return.

Claudia observes towards the end of the novel "*It's much, much, much too late.*" (1970:164)

Nerve Shattering Story of Pecola

Morrison's first novel *The Bluest Eye* is a neo slave narrative, concerned with the theme of racial exploitation. It narrates the tragic life of a young Black girl of eleven years, Pecola Breedlove, who craves to be loved by her family and her school friends. Pecola also is in need of love of others to overcome the self-loathing. Her own mother perceives her as ugly and her father's love turns out to be destructive not healing. Pecola becomes the

scapegoat of her mother's frustration and disillusionment in life. She is the major cause of Pecola's obsession with Blue eyes and mental alienation. She steals the daughter's life beyond rescue and beyond salvation.

She is subjected to the most dreaded condition of impoverished communities, being an outsider and remaining always on the margin of the white and accepted society. Pecola lives in a bubble world which is untouched by change - neither she goes out neither she allows anyone in her world.

She rejects her true identity, and lives in a fantasy world according to the standards of whites, and nurtures the desire that blue eyes will give her acceptance in the society. In her quest for identity and beauty, she has been exploited. She longs to have blue eyes and blond hair which she considers as a mark of beauty. But her self-image is unable to bear the brutality meted out to her and she goes insane and lives in her own imaginary world in which she is the most lovable as she has the bluest eyes of all. She is ignored by the society, neglected by the family and despised by teachers and classmates.

Pecola sits long hours looking in the mirror, "[...] *trying to discover the secret of the ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike*" (34). Pecola's discovery of ugliness stands in contrast to Claudia's dismemberment of pink-skinned dolls to discover its beauty. Unlike Pecola, Claudia tries "*to discover the dearness, to find the beauty, the desirability*" (14). It is clear that the quest that stems from both of them is the sure result of the danger lurking within.

In order to give respect to the Pecolas of the world, the Blacks must respect themselves and not look down upon themselves and look up to the whites, as these different creations in our beautiful world is by the supreme.

Rape as a form of Resistance

Cholly Breedlove, Pecola's father, was abandoned, before he was born by his father and as an infant by his mother. He was

raised by his great Aunt Jimmy who dies when he is fourteen years old. During his first sexual experience, occurring during his aunt's funeral banquet, he is violated by two white men who force him to perform sex in front of them. This sows the seeds of hatred and abuse in his heart for whites. He wanders until he meets and marries Pauline Williams and has two children with her. He becomes an alcoholic and an abuser of his wife. When his daughter is eleven years old, he rapes her and then abandons the family. Thus it can be analysed that he had incestuous relation with his daughter, as he was humiliated during his first sexual act.

Rejection from Society and Family

The Afro-American woman find themselves doomed under denunciations both from society and from family. As a result of this they feel alienated and frustrated. Pecola finds herself unable to withstand all these rejections and finally decides to take shelter under the guise of blue eyes. She discovers the resting place of her ugliness to be in her eyes. Pecola innocently considers: "*If she looked different, beautiful, may be Cholly would be different and Mrs. Breedlove too*" (34).

Pecola was carried away by the pretty blue eyes of Alice and Jerry story book and is on the quest for blue eyes. Each night she used to pray ardently for blue eyes.

Shame and Guilt within Black Minds in White America

In white-dominated America, Afro-Americans feel guilt and shame about their own race. The social oppression of black by white is implicit, but the black males calling Pecola black is ruthless. One of the heart-breaking scene in Morrison's novel is the one in which a group of boys encircle Pecola and shout at her, "*Black e mo. Black e mo*" (50). With no sense of self-respect or pride in one's own race, the blacks sacrifice people belonging to their own race. The black males come together to belittle Pecola, reflects their own distorted mental state.

Conclusion

According to Toni Morrison the agonizing story of “*A little black girl who wanted to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes*” can be uplifted and break the shackles, if people are more human towards each other and do not discriminate tiny tots based on their skin colour which gives birth to inferiority complex in the little ones right from a very young age. Pecola’s mother Pauline wanted her to be white.

Racism is the result of the absence of human consciousness when it comes to accepting another human without prejudices. Racism, Sexism and Classism signify the traumatic conditions under which Afro-Americans lived in white America. These are systems of societal and psychological oppression that have adversely affected the lives of blacks in general and Afro-American women in particular. Black people like everyone else on Earth are human and unfortunately that means they can be bigoted.

The Breedlove family is representative of the Black rising in the North.

The main theme is the quest for individual identity and the influence of the family and society. This theme is present throughout the novel and evident in many of the characters. Thus, Pecolla, Cholly and Pauline Breedlove are all embodiments of this quest for identity. The pathetic condition of Blacks in North America has to be kept in mind for understanding the work humanely.

A black woman, to get a place in her family and society must love herself. She, having been a victim of American society, should try to live up to the standard that she wants to create for herself. The ability to develop a positive self-image is what Morrison expects in a Black woman and that is what she terms as Afro– American feminist consciousness. Black women are alienated from the White patriarchal society as they are coloured and female, and from their husbands as they are female and so considered as inferior to them. A

Black woman is a feminist, if she tries to liberate herself, though at a painful cost from the most dissipated and unfair world where justice and self-respect could not be restored. Morrison wants Black women to be self-dependent and asserts that they have the potentiality to be so.

The themes of race, class and gender are inter-related in *The Bluest Eye*. Spurned and rejected by a community plagued by the virus of self-hatred, Pecola is pushed to the fringes of the town and towards marginality, both literally and figuratively. Madness is Pecola's fate and there is no saviour for her. She is not accepted by society, rather society influences her identity. For Pecola, *The Bluest Eye* she yearns for is surrogate for Whiteness, in her young mind whiteness avails entrance into a cultural hegemony that is affirmed and empowered. No racial or ethnic group is inherently better or worse than any other. The Blacks should be proud of themselves, as they are creations of the same God as the Whites.

They have made significant invaluable contributions to all aspects of this society not because of the 'system' but going against the flow; despite being maligned, insulted, ridiculed, humiliated and otherwise looked upon with contempt, that is until they are needed.

Though Pecola wanted to be victorious by emulating the melanin colour or wanting bluest eyes, but the Black President of United States of America, Mr. Barack Obama have been one of the most successful President of the superpower twice, so one should never give up their identity, to gratify anyone.

Work Cited

Bhattarcharya, Shruti Sangam & Shilpi. "Feracialnalisation in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Mahashweta Devi's *Rudali*." *International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL)* ISSN(P): 2249-6912; ISSN(E): 2249-8028 Vol. 5, Issue 5, TJPRC Pvt. Ltd. (Oct 2015): 97-10. Web.

Callahan, Molly. "Toni Morrison's influence extends beyond literature." <https://news.northeastern.edu/2019/08/09/in-her-chronicling-of-black-history-and-identity-toni-morrison-influence-extends-beyond-literature/> (August, 9, 2019). Web.

Clark, Kenneth. "Black and White: The Ghetto Inside,." (Lapides and Burrows, 1971), n.d. 104-20.

Dr. Amal Galal Mohammad Morsy Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Fayoum University, Egypt. "The River that Dies Thirsty': Murdering Black Womanhood in Toni Morrison's Bluest Eye." *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture*, (June 2019 edition Vol.6 No.2 ISSN 2518-3966): Pgs 43-57, URL:<http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/llc.v6no2a3> . Web.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. *Racism in the United States*. 1 April 2020. Web. 4 April 2020.

—Gayles:, Gloria Wade. *No Crystal Stair: Vision of Race and Sex in Black Women's fiction*. (New York Pilgrim Press), n.d. 67.

"https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toni_Morrison." *Wikipedia* (n.d.). Web.

https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/15860/8/08_chapter%201.pdf. *Black Feminism* . n.d. Web. 04 April 2020.

<https://www.essay.uk.com/coursework/literature-of-protest.php>. *Literature of protest*. 02 04 2020. Web. 04 April 2020.

Jeyachandra, P.V. Annie Gladys and Edwingsingh. "The Danger Lurking Within: The African American Woman in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye." *Language in India* www.languageinindia.com (1 January 2010): 206-212. Web.

- León, Concepción de. "She Saved Us': Mourners Pay Tribute to Toni Morrison." <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/21/books/toni-morrison-new-york.html> (2019). Web.
- Megha Bharathi, L.M. Joshi. "Race, Class and Gender Bias as Reflected in Toni Morrison's First Novel The Bluest Eye." *Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies* (Number 1 q Summer q June 2009): 37-45. web.
- Morrison, Toni. "The Bluest Eye." https://www.academia.edu/22071509/THE_BLUEST_EYE?sm=b (n.d.).
- Morrison, Toni "The Bluest Eye." London : PEN., 1970.
- Sarita, Ravindra Kumar. "BEAUTY: A DEVASTATING TRUTH (A Study of Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye." *International Research Journal of Management Sociology & Humanity (IRJMSH)* www.irjmsh.com (IRJMSH Vol 5 Issue 6 [Year 2014] ISSN 2277 – 9809 (online) 2348–9359 (Print)): Page 218-222. web.
- V.Hema. "An Analysis of Toni Morrison's the Bluest Eye." *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences (IJELS)* (Vol-4, Issue-1, Jan - Feb, 2019): 128-129. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.4.1.25>.

Meenakshi Kulkarni

Assistant Professor

Department of English

L..A.D. & Smt. R.P. College for Women,
Nagpur.

The Eternal Conflict: Mother-Daughter Relationship in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughter*

Suchita Marathe

Abstract

In 1976, Andrienne Rich alerted us to the silence that has surrounded the most formative relationship in the life of every woman, the relationship between daughter and mother. Manju Kapoor has delved deep into this beautiful relationship. She has shown how this relationship ebbs and flows with the strict implementation of tradition, pitfalls of generation gap and concomitantly modernity. She has stated the universal truth that blood relations may be severed for the time being due to compulsive conditions but the pull of blood is so strong that they are finally renewed. This paper tries to trace the trials and tribulations in the relationship between Kasturi and her rebel daughter Virmati.

Keywords: Mother, daughter, patriarchy, social pressure, emotional void, assertion

Mother-daughter relationship is a life-long cherished relationship. Every relationship is fraught with adjustment problems; so is the case for this too. The Indian social scenario and its social demands of preparing the daughters for the sole purpose of marriage takes a heavy toll on this relationship. The social obligations dictate many a times unwillingly on the mother to curtail the freedom of nurturing individuality for which she herself

had rebelled in her youth. The ideas about individual freedom are in a constant state of flux. So the generation gap remains a bane for the flowering of this relationship.

Mother-daughter is the same-sex relationship and therefore more complex. The daughter in her childhood desires an emotional bond and prefers to shed these strings once she enters adolescence. This shift towards independence is a bit painful. At this stage the daughter feels stifled by the constant domination of her mother and decides to escape the tyranny by establishing her separate identity. Sometimes the anguish is such that the daughter decides to avoid everything that her mother has been. There is unannounced rivalry interwoven in this same sex relationship regards beauty, education, fate, physical space, individual freedom, economic independence. Manju Kapur true to the realistic tag has kept the mother-daughter relationship on a normal plane exhibiting the different shades.

Being the eldest in a brood of eleven children, Virmati had to be a second mother to her other siblings. Virmati's own childhood is lost in household chores, her interest and yearning for books is forcibly replaced by having to resolve sibling squabbles and attending to their perennial expectations. Her relationship and emotional bond with her mother is severed due to the difference between her mother's expectations and her agonised assertions and pleas for some semblance of a space for herself.

In a book edited by Carol Boyd titled '*Mothers and Daughters : A Discussion of Theory and Self*, Nancy Chodorow who is a pioneer in researching Mother-Daughter relationship writes---' The mother is the early care-giver and primary source of Identification of all children.....but a daughter continues to identify with the mother lifelong' Accordingly, even the eldest daughter like Virmati burdened with innumerable responsibilities looks towards her mother for loving words and encouragement. If the daughter fails to get emotional security in the early growing

years of her life, it creates an emotional void in her life. If her own mother does not understand her desires and her ambitions, she begins to search for emotional fulfilment elsewhere. Virmati doesn't remember one warm moment with her mother. Ever since Virmati could remember, she had been looking after children. "It was'nt only baby Parvati to whom she was indispensable, to her younger siblings she was second mother as well" (6). Sometimes Virmati yearned for affection; but her attempts were thwarted by the sick and constantly pregnant Kasturi. "However, when she put her head next to the youngest baby feeding in the mother's arms, Kasturi would get irritated and pushed her away, 'Have you seen to their food-milk clothes, studies?'" (6).

At Dalhousie, where Kasturi was sent for recuperation, Virmati tried to bridge the emotional gap present between them. "She had never had Kasturi so much to herself and was jealous of each moment with her' (11) But her one-sided attempt to connect met with utter frustrations as "Virmati's attempts to spin webs of love through her devotion were met by exasperation. Kasturi was not used to so much solicitude' (11).' Secondly "The language of feeling had never flowed between them" (12) and their relationship remained sacrificed at the altar of a typical situation where mother becomes a breeding machine and gives birth but does not have time to even look after their physical needs; leave alone their emotional cravings. Finally, Virmati consoled herself "Why did she need gestures when she knew how indispensable she was to her mother and her whole family" (7). There Kasturi found time to observe the restlessness in her daughter Virmati and was alarmed 'Why was her daughter so restless all the time? In a girl that spelt disaster'. (12) Marianne Hirsch quotes Chodorow and Flax in her essay *Mothers and Daughters* – "that the ego boundaries between the Mothers and Daughters are more fluid, more undefined. The girl is less encouraged to be autonomous but she is also less nurtured, since the mother projects upon her daughter her own ambivalence about being female in patriarchal culture.'

Psychologists observe that Mothers undergo moments of frustrations when they realize that her daughter is fast becoming a separate identity who has her own views on things and dares to even contradict her. Kasturi feels insecure when powerful influences like the modern Shakuntala in Virmati's case become potential threats in carrying out her assigned function of conditioning her daughter to be a 'good wife' as Signe Hammer writes in her book *Daughters and Mothers: Mothers and Daughters* - 'Mothers of all classes are still primarily concerned about their daughters' as future wives and mothers, and not separate entities having some other ambitions.' So when Virmati complains that she doesn't find time to study because of housework and hence has failed in her exams, Kasturi is furious and says 'Leave your studies if it is going to make you so bad tempered with your family. You are forgetting what comes first' (21) It hurt Kasturi when Virmati pointed out that her aunt had supported her cousin Shakuntala when she studied.

Kasturi is pressurised by the social tradition that her eldest daughter should get married on time as she has a line of daughters and sons to be married. This pressure makes her impatient with Virmati. When Virmati decides to become a difficult daughter, Kasturi curses herself for her poor luck. Kasturi believed that Education, "hardly anything to do with the real business of life and that is looking after home"(22). A canal engineer, Inderjit, a perfect groom for Virmati was also found. But Virmati was herself drawn towards her cousin who was pursuing higher education. She believed Shakuntala when she said "times are changing and woman are moving out of the house, so why not you?" (18)

Virmati dreamt of emancipation from these familial obligations and going to Lahore for further studies and living an envied life like Shakuntala. She remembered Shakuntala's words "These people really don't understand, Viru, how much satisfaction there can be in leading one's own life, in being independent." (17)

Virmati felt torn between her responsibilities towards her family and the sophistication she had started yearning for after

being inspired by Shakuntala's free lifestyle. At home, nobody paid any attention towards her studies and her mother constantly loaded her with one housework or the other resulting in constant conflict with her mother: The situation was too precarious: Daughter attracted towards books and mother failing to adjust to the changing times to understand this attraction. Kasturi expected Virmati to feel enthusiastic about her marriage and make efforts to achieve perfection in the housework as she had done. As Virmati could find no sympathy for her feelings at home she was naturally instantly drawn towards the erudite, literature studied, sophisticated, foreign returned Professor who drank tea from dainty tea cups".

Trapped in the traditional patriarchal set-up, Kasturi failed to give wings to the flight that Virmati so longed to undertake. On the other hand, she had a powerful motherly shadow which enveloped the motherly love and precluded any sense of confidences that could be exchanged between Mother-Daughter. Virmati had become too big now to remain in the terror of her mother and with the growing support and love and attention from the professor, Virmati's daring increased as she took the bold step of declaring her plan to continue her education and not marry. On being forced by her mother, she even took the extreme step of committing suicide. Kasturi as a mother, felt ashamed of Virmati's humiliating action of committing suicide and the shocking concomitant admission of her love affair with the already married Professor having a small daughter. Kasturi hit her across her face from cheek to cheek. 'For this I let you go to college. So that you are ruined permanently. Are you mad?' (86).

It is a social rule that when a member of a family decides to take a revolutionary step the other family members have to bear the brunt of social ridicule. So when Virmati was offered a job in the hill state of Sirmaur, Kasturi being a mother was more apprehensive, "How can we let her go? 'The relationship between a mother and daughter is constantly contoured by the social norms prevalent in

that particular social milieu. Her career at Sirmaur was sabotaged by the surprise visit and overnight stay of the selfish Professor. She was terminated from her job. Extremely ashamed, she could not return back to Amritsar and as the Professor did not show any courage to marry her, she decided to go to Shantiniketan. On reaching Delhi, the poet friend intervened and Virmati finally got her married to the Professor. After her return to Amritsar, Virmati makes one feeble attempt to restore her severed ties with her family. But it was futile. Her mother was not ready to forgive her. "Virmati looked at her mother's face. The eyes were cold and narrowed, the brows contorted with rage. There was impeccable hostility there. She thought she would die with the pain she felt" (220).

The daughter had established a separate identity, had taken her own decision to marry the much married Professor and bring shame to the family and Kasturi was not in any mood to forgive her. Kasturi's anger was not only about a daughter going awry but about a daughter who had defied the authority of the mother and outgrown her dominating shadow. It was anger about the frustration of losing a daughter.

'When Virmati's father died suddenly, she wanted to go and be accepted by the family; to be of help to lessen her mother's grief and share her burden of sorrows. But the mother had still not forgiven her and on the contrary blamed her for the sudden death of her husband. When a daughter marries she goes and lives in an alien atmosphere; at this time she needs the guidance and support of her mother to help the process of adjustment. Virmati had opted for an unconventional marriage where she had to bear the hatred of the Professor's first wife and in-laws. She had to share her husband and exist in the corner of the house when her husband was not around. Many Indian girls are advised not to go for love marriage to avoid this situation where their mother would be forced to abandon the daughter due to societal taboos.

When the bloody Partition took place, Amritsar was flooded with Hindu refugees from across the border. It was also a time when

religious groups used to target the localities of opposite religion. Therefore, the people on getting a hint of such attack used to assemble under one roof to be able to make a collective combat of the enemy's attack. On one such occasion Kasturi spotted that Virmati was pregnant when they had gathered under one roof as a result of a rumour about an attack. The times were so turbulent that Kasturi could not carry further her resentment towards her daughter and called her home. Virmati overwhelmed by this gesture also resolved her differences and went to live under the care of her mother. Thus it is seen that whatever the differences especially between mother and daughter, it is difficult to sever blood ties, particularly the bond between mother and daughter. At this moment of crisis Kasturi forgave Virmati and brought her back into the family fold. The patriarchal pressures over Kasturi to sever ties with defiant Virmati abated with time. Thus ultimately it was a mother's magnanimity which reunited Virmati with her family.

The story of mother and daughter has indeed been written, although it is not often found on the surface but in the submerged depths of literary texts. Till today even though the title of the novel is *Difficult Daughter* the work has been researched in the feminist perspective; as a struggle of a woman against tradition to establish her own 'space' and 'identity'. But the powerful sub-text is also the focus on the different facets of a mother- daughter relationship.

Thus Virmati's story is not only about a 'search for identity'; it is also a portrayal of her struggle to emancipate herself from the tyrannical control of her mother. Thus Virmati suffers an emotional void due to the indifferent relationship with her mother owing to a large family and the socio-cultural factors which determine Kasturi's relation with Virmati.

Works Cited

Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1976). Carol Boyd, *Mothers And Daughters: A Discussion of Theory and Research*.

*The Eternal Conflict: Mother-Daughter Relationship in
Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughter*

Marieanne Hirsch: Mothers and daughters Journal of woman in Culture and society, signs, Vol.7, No.1 (autumn, 1981).

Signe Hammer, Daughters and Mothers: Mothers and Daughters (New York: Signet Books, 1976).

Sara Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking", Feminist Studies 6, no2 (Summer 1980).

Dr. Suchita Marathe
Associate Prof. in English,
SBMM, Mahal, Nagpur.

Female Face of Patriarchy in *The Pakistani Bride* by Bapsi Sidhwa

Madhavi A. Moharil

Abstract

Eastern Feminism is different from the Western Feminism. Condition of women in Eastern countries is projected by many talented women writers in their fiction. With this regard, in most of the cases the women protagonists are presented on the background of patriarchal structure of the society. The same patriarchal structure is seen working on the women characters in the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa, one of the leading names in the list of Asian women writers. Present paper entitled 'Female Face of Patriarchy' highlights the protest of Zaitoon, the central character against the rigid taboos of the society. Adversities test her metal but she accepts the challenges and overcomes the same with grit.

Keywords: Feminism, patriarchy, tribe, marriage, domination, struggle

In Eastern Feminism, feminine discourse received a substantial platform for self-expression. In Modern and Post-modern Asian English Literature the concept of 'new woman' evolved with a sense of individualism. When Bapsi Sidhwa decided to write during the 1970s, there were hardly any women writers writing fiction in English in Pakistan. The conditions across the border however, were different as Indian writings in English had already recognized as a literary genre with many women writers

like, Kamla Markandya, Nayantara Saighal, Ruth Jhabwala, Miralini Sarabhai and Anita Desai. Therefore, Sidhwa is considered as one of the first generation of Pakistani fiction writers in English. Among all the women writers, Sidhwa's presentation of the unconquerable women characters in her novel had a far-fetched impact on the Third World Literature. It is Sidhwa, who established an assertive say of women from different strata of the Asian countries because at that time the Pakistani feminine presence was shadowed behind the veil which was the symbol of shame and concealment. The women protagonists projected by Sidhwa attempt to carve a niche of their own by overcoming adversities placed by social taboos and patriarchal norms. She unveils women's identity by projecting a strong literature of protest.

Pakistani Feminism is different from the feminist thought expressed in West. In Eastern countries the life of women is still moulded by the patriarchal customs and cultural norms. The struggle of Eastern women to live an independent life with equal rights is not finished yet. The feelings of agitation, injustice expressed through the women characters are the result of the age old precincts imposed on the womanhood by the society. Thus feminine attitude, feminist resistance and female ambitions are the outcomes of the protest literature of this age.

Plot of *The Pakistani Bride* itself is the protest against a true story. After her second marriage, Sidhwa went to Northern Pakistan with her husband. The army was building a road through the Karakoram Mountains into China. They stayed in a very remote camp. During the stay, Sidhwa heard a story of a young Panjabi girl who suddenly appeared in the camp. The girl was married among the primitive Kohistani Tribes. She failed to tolerate the ungoverned territory of the Kohistani community and managed to run away. It was not acceptable to the tribe. When her husband discovered that she had run away, he took it as a great insult and hunted her down. The girl, after surviving for almost two weeks in the lofty mountains was killed by her husband. Over this, Sidhwa reacts,

The girl's story haunted me: it reflected the hapless condition of many women in Pakistan. Telling it became an obsession. I thought I'd write a short story; after all it had barely taken 30 minutes to narrate. Before long I realised I was writing a novel. It became *The Bride* or *The Pakistani Bride* as it is titled.

Zaitoon, in *The Pakistani Bride* is described living in a typical traditional Muslim community. Zaitoon and Qasim, her father suffer the painful turmoil of Partition. They live together and try to heal the scars of the past. Both of them try to forget the painful memories of their lives. Zaitoon is orphaned during the holocaust of Partition. She is sheltered by Qasim, who loses his wife and children during the same period. Qasim belongs to Kohistani Tribe and is proud of his 'root identity'. He pampers Zaitoon and allows her to attend the school for five years later following his neighbour's, Miriam's, suggestion, her education is discontinued. Here Sidhwa brings out discrimination which is rampant in the society due to age old conventions and traditions. This is the condition that seems to be evident in almost all over the eastern countries. Sidhwa focuses on the unrealized sufferings of Zaitoon in a very early stage of life. She has faced gender discrimination and injustice at a very young age. The condition of the protagonist is rightly pointed out by Sadaf Farid,

Also the content clarifies that the discrimination starts at a very tender age at the same time highlighting the regular bickering by other elder male chauvinists so as to continue the male dominance and the trends prevailing. Sidhwa in further sections of the story gives a very clear description of the discrimination practiced against the women behind the four walls of the house. (Fareed, 255).

Miriam grooms Zaitoon as an ideal girl, ready for household duties. She trains Zaitoon to cook, sew, shop and keep her room tidy. Miriam becomes the instrument of imparting patriarchal ideals to Zaitoon. This is supposed to be the only world of women which is behind 'burkha', the veil. Qasim's decision to marry Zaitoon in a barbaric Kohistani tribal community brings a subtle

change in the life of the protagonist that makes her to protest hard for survival. Through this matrimonial alliance of his daughter Qasim wants to solidify his own tribal relations. He uses Zaitoon as a 'gift' in order to win over, re-establish his tribal relations.

The society has long since constructed the frame of the women so as to bring restrictions upon them. The so called social taboos and norms are meant only for the women. Following this Zaitoon does not utter a word against the decision taken by her father. She submits herself to the desire of Qasim and says, 'I cannot cross my father'. The girls have to marry in their teenaged. As she reaches to her puberty, she is supposed to be the one fit for marriage and capable enough to shoulder the responsibilities of the married life. Zaitoon does not want to bring dishonour to her father but the father fails to understand the heart of her daughter.

Comparatively the life at Lahore is easier than the life waiting for Zaitoon in the tribal area. There her patience is tested. The norms and rules of the tribal life are far different than the life of the urban area. No doubt, the life of women at Lahore is also restricted by so many rules and norms of the society. The life within tribal clan is harder for any woman to survive. There women are regarded the property of men, like houses or cattle. The way tribe welcomes the father and the daughter, Zaitoon understands the savage ways of the mountain people. She realises the poverty and the harshness that she will have to fight in order to survive against all odds. She requests, 'Abba take me to the plains when you go. Please don't leave me here. Take me with you' (PB 157) She dares to say, 'Abba take me back. I'll look after you always. How will you manage without me and the food? If I must marry, marry me to someone from the plains. That Jawan at camp, Abba, I think he likes me. I will die rather than live here' (PB157) Instead of considering the tender feelings of her daughter, Qasim thinks that Zaitoon is crossing her limits. Here it is a struggle between 'the word of a Kohistani', male pride and the sentiments and desire of the girl, obviously the male dominance and the pride wins.

After marriage, Zaitoon finds her husband, Sakhi as a typical tribal male. He fails to understand the feeling of his wife. He has nothing to do with the ways of her life in the past. For him, Zaitoon is a woman all his won with 'proprietary lust and pride'. She lives every moment under the suspicion of Sakhi. After marriage, Zaitoon's second part of life begins which is worse than the previous one. On the home front she feels the silent pains of her mother in law Hamida. Both of them tolerate the tyrannical treatment given to them by the tribal structure of life. Zaitoon feels defeated because,

She also grew immune to the tyrannical, animal-trainer treatment meted out by Sakhi. In his presence she drifted into a stupor, until nothing really hurt her. He beat her on the slightest pretext. She no longer thought of marriage with any sense of romance. She now lived only to placate him, keeping her head averted unless it was to listen to a command. Then her eyes were anxious and obsequious like those of Hamida. (PB,174)

Tolerance is an inborn quality among the women. When the patience and tolerance of a woman ends, it results into revolt. This may be regarded as a protest against all the restrictions framed by the society. Zaitoon realises that she cannot fight against the norms of the barbarian society. Eventually, she decides to take a flight. She wants to escape from the inhuman society around her, which makes life hell on the earth. She tries to escape to the mountains where she is caught by Sakhi. He drags her along the crags of the mountains abusing and beating her in a barbaric manner. This attempt does not knock her down. On the contrary, this humiliation and inhuman treatment shapes Zaitoon as more determined and bold girl. She prefers to fight again through another attempt to escape rather than tolerating the same torture till death. Here she becomes the symbol of the desire for liberty which resides there in a woman. Strong protest against cruelty gives birth to 'a new woman' within Zaitoon. She is aware that if she is caught, her punishment would be death. Her determination helps her overcome very trying conditions of the

mountains. She survives without food and shelter. The hard journey tests her will and grit. She overcomes all physical and mental horrors. She wanders for nine days and nights in the Karakoram, Himalayan Mountain ranges. The novel comes to an end with an optimistic note. Major Mushtaq supports her. With great presence of mind and meticulous planning he helps her to come out of the mire. Words of Loss are more appropriate when he says,

Certainly, Sidhwa's stories, always about women who dare to go beyond the limits set to them, along with her own story, can only raise the awareness of women – and of men as well. Although the men in her novels may often be weak, unreasonable and cruel, Sidhwa sees them caught in the web of another so-called immutable law that needs to be reversed. They, too must rebel against the role in which tradition has paced them. In Sidhwa's view, only when this dual rebellion takes place will the story of *The Bride* be a happy one. (Loss, 165)

Pakistani Bride is the protest of a girl to get an identity in the conservative Muslim community. It is a protest against inhuman, barbarian tribal community. It is a revolt against social taboos and constraints to womanhood. It is the rebellion against rigid patriarchy. It is a strong objection against suppressed woman desires and aspirations. In fact, this protest is a demonstration of strong will of a woman to live with self-dignity and self-respect. Bapsi Sidhwa is highly applauded for the presentation of the character of Zaitoon, who represents the voice of thousands of women who struggle to prove their existence in the patriarchal society. She represents the female face of patriarchy. Rightly conclude with the words,

Zaitoon's escape from her brutal marriage is a victory against the male chauvinistic system. She is a survivor: She gets able to be free from the clutches of the brutal marriage, the wild hills, the honour-thirsty tribes men and the cruel rapists. She escapes from all this hostility and survives. Zaitoon's choice of freedom from the

slavery of a brutal marriage is a courageous and heroic
action a testimony to the never yielding spirit of a woman
(Sofia Alvi, 91)

Works Cited

- Fareed, S. "Women Subjugation: A Suppressed Survival Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*." VSRD Technical & Non-Technical Journal. 2012.
- Loss, R.L. "The Bride: The Treatment of Women". *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa*. Ed. N.K.R.K. Dhawan. New Delhi, India: Prestige Books, 1996.
- Sofia Alvi, A.B. "Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Bride*: An Alternative Viewpoint in Pakistani Literature". *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*. February, 2012.
- PB is used as abridged used for *The Pakistani Bride*, New Delhi, Penguin, 1990.

Madhavi A. Moharil

Department of English
Rajkumar Kewalramani Kanya Mahavidyalaya
Nagpur.

Mahesh Dattani's *Seven Steps Around the Fire*: A Study as a Protest Play

Archana A Gupta

Abstract

Mahesh Dattani's play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* mirror the society and help audience and readers understand and connect to the world they live in. the play is based on the unusual storyline as it is based on crime and an extraordinary love relationship and marriage of Kamla, a hijra with Subbu, the son of a wealthy and influential minister. The study of the play reveals the hijras are not revered in the society and are not considered trustworthy and loyal. The presence of hijra is noticed during wedding occasions or child birth, to celebrate the event and it is considered auspicious, otherwise they are 'invisible minority' and the society does not care for hijras; their presence or absence does not matter to the society. The hijra belonging to the 'other' gender and being poor are victims of power, and have no freedom to express truth. They are one of the socially excluded groups.

Keywords: Protest and literature, transgender (hijra) community, invisible minority, socially excluded.

Any work of literature is the artistic form of human life seen through a temperament; hence the study of literature is a study of various temperaments. A writer of any genre of literature plays his role in that field. Hence, his writing is not purposeless. Contemporary playwright Mahesh Dattani is not an exception in the

continuation of the trend. Dattani's plays mirror society and help audience and readers understand and connect to the world they live in. Erin Mee has noted the views of Dattani in *The Note on the Play, Tara* thus;

... I think it is very important for our country to spawn new playwrights... who reflect honestly and purely our lives, because... that is our contribution to the world (*Collected Plays, Tara*, 319).

Markandey Katju in *The Role of Art, Literature and The Media* has propounded that the concept of 'art for social purpose' in its active sense of using art and literature for reforming society is largely of recent origin. Drama is considered as a literary art which comprises of a plot, characters and dialogues. It represents the society in which its plot is developed. The chief feature is to bring out the nature of people in the society and how they value the society and its components. Thus, drama in turn aims at reforming the society.

To reform the society and to bring about any social change, first is to visualize a better world, then to convey this vision to others. And drama and its performance is an apt medium to bring forth the society and its social and political trends and also man's mores, his foibles, his problems, triumphs, defeats, thinking. As it is a visual art form, its impact and consequences on the audience is tremendous.

Paul Woodruff has observed about theatre in his book *The Necessity of Theater* thus, "Theater is the art by which human beings make or find human action worth watching, in a measured time and place"(18). He further writes on the art of watching thus;

And there is an ethical reason to practice the art of watching. Part of our need to watch theater grows from our need to care about other people. ... You pay attention because you care, and paying attention allows you to care. Caring about people in the make-believe world of mimetic theater may strengthen your ability to care

about people offstage. Healthy people in healthy communities do develop the capacity into a virtue – a virtue that I call “humaneness” (20).

In the play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* Mahesh Dattani questions the age old belief of marriage based on heterosexual relationship. The storyline of the play is unusual as it is based on crime and extraordinary love relationship. The play also explores that the plight of hijras in our society is deplorable.

Dattani's *Seven Steps Around the Fire* was first broadcast as *Seven Circles Around the Fire* by BBC Radio 4 on 9 January 1999 and was first performed on stage at the Museum Theatre, Chennai, by MTC Production and the Madras Players on 6 August 1999. The play opens with the sound of the flames of the fire; the wedding fire and the chanting of Sanskrit mantras imply the marriage of Kamla with Subbu. Then the flames of the fire engulf Kamla. Kamla is burnt to death by Subbu's father as he could not accept Kamla, a hijra for his daughter-in-law. The term 'hijra' and not transgender is used in the study of this play because the same has been used in the play by the playwright.

The play moves around Uma, daughter of the Vice Chancellor of Bangalore University and wife of Chief Superintendent of Police Suresh Rao. Uma teaches Sociology at Bangalore University and is working on a research paper on class-and gender-related violence. In this interest of hers she visits jail to meet Anarkali, a hijra who is accused of killing Kamla, another hijra. Uma acts as a sleuth in the murder case of Kamla, unravels the mystery of the murder using rather unconventional means and realizes that the influential people by exercising their power crush the rights of the marginalised, in the play the rights of hijra community are crushed. Kamla is secretly married to Subbu, the son of a wealthy and influential minister Mr. Sharma and is burned to death by Mr. Sharma. Mr. Sharma then hastily arranges for the marriage of his son to an acceptable girl. But at the wedding, attended by the hijra, who sing and dance at weddings and births,

Subbu takes out a gun and kills himself and the truth behind the suicide is hushed up. The suicide was written as an accident in the police records and no arrests were made. With this plot of the play the playwright has pointed out the status of the hijra in the country and also the way the society thinks of them and in turn treats them.

The hijra are not revered in the society and this reality is evident from the play at various instances. Uma uses the pronoun 'she' for Kamla while talking about her, but Munswamy chuckles at this and instead uses 'it' for Kamla (*CP, SSAF, 8*). Suresh mentions Kamla as a 'thing' when he is conversing with Uma, "I hope this thing didn't give you any trouble" (*CP, SSAF, 16*). Moreover talking to a hijra is not considered as respectable in the society therefore Munswamy insists Uma to leave the case of Anarkali and instead take up any other murder case for her study as for him it is not respectable to talk to a hijra for a lady like Uma from a highly regarded family and he articulates his thoughts to Uma thus, "... why is a lady from a respectable family like yourself...?" (*CP, SSAF, 7*) and, "Why do you want to bring this shame on your family... I beg of you go home" (*CP, SSAF, 8*).

In the Vedic society and also during the Muslim rule in India, the hijra were considered trustworthy and loyal. But during the colonial period and in contemporary India the hijra community is considered to be the criminals, untrustworthy and disloyal. Munswamy considers Anarkali as liar and this is made known with his conversation with Uma, "What is the use of talking with it? It will only tell you lies" (*CP, SSAF, 7*). Even Suresh while talking about Anarkali to Uma expresses thus, "Don't believe a word of anything it says. They are all liars" (*CP, SSAF, 9*). Uma, in an attempt to get to the truth behind the murder of Kamla, visits the house of Mr. Sharma. At the time of her conversation with Mr. Sharma she admits that the hijra are "all so used to lying" that "it is very difficult to get to the truth" (*CP, SSAF, 31*).

Anarkali tells Uma that the hijra make their relations with their eyes and with their love, "We make our relations with our eyes.

With our love. . . . I look at you, you look at me, and we are mother and daughter" (*CP, SSAF*, 1). Though they are not bound in relations with blood, but their attachment are stronger than blood relations. This quality of hijra is clearly explicit in the play. Anarkali knew Kamla loved Subbu and that they both wanted to marry, hence she tried to stop her by the ways she could. In her attempt, she fought with her, scratched her face with the hope that Kamla will become ugly and Subbu will forget her. All this we come to know towards the climax of the play, but before this Uma suspects they fought to be head hijra. After Champa, Kamla was to be head hijra, therefore Uma presumes Anarkali fought with Kamla and must have killed her to become head hijra. Even Suresh thinks low about their relations. Uma is in discussion about Anarkali with Suresh and pronounce that she is arrested for the murder of her sister 'Kamla'. Suresh chokes with laughter at Uma's mention of relation of sister between Anarkali and Kamla and comments, "There is no such thing for them. More lies. . . . They fought like dogs every day, that Anarkali and . . ." (*CP, SSAF*, 10). He intended Anarkali and Kamla, though he left his dialogue incomplete.

Anarkali gifts Uma a locket with special mantra given by Champa to wear. This locket will bless her with children. Uma and Suresh do not have children. They have been to doctor and problem is with Suresh because of which they are not having children. Anarkali wishes happiness to Uma and her family and requests her not to visit the hijra locality as it is not appropriate for her to be in the company of hijra. All this is in confirmation to the fact that hijra are loyal and trustworthy enough as they were considered in the Vedic period and the Muslim rule, but unfortunately the present society do not appreciate this quality of them.

The hijra were criminalized in the British rule. This prejudice against hijra community continues to the present time. An instance of this can be witnessed in the play when Kamla's dead body was found out; the hijra community was informed by the police. About this incident Munswamy told Uma the hijra were

more interested in her jewelry as she was wearing so much of gold jewelry when she died. Munswamy doubted on how a hijra can get so much of gold, when they are seen to beg for rupees. This information makes Uma to hold up her information that the hijra are criminals. But later Uma had to change her opinion about the hijra when she was gifted by Anarkali and also when she came to know of them better.

The presence of hijra is noticed during wedding occasions or child birth, to celebrate the event and it is considered auspicious, otherwise they are 'invisible minority'. The fact finds expression with the words of Uma when she visits Champa, "The invisible minority. . . although I couldn't see any hijra on the streets. They only come out in groups and make their presence felt by their peculiar loud hand clap" (*CP, SSAF, 21-22*). Here the views of Miruna George can be appropriately quoted,

It is a paradoxical situation where the singing and the dancing of the transgendered at a marriage for blessing a newly married couple is believed to assure parenthood to the couple. So it is not a complete banishment of them from society's circle. Their visibility does not cause any embarrassment or mishap. Yet they are restricted in social function. They are objects of mistrust, ridicule and contempt. They are social victims and exist only on the margins (146).

Anarkali is bailed out from the jail. When Uma comes to know about this from Suresh she immediately makes to visit her. At first Champa denies her entry into the place Anarkali was. But then Champa lets her to meet Anarkali. The very first question Anarkali asks her whether her husband knows she has visited them. Uma's answer, 'no', makes Anarkali to further ask Uma the reason behind hiding her meeting them from her husband. Uma openly admits her husband will not allow her to visit her. At this Anarkali boldly asks her, "Then what will you do knowing who killed Kamla?" (*CP, SSAF, 35*). Uma answers, "Tell my husband to make an arrest." And the reply of Anarkali is, "One hijra less in this world does not matter to

your husband.” Here Dattani has rightly hinted the society does not care for hijras, their presence or absence does not matter to the society.

Towards the climax, with the words of Uma it is revealed that Anarkali, Champa and the other hijra knew the reason and the person behind the killing of Kamla. But they could not express the truth as they ‘have no voice’ (*CP, SSAF*, 42). They are one of the socially excluded groups. The murder case of Kamla was hushed up. The case not even found place in the newspapers. Subbu’s suicide was taken as an accident and his wedding photograph with Kamla was destroyed. The lives of Subbu and Kamla were destroyed only because of unaccepted marriage relationship on the part of society and also on the part of Subbu’s family. Had the hijra been socially accepted, the marriage would have been worked and Subbu and Kamla would not have met untimely death. The solution to this social issue Dattani hints through the words of Champa, “You see us also as society, no?” (*CP, SSAF*, 23). These are the words of Champa when she realizes the empathy Uma possess for the hijra.

Uma’s research paper was on class-gender-based power implications and it made her a sleuth during her study in Kamla’s murder case. Mr. Sharma, a leading politician, hushed up the case of Kamla – the murder of a hijra. For all this he gets support of Chief Superintendent of Police, Suresh Rao. Uma, being the wife of Suresh, gets the benefit of his power and post. She gets entry into the jail to meet Anarkali; has constable Munswamy for her bodyguard and a vehicle from police department to move around. The hijra belonging to the ‘other’ gender and being poor are victims of power, have no freedom to express truth. Anarkali, Champa and all other hijra knew everything but they could not tell about it to Uma, rather they themselves suffered. Anarkali is kept in jail on the charges of killing Kamla, that too with male inmates where she suffers sexual exploitation. Kamla’s life is lost only because she belonged to hijra community. Though Uma discovers the truth behind the murder of Kamla, she could not do anything, she too could be said to have no

voice being a woman. The play thus gives a glimpse of the pathetic condition of the hijra community and their exploitation by the ruling class and the society at large. Here the views of Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri can be quoted;

Dattani cleverly enmeshes twin gender issues in the play, the woman as a fighter, in multiple roles and yet empowered only derivatively, constantly using all possible means to achieve her ends, juxtaposed with the extremely marginalized, 'invisible' groups of eunuchs of undefined sexuality who she tries to make contact with (66).

About the theme of the play Dattani himself has mentioned through the words of Uma, "The purpose of this case study is to show their position in society" (*CP, SSAF*, 10). Here case study is Uma's research paper on class-gender-based power implications. He further adds here, "Perceived as the lowest of the low, they yearn for family and love. The two events in mainstream Hindu culture where their presence is acceptable – marriage and birth – ironically are the very same privileges denied to them by man and nature" (*CP, SSAF*, 10). And furthermore, "Not for them the seven rounds witnessed by the fire god, eternally binding man and women in matrimony, or the blessings of 'May you be the mother of a hundred sons'" (*CP, SSAF*, 10). Here is the significance of the title of the play, *Seven Steps Around the Fire*. And if they do dare to enter into matrimony they have to suffer dire consequences. Kamla, a hijra, entered into marriage relations with Subbu by defying the norms of society has to meet untimely death and the other members of the hijra community have to suffer. Bijay Kumar Das writes about the play;

This can be interpreted as a protest play against the injustice meted out to the downtrodden in a society. Dattani is questioning the age old belief of marriage being based on heterosexual relationships. (85).

This is the pitiful condition of transgender in the society as

portrayed by Dattani in the play. Dattani has done a great job by introducing a new theme to Indian English drama.

Note

The play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* of Mahesh Dattani selected for the present study and quoted in the body of the present research paper is abbreviated as *SSAF* while referring to it.

The play has appeared in the book;

Dattani, Mahesh. *Collected plays*. New Delhi, India, Penguin Books, 2000.

This book has been abbreviated as *CP* for *Collected plays* while referring to it in this research paper.

Works Cited

Chaudhuri, Asha Kuthari. *Contemporary Indian Writers in English: Mahesh Dattani*. New Delhi, India, Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd., 2008.

Das, Bijay Kumar. *Form and Meaning in Mahesh Dattani's Plays*. New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors (P) LTD, 2008.

Dattani, Mahesh. *Collected plays*. New Delhi, India, Penguin Books, 2000.

George, Miruna. "Constructing the Self and the Other: *Seven Steps Around the Fire* and *Bravely Fought the Queen*." *Mahesh Dattani's Plays: Critical Perspectives*. Ed. By Angelie Multani. New Delhi, India, Pencraft International, 2007.

Katju, Markandey. "The Role of Art, Literature and The Media". *Outlook The Magazine*, 10 February 2010, www.outlookindia.com/website/story/the-role-of-art-literature-and-the-media/283732, accessed on 12 March 2020.

Mee, Erin B. "A Note on the Play". *Collected Plays*. Mahesh Dattani. New Delhi, India, Penguin Books, 2000.

Mohan, Narendra. "Protest and Literature". *Indian Literature*, Volume 18, No.1, (January – March 1975). India, Sahitya Akademi, 1975, www.jstor.org/stable/23333844, accessed on 16 March 2020.

Woodruff, Paul. *The Necessity of Theater: The Art of Watching and Being Watched*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2008.

Archana A Gupta

Assistant Professor

Smt. Binzani Mahila Mahavidyalaya

Nagpur.

A Critical Analysis of Selected Caribbean Short Stories: A Saga of Feminine Protest

Renuka L. Roy

Abstract

Caribbean literature is one of the major constituents of post-colonial studies. The female Caribbean writers have made their presence felt through variety of literary creations. They succeeded in compensating their long absence from the arena of Caribbean literature by narrating their own stories of migration, exile and alienation etc. They have eloquently voiced their own quest for identity and negotiated a literary space for themselves through their literary works. The literature of the Caribbean island is resplendent with multiple themes of subjugation, alienation and exile etc. that offers fine glimpse of a mosaic multiplicity of the Caribbean land and its culture. The present paper aims at studying the theme of protest as reflected in works of the selected Caribbean female authors' short stories. The paper proposes to explore the multiple shades of protest exhibited by the characters in these stories and makes an attempt to understand the socio-historic and political undercurrents, the dormant ideals and ideologies that provoke them for the protest. In the present paper, it is proposed to understand the traditional roles of indentured women, history of slavery, and exploitation during colonial period. Their protest depicted through rich narratives in Caribbean oral tales, folklores, myths and other narrative forms.

Keywords: Caribbean feminine, exile, slavery, subjugation, protest.

Literature is the product of the dominant culture of the respective society. It mirrors the social, economical and political power bases of a particular society in the given period. The critical inquiry into the cultural phenomenon of a particular society can provide the insight into the literature of that place. It helps the readers to analyze as to how the incidents leave their mark on the literature of that particular era. The Caribbean literature is one of the major constituents of post-colonial studies. A close analysis of this literature throws some light on the interrelation between the islands of West Indies and the continents like Europe, Africa, America and Indian subcontinent from fifteenth century till the present time. The famous Caribbean islands like Cuba, Trinidad, Tobago, Guiana, Puerto Rico, Jamaica were the hot beds of sugar plantation where French, Dutch and English colonizers established their sugar estates and flourished during late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. These European sugar estate owners needed cheap and industrious agricultural workers, labourers for their sugar farms and industries; as well as for the domestic works. For this purpose they imported cheap workforce from impoverished states of India like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, who were later termed as Indo-Caribbean populace in the island. The labourers from India crossed the ocean through trans-Atlantic journey and braved '*Kala Pani*', the term was used by famous Indo-Caribbean scholar Brinda Mehta in her book *Diasporic (Dis)locations: Indo-Caribbean Women Writers Negotiate the Kala Pani* (4). A large number of black African slaves were deported to the West Indies islands through the middle passage. Labourers from other ethnic groups Chinese, Mulatto, Jewish etc. also established themselves in these islands. These labourers were engaged as slaves in the plantation farms, sugar factories or in the households of the colonizers. They carried with themselves the social, ethnic and cultural nuances of their lands and tried to find roots in this new establishment. Eventually, the cultural and racial multiplicity in the island for more than two centuries have resulted in worst possible racial and

cultural conflicts, segregation based on gender and class, poverty and squalor in the barracks of these indentured farm workers, social stratification and class conflict among the white overseers and the black slaves, cultural hybridity and creolization etc. The literature of the Caribbean island is resplendent with such multiple themes and offers fine glimpse of a mosaic multiplicity of the Caribbean land and its culture.

The famous Caribbean authors like V.S.Naipaul, Olive Senior, Sam Selvon, Shiva Naipaul and many other West Indian writers have beautifully handled the issues like indentureship, exile, social stratification and cultural estrangement etc. through their writing in the backdrop of a cross-cultural Caribbean milieu. Earlier the female writers from Caribbean society could hardly secure a space for themselves in the literary arena of West Indies. The saga of women's exploitation, their double subjugation and exile found faintest expressions in the writings of the male authored texts. Ramabai Espinet, a famous Indo-Caribbean feminist thinker and writer calls it, "the phenomenon of invisibility (116)". In her article, she directly holds the male authors responsible for their strategy of skeletal representation of women in their narratives which makes it impossible to give more wholesome and plausible depiction of Caribbean feminine. The tales of Caribbean feminine later found a genuine expression at the hands of writers like Jane Shinebourne, Ramabai Espinet, Jean Rhys, Olga Nolla, Sony Ladoo etc. These writers openly narrated the tales of their multiple subjugations, cultural contestations and the ultimate conquests through their poetries, novels and short stories etc. The Caribbean feminine who were, hitherto, inarticulate as they could hardly find a ground for self-exploration till the mid 20th century. The repressive social and familiar structure in the island, in addition to, lack of support and validation from family members, feeling of insecurity and self-censorship had hindered them from writing freely about their experiences of *cooliehood*, creolization, sexual exploitation and religious bigotry in the island. In the latter half of twentieth century, the female Caribbean writers have profusely written about their

status in this land. They emerged as the trail blazers in the history of post-colonial literature and openly recorded their protest against the canonical literature in general and Caribbean male literature in particular. The present paper aims at studying the theme of protest as reflected in works of the selected Caribbean female authors' short stories. The paper proposes to explore the multiple shades of protest exhibited by the characters in these stories and makes an attempt to understand the socio-historic and political undercurrents, the dormant ideals and ideologies that provoke them for protest.

The Caribbean female writers have presented a panorama of insight and vision through their literary works. They earned their perspective through the experiences as well as observations of the lives of women in the Caribbean land of exile. The context of their writing has a broadening link which is capable of connecting the works of these writers with their counterparts in cultures around the world. In the present paper, it is proposed to understand the traditional roles of indentured women, history of slavery, exploitation during colonial period and their protest depicted through rich narratives in Caribbean oral tales, folklores, myths and other narrative forms etc. The women of Caribbean land are always considered as the preservers and purveyors of their culture all around the world. They have proved themselves as the authentic chroniclers of civilization; opening windows to the world to look into the lives of Caribbean people unfurled in their rich literary works. As Trinha Minha-ha rightly says, "The world's earliest archives and libraries were the memories of women." (Minha, 121)

Lelawatee Manoo Rahming, a Trinidad born female Caribbean writer weaves yarns of wonderful folk tales through her writing. In her works, she explores the issues like gender, sexual orientation, abuse, Indo-Caribbean culture and spirituality etc. Her folk tale 'Naga' gives an account of child abuse in the barrack of Indian indentured worker. Naga is a nine years old daughter of a migrated Indian labourer who has his temporary settlement in the

barrack. Naga was forced to surrender to brutal erotic force of an elderly man called 'Slim'. Her parents were compelled to hand over Naga to this man owing to their own incapacity to pay off a petty amount of debt. Night after nights, Naga is brutally beaten and raped by this man, till one night she realizes that she can transform herself into a serpent. Naga avenges the wrong done to her by transforming into a snake, a real *naga*, and kills the man by wrapping him in her strong coil. In the story, Naga's mysterious transformation into a real snake has a strong cultural connotation. The protagonist in the story is born in Caribbean island of Trinidad, yet her parents name her 'Naga', this clearly shows the ethnic believes of the indentured labourers in their native deities. Referring to the cultural translatability in the writings of diasporic women writers, Christine Vogt-William states in her article "Of Serpents and Swastikas—Transcultural Interrogations in Two Poems by Indian Women Writers of the Diaspora" She discusses that the diasporic female writers consider Indian culture as fertile ground for borrowing their pool of cultural resources which they can access in their creative works. She gives a wonderful clarification of the term 'Naga' and talks about its literary significance in texts writers.

In India, the term is used to describe any image of a mythical female who is sheltered or wrapped in the coils of serpents. Indian mythology tells of the serpent goddess Kadru, who gave birth to many *naga* and *nagini*. These guarded the great treasures of wealth and books of secret knowledge which they dispensed to the deserving. Thus the figure of Nagini is also seen as a powerful guardian of knowledge, wisdom, and eternal life. (149)

Similarly, in the above story, Lelawatee Manoo's seems to have used the symbolic image of 'Naga' in order to actualize the act of protest and revenge for the young and helpless girl. Naga as a guardian spirit of eternal life and Indian deity helps the girl in her mysterious transformation and puts an end to her persistent sexual harassment by avenging the abuser.

Ramabai Espinet, a famous feminist thinker and writer in her overtly dramatic short story 'Barred: Trinidad 1987' links rum and cane with desperate economic condition of the sugar estate workers. The story consists of five short narratives linked together with pivotal theme of memory and survival. In the first part of the story, the narrator recollects muddled experiences of arrival to the plantation island after the Trans-Atlantic journey. She narrates, '...a fantasy of being locked out and thrown absolutely upon my own primary resources. I remember standing above the Hasting Bridge in Vancouver' (181). A constant anxiety of being looted, raped and disowned signifies a deep seated anxiety of a dis-housed individual which is aptly expressed in the following lines, "...in between waiting and his force entry, I might die before the night is out of nerve-racking loneliness and anguish" (Espinet, 81). The subsequent part of the story describes a typical situation in the barrack of indentured farm workers. The protagonist's abusive husband in the story is a prototype of 'the abused turned abuser' He is an illiterate farm labourer whose ancestors had come to this land from India. He works in the cane field on very meager wages; a large portion of his earning is spent on purchasing rum. He beats his wife to give vent to his pent up frustration. One night, the wife chops her abusive husband with a cutlass. Later, she calls her brother-in-law, both of them witness that the man is dead.

In the third part of the narrative, the narrator recalls 'the crossing' (referring to trans-Atlantic journey) which as she rightly observes, "... has not been a happy arrival" (83). There is a vivid description of burning of sugar-cane farm. Espinet writes: "All around us the cane fires are burning-rising and falling, smoke and soot. Nothing on earth has the live sugar smell of a burning cane. And when the cane-sugar boils in the vats the smell is like all the holidays rolled into one fragrant ball-amber and crystalline on the outside and full of honeyed liquid in the centre." (83). Here, the cane-field burning has a strong symbolic meaning. In Jan Shinebourne's *The Last English Plantation*, Sokedoe sets fire to the largest cane field and Johnson's house as an act of vengeance

against Johnson. He emblematically inscribes his resistance for sexual harassment of his fiancée by Johnson. In this context, Veronique Bragard points out: “The cane field becomes a place of rebellion, it’s firing the first expression of anger and post-colonial re-appropriation of space by ordinary workers who becomes in Shinebourne’s fiction the true maker’s of history” (Bragard 175).

The fourth part of the story describes that the lady married to a man called Dass. Her husband earns livelihood by seeking jobs in a number of small companies. He, too, spends a large portion of his earning on rum and gambling. One day, she is determined to find an escape from poverty by selling her husband’s ‘Anchor’ brand cigarettes. Shalini Puri discusses the stereotypical position of indentured labourers suggested through the ‘Anchor’ brand of cigarette. “Significantly, the cigarettes are the local Trinidadian brand ‘Anchor’, a word which suggests how they serve to locate her or root her in the landscape. It is also a word that evokes the voyage across the seas of the Indian indentured labourers and signals that her ship can now come to rest” (Puri 120). The last portion of the narrative ends on a note of reconciliation, when she accepts her situation in the new land and starts her entrepreneur’s venture. She is content to sell cigarettes and sweet candies to her customers and feels completely secured with her family. The following lines at the end of the story are extremely poignant:

Outside now, the rain is pouring. Rain on a galvanized iron roof is the sweetest sound on earth. And when you lie with someone under the sheets in a safe bed while rain pelts down on the roof above, there is no other experience on earth like that. A crystal clear morning after the rain-dewfall, rainfall, footfalls of love. It is Sunday morning. I have lived through the long night. (Espinete, 85)

Jean Rhys is a Dominican author. Her father was a Welsh doctor and her mother, a creole woman in the Caribbean. Her stories are usually derived from the cultural background of Caribbean where she spent her formative years. As a child, she grew

up witnessing a cultural tension that arose due to conflicting Western and Caribbean values in her surroundings. She herself experienced problem of conflicting identity 'due to her position as a colonial or half-white and half coloured person.' In her story, 'The Day They Burned the Books', we come across the character of a little British boy named Eddie. He holds a unique position in his Caribbean residence. He is a son of a well-bred British man Mr. Sawyer and an educated coloured mother. Mr. Sawyer loathes the Caribbean land and detests his wife for her nigger origin. They share a tensed and hateful relationship. Mr. Sawyer hoards and treasures English and French classics in his rich library. For him, this library is an emblematic of his association and bonding with his land of origin in England. Mrs. Sawyer hates these books, as she finds her husband completely absorbed in them. Eddie who is, of course, torn between two distinct ideologies shows his inclination towards Caribbean way of life. At the beginning, he openly proclaims, "I don't like strawberries.' He said on one occasion. 'You don't like strawberries?' 'No. and I don't like daffodils either..." (Rhys 240). Surprisingly, Eddie drifts towards British cultural ideology and gravitates towards Mr. Sawyer's library and his books, after Mr. Sawyer's sudden death. Mrs. Sawyer turns extremely intolerant towards Eddie's shifting loyalty. She senses a threat of infiltration of British cultural ideology in her Caribbean household. She takes the help of Mildred, her black servant and sets the books in Mr. Sawyer's library on fire. Her act of burning the British and French classics is a clear act of defiance on her part. The burning of the books is a symbolic signal of emancipation from the age-old servitude.

Eddie doesn't easily surrenders before his mother's rebellious act. He openly defies her for setting the books on fire. Eddie is a representative of white imperial rule in the land which is on the verge of extinct. Eddie identifies himself with his father, hence the quote: "He was white as a ghost in his sailor's suit, a blue white even in the setting sun, and his father's sneer was clamped on his face." (p.241) At the end, Eddie manages to escape the fire with a

book on his person title 'Kim' and his friend elopes with a French book named 'Fort Comme La Mort'.

Thus, through such and many more varieties of literary creations, the Caribbean female writers have made their presence felt. They succeeded in compensating their absence from the arena of Caribbean literature by narrating their own stories of migration, exile and alienation etc. They have eloquently voiced their own quest for identity and negotiated a literary space for themselves. Writers like Rosarie Ferre, Jamaica Kincaid, Ramabai Espinet, Lakshmi Persaud wrote profusely about the third world issues like race, power, colonialism etc. and expressed their defiance against the age old subjugation of women during the colonial period. They also claimed distinctive position for themselves in the socio-political and economical activities of the island. Espinet's protagonist in "Barred: Trinidad 1987" starts her own entrepreneur's enterprise. She decides to take part in the economic activity of the island; this clearly expresses a woman's protest against her subordinate position. She doesn't care to be at a receiving end any more. Mrs. Sawyer's violent act of setting her husband's library on fire signifies her intolerance against any kind of infiltration of Western ideology in her Caribbean household. She wishes to harbour her own creole values that has been denied to her for a long duration and she is resolute in her determination to keep away the tainted colonial influence from her family. The protagonist in Naga, too, seeks shelter in the mythical incarnation of 'Naga' i.e. snake God. She puts an end to her misery. Thus, the saga of protest by the Caribbean literary artists has paved the way for greater emancipation and promises to scale newer heights in literary sphere.

Works Cited

Bragard, Veronique. *Transoceanic Dialogues: Coolitude in Caribbean and Indian Ocean Literature*. Brussels, Belgium: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2008.

- Espinet, Ramabai. "Barred Trinidad:1987." *Green Cane and Juicy Flotsam: Short Stories by Caribbean Women*. Ed. Carmen C.Esteves and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebirt. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991.
- Espinet, Ramabai. "The Invisible Woman in West Indian Fiction." *World Literature Written in English* 29.02 (1989):
- Mehta, Brinda. *Diasporic Dislocation: Indo-Caribbean Women Writers Negotiate the Kala Pani*. Jamaica: West Indies University Press, 2004.
- Puri, Shalini. "Race, Rape, and Representation: Indo-Caribbean Women and Cultural Nationalism." *Cultural Critique* 36 (Spring 1997):
- Rhys, Jean. "The Day They Burned the Books." *The Routledge Reader in the Caribbean Literature*. Ed. Sarah Lawson Alison Donnell. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Riederer, Instructor. "Owlcation." 13 May 2018. The Day They Burned the Books: Values, Identity, and Otherness. 05 April 2020 <<https://owlcation.com/humanities/The-Day-They-Burned-the-Books-Values-Identity-and-Otherness>>.
- T.Minha-ha, Trin. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- "Of Serpents and Swastikas." Vogt-William, Christine. *Translation of Cultures*. Ed. Rudiger Conrad Gross Petra Wittke. Amsterdam -New York: Rodopi, 2009.

Dr. Renuka L. Roy
S.K.Porwal College, Kamptee.

Distress and Protest in the Select Dalit Women Autobiographies: A Brief Study

G. R. Hashmi

Abstract

The arrival of Dalit literary criticism and Dalit literature located within the Ambedkarite movement was accompanied by a new founded Dalit political identity and social consciousness. Within Dalit literature, autobiography is a literary and cultural expression of internal caste based discrimination. Dalit women's autobiographies emerge as site of difference through their articulation of caste based inequalities and showcase the resistance, distress agony and pain they experienced down the ages being doubly marginalized. This paper will focus on autobiographies by Kausalya Baisantri's *Dohra Abhishap (Double Curse)* (1999), Urmila Pawar's *Aaydan (The weave of my life)* (2007) and Baby Tai Kamble's *Jina Amucha (The Prison we broke)* (2008). Their stories bring out their agonizing experiences and can be read as the tales of protest too.

Keywords: Dalit, caste system, discrimination, subjugation, patriarchy, distress, protest etc.

The lives of autobiographers are elaborate in nature. This comes in line with its own perils. They open their hearts and speak their minds in order to be understood by the readers. However, in return readers counter the self-assertion of the writer with their own. An autobiography is a kind of writing which, compared to any other genre, and tries to narrow down the distance between the

writer and the reader. It is a record of the past in its most transparent form. Historically, the portrayal of Dalits in literature, since time immemorial, has been full of distortion and contradictions. Dalits are often shown as vile and filthy whose only use in the society is for menial purposes. The picture is often repulsive, distorted and highly maligned. Therefore, Dalit writers have taken up the responsibility to put their pains and problems in words and share the shameful and inhuman experiences they put up with. In due course of time, powerful autobiographies emerged by Dalit women writers, who showcased their agonies and protests from the feminist point of view.

Kaushalya Baisantri's *Dohra Abhishaap* (A Double Curse) was published in 2002. She is from Maharashtra, an activist of the Ambedkar movement and a founder member of the Bhartiya Mahila Jagruti Parishad. Baisantri's autobiography revolves around the community she was living in. There are various references to her everyday activities and the problems she faced both within and outside the community. Though the caste bias is attacked, that is not the prime focus of this autobiography. The focus is on the social aspect of the Dalits, their culture and prevalent day to day practices. Baisantri's usage of "we" instead of "I" in her autobiography shows the way the individual here is speaking for the community and hence there is a collective consciousness. Dalit autobiographies are generally based in rural India where the authors spent the early part of their lives and first experienced discrimination based on caste. Subsequently there is a shift to the urban landscape where the discrimination is comparatively less and it is often disguised and not blatant. Untouchability and class hierarchization as well as bias did exist in society but under the veneer of pseudo-equality. The focus is on the locality, the environs, family, childhood, education and on the looming presence of casteism. The narration is not merely about herself but also about her mother and grandmother (*aaji*). She talks about the ordeal meted out to Dalit women at home be it physical, mental or psychological. So the narrative form is that

of agitation against not only upper caste men but also, and more importantly, against men of their own community. The picture which emerges from Baisantri's autobiography is that of Dalit women under double oppression as both women and Dalits. Her narrative abounds in instances of domestic abuse. She talks of the violent beatings that her *aaji* received at the hands of her husband almost every other day. Baisantri is quite often absent from her own narrative when she talks about other people. While the story is ostensibly about her she locates it in the familial context. Her larger concern is shedding light on her mother's struggles in bringing them up and ensuring that they got educated. In a way she traces the difficulties that different generations of women in her family faced. She talks about her grandmother and the problems she had to cope with in bringing up the author's mother. The narrative is not merely about a personal struggle but instead it is about a struggle of three generations which she has been a witness to. She places herself and her education within a Dalit context. But being a woman does not mean an inclusion of the narratives of her female siblings and an exclusion of the male. Her father's life and travails are also detailed. Her description of her childhood, however, focuses on the pains that her *aaji* and mother had to undergo to help her grow up, give her an education, to earn money of their own and to live their lives on their own terms and teach the daughters/granddaughters to follow in their wake.

Details about various social customs like widow remarriages, eating pork, and the everyday struggle of the community around the author help in generating a visual image of an entire community. The contrasts in emotions in the two kinds of writing are equally important to determine their general tenor. Baisantri's narrative does talk about caste based discrimination and inequalities but her agenda is to highlight the plight of many other struggling Dalit women like her. Baisantri's autobiography with its narration of women across three different generations questions the double standards in society. The demand is to bring the female

voice back to the narrative and look for ways for her empowerment. These women were either represented within the patriarchal set up or occupied secondary or no position at all. The women were commodified and exploited as they were considered not to be at par with men; the lack of representation despite a general sense of injustice harbours a despondent narration. While domestic abuse, be it mental, physical, psychological or verbal, was finally recognized there is still a lack of fair representation of Dalit women.

Urmila Pawar is a literary personality, known for her short story writings in Marathi literature. She was born and brought up in Konkan region of Maharashtra state. Today, she is known as a feminist writer and leader of Women's lib movement. Her memoir 'Aaydan', which was published in the year 2003 and was translated by Dr. Maya Pandit as *The Weave of my life: A Dalit woman's Memoir*. Weaving happens to be the central metaphor of the present memoir, Weaving of bamboo baskets, the main profession of the protagonist's mother, indicate their low caste as well as their dire economic poverty. Pawar has referred about death of her father, when she was in third standard. Pawar has specifically thanks her teacher Diwalker who had taught her good manners and importance of cleanliness.

Pawar has given very minute details of oppression and exploitations of girl child and women. The community followed the blind faith and sought unethical and inexperience medical assistance. She has given narration of wife beating incidents at the home front as well as at the community level. The narration of pathetic incident of beating a pregnant woman only based on blind faith is a touchy as well as alarming for the generations to follow. Urmila remembers her first salary she has received after her marriage and it indicates her happiness at one point but at the same time, she was aware that she has to give it to Harishchandra her husband. Pawar shows the distinction of male female positions and titles awarded to them. She says when any man is promoted he would become a 'Bhaushaeb' or 'Raosaheb' but a woman officer will

remained only a 'Bai' without the title of Sahib.

Pawar has highlighted the other important issue of male child through the example of her own brother Sahu. She has also narrated another incident of daughter's property rights, when all the sisters were together for the Sahu's son is naming ceremony and with natural expectations; they have fight with the brother. However, her mother scolded the daughters that why should they expect something from the brother since they are well versed and happily settled. It means ones married the daughters have no natural right to obtain any material advantage from their parents.

Pawar has also narrated the story of Jyoti who has attempted to steal other woman's child for the cause male child craze of her husband. When she refers to her Autobiography writing, she constantly remembers her mother and her attempts to weave the basket. Urmila looked upon her writing as an escape to forget the pain of lost son and so there was no connectivity of analysis of her writing but to forget the sad incident and involve her in write-ups. She has narrated number of incidents of wife beating in the slum area opposite to her house and that has given her conscience deep and impact making appeal to help such helpless women for their better life and to provide them some relief.

'The Weave of My life' written in a realistic fictional mode, it is characterized by an honest, frank, and bold articulation of a Dalit woman's experiences and may easily be compared with Afro-American women's narrative. The English translation by Maya Pandit is quite successful in bringing out the ethnic flavor of the Marathi original.

Baby Kamble, the most influential dalit activist and an outstanding writer, was born in a relatively comfortable working class family. Her maternal grandfather had worked as butlers for British officers and her father was a labour contractor. Because of the shifting job of her father she and her mother had to live with her maternal grandparents at Veergaon, in Purandar tehsil. She spent

her childhood in a quite comfortable family but she had to face and experience the cruelties of caste tyranny and gender discrimination. She objectively observed the malevolence of the caste tyranny which put millions of low castes in poverty, hunger, untouchability, insults. She encapsulated the agonies of her community in general and dalit women in particular in her autobiography *The Prisons we Broke*. In this epoch-making autobiography she presents the subtle actualities in the lives of dalit women and the innumerable assaults caused by the biased attitudes of men and the malevolent caste system. This chapter aims to examine the intersections of the devastating effects of evil of caste tyranny and gender politics on dalit women in the post independence era. It also seeks a critical investigation of the struggle of the low castes in general and low caste women in particular to reach to the central locus of all the disciplines of society.

The Prisons We Broke is a realistic document of Dalit women's tattered life which was hardly presented in mainstream literature before its publication. Baby Kamble brings to the forefront the experimental worlds and discursive practices derived from the malevolent caste system and the patriarchal social order in the Indian society. Baby Kamble's writing drastically reflects her feminist sensibilities as she gives vivid description of her birth and the valued status of male child in her family. She not only reflects the socio-economic condition of the dalit community but also records the societal and in-house subjugation of dalit women. She presents the imposition of household restrictions and its significance in the prestige of the family. Baby Kamble sheds light on the notion of women subjugation and its association with the feudal pride of the family. Baby Kamble throws light on the peculiarities of dalit's life with an objective point of view. The Indian caste system had left dalits illiterate. Due to lack of education, dalits remained ignorant. Their illiteracy and ignorance made them believe in superstitions, false beliefs, and wicked religious practices. The caste stratification was strictly based on the power relations and unfortunately all power was controlled by the high castes. It is reflected in every act of

the high castes. During the buffalo fair, the preparations were being made by the Mahars and Mangs but the honour of sacrificing buffalo was given to the high caste Patil and filthy job of skinning the buffalo was for the Mahars.

Baby Kamble exposes the politics of patriarchal stratification and presents how it contributes in trifling the life of Indian women in general and dalit women in particular. She provides dalit feminist critique of patriarchy by giving anecdotes of low castes women's physical and psychological sufferings. The appalling notion of the unexpressed miseries of Mahar women have been voiced by Baby Kamble with suitable examples from their dark lives. The absence of education, lack of medical facilities, regular scarcity of food, starvation during pregnancy, unskilled midwives and the serious injuries caused during pregnancy, unhygienic cleaning of new born baby with spit and saliva etc - all these details sufficiently convey the intensity of the multifaceted humiliation and sufferings of dalit women.

Baby Kamble underlines the devastating effect of evil social practices like Child Marriage, Vagya-Murli tradition, superstitions and caste based discrimination and asserts the urgent need for dismantling the artificial stratification of people based on caste and gender inequality. It records the earnest yearnings of the long exploited masses to create an egalitarian society.

Baby Kamble's autobiography cannot be confined to a particular notion of thought. It's a multidimensional text which explores entirely un-viewed sides of diversely subalternized dalit men and women's lives. On the one hand, it presents the historical overview of the multifaceted exploitation of the low castes and on the hand it serves as an eye opener for the contemporary progressed dalits to memorialize the painstaking efforts of Babasaheb Ambedkar and live for the cause of Ambedkarite mission.

Dalit women writers wrote their autobiographies in a more assertive and rebellious manner. They are concerned with the

pathetic condition of the Dalits. They help fellow Dalits to be alert and struggle for their rights, which are denied to them by the so called upper castes. As memories, Dalit autobiographies are the sources of Dalits social reality in contemporary India. In their autobiographies, Baisantri, Pawar and Kamble expressed how Dalit women experienced subjugation from their own community as well as the larger society. In the Process of protesting the age old oppression, they assert themselves and their lives following with an endeavour to open up their inner world to the readers. The highest purpose of Dalit writings is not beauty of craft, but authenticity of experience and protest.

Works Cited

- Baisantri, Kaushalya. *Dohra Abhishap (Double Curse)*. Delhi: Parmeshwari Prakashan. 1999. Print
- Pawar Urmila-*Aaydan, (The weave of my life)* 2008 Print
- Kamble Baby Tai-*Jina Amucha (The prison we broke)* (2008) Print
- Rege, Sharmila. *Writing caste/writing gender reading Dalit women's Testimonies*. New Delhi : Zubaan, 2008 Print
- Kumar, Raj. *Dalit personal narratives*. Hyderabad: Orient Black Swan Pvt. Ltd, 2010. Print
- Mehra, Parmod Kumar. *Literature and Social Change: Emerging Perspectives in Dalit Literature*. Kalpaz Publication. Delhi 2015. Print.
- Singh, Bijender. *Dalit women's autobiographies: A critical appraisal*. Kalpaz publication, 2016 Print.

Dr. G. R. Hashmi

Assistant Professor of English
S. K. Porwal College, Kamptee.

Unifying Marginalised Voices Through Literature of Protest

Nandita Mane

Abstract

The role of Literature as one of the powerful medium in bringing about a social change is undeniable. It is an effective tool for propagation of ideas. Poetry as a medium is equally powerful in mirroring social concerns. Poems encapsulate the vision of poets. Maya Angelou's poems are a good specimen of protest literature as they address the issue of racism, oppression and subjugation of black people. Angelou's Poem *Caged Bird* published in 1983 poetry collection *Shaker, Why Don't You Sing?* protests against Racial Discrimination and Oppression of the African American Community at the hands of the White Americans. *This paper explores how the poem is a celebration of the African American Resilience in the face of oppression and suppression and how such protest literature can unite all the marginalised voices to make a unified whole.*

Keywords: Freedom, Captivity, Consciousness, Resilience

The role of Literature as one of the powerful medium in bringing about a social change is undeniable. It is an effective tool for propagation of ideas. Stauffer describes Literature as a Catalyst, Guide or Mirror of Social Change. (Steven Web) Writers and authors across globe have used their writings to raise social consciousness among the masses. They have picked up issues and

interwoven it with a story, plot or laced it in poetic notes. Poetry is equally powerful in mirroring social concerns as they encapsulate the vision of poets.

Pithy and powerful, poetry is a popular art form at protests and rallies. From the civil rights and women's liberation movements to Black Lives Matter, poetry is commanding enough to gather crowds in a city square and compact enough to demand attention on social media. Speaking truth to power remains a crucial role of the poet in the face of political and media rhetoric designed to obscure, manipulate, or worse. (Poetry Foundation Web)

Maya Angelou, the American poet, Singer, memoirist and civil rights activist; is a prolific and widely read poet. Her poems are a good specimen of protest literature as they address the issue of racism, oppression and subjugation of black people. Her poems are a protest against the painful anguish suffered by the blacks.

Indeed, Angelou's poetry can also be traced to African-American oral traditions like slave and work songs, especially in her use of personal narrative and emphasis on individual responses to hardship, oppression and loss. In addition to examining individual experience, Angelou's poems often respond to matters like race and sex on a larger social and psychological scale. (Poetry Foundation, Angelou, Web)

Angelou's Poem *Caged Bird* published in 1983 poetry collection *Shaker, Why Don't You Sing?* protests against Racial Discrimination and oppression of the African American Community at the hands of the white Americans. *The poem is a celebration of the African American Resilience in the face of oppression and suppression. It protests against the cruelty inflicted by the privileged class on the less fortunate strata of the society.*

The poem describes the opposing experiences between two birds: one bird is able to live in nature as it pleases, while a different caged bird suffers in captivity. Due to its profound

suffering, the caged bird sings, both to cope with its circumstances and to express its own longing for freedom. Using the extended metaphor of the two birds, Angelou paints a critical portrait of oppression in which she illuminates the privilege and entitlement of the unoppressed, and conveys the simultaneous experience of suffering and emotional resilience. In particular, the poem's extended metaphor can be seen as portraying the experience of being a member of the African American community.

(Lauren, Litcharts. Web)

By using the metaphor of the two birds; one that is free and the other that is captive; the poem portrays two opposing ideas: Freedom and Captivity. It poignantly juxtaposes the situation of the two birds in differing environment. Here the caged bird represents the African American community who were bound by the rules and laws dictated by the people of the white society. The people in captivity longed for freedom, which has been bestowed upon every living being on their birth. This poem protested against those privileged class who while enjoyed freedom themselves, denied it to the other group.

The free bird in the poem represents the White Americans. The poem shows how the free bird leaps and floats and roams freely in the sky daring to claim the sky its own. The bird does not have to share the sky with anyone. It has always lived a life of complete authority having dominion over its surrounding. The bird is oblivious to the pain and suffering of the ones in captivity. It is the sole monarch of all that it sees.

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

(Angelou 1-7)

The free bird thinks about another breeze and the trade wings. Its movements are unrestricted and therefore names the sky his own. It thinks of the things that are a source of delight for him. It thinks of the fat worms, cool breeze and a sky that is his own. It leads a carefree life and indulges in matters of personal delight.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn
and he names the sky his own
(Angelou 23-26)

On the other hand the caged bird can barely see the world outside through its bars that bind it. In vain it rages and grieves inside the cage. His wings are clipped and his feet are tied, but still with his throat he sings.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.
(Angelou 8-14)

It sings with a fearful trill of unknown things which it has never experienced but still longs for it. It has never known freedom but yearns for it. Though the caged bird is born in misery and captivity, it does not want to end up being there. Therefore, it sings loudly. Through his loud voice it can be heard on the distant hill because it sings of freedom.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill

for the caged bird
sings of freedom.
(Angelou 15-22)

When the free bird roams freely in the sky thinking of delightful things, the caged bird stands on the grave of his own dreams. His own shadow shouts an anguished cry of mercy.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.
(Angelou 27-30)

This poem is not merely a grim and bleak poem. Though the poem is born from deep pain of the bird, it still sings of hopes of freedom. It gives forth a positive message of resilience. It inspires us to raise our voices even in hopeless situations. The caged bird had its wings clipped and feet tied and was in a cage with no hope in sight, still it did not lament on its condition. Instead of indulging in self pity, it made use of available resources. Its mouth was not closed. Hence, it sang with its throat loud and clear. Its voice reached the distant hill. By using the extended metaphor of the caged bird, the poet shows this resilience in the African American Community which enabled them to endure the sufferings and emerge triumphantly defeating all the fetters of bondage. Though they have suffered tremendously still they did not bow down to the cruel pressures of their opponents. They kept struggling to achieve their rights until they finally did.

Though the poem refers to the sufferings of the African-American slavery, the poem has a universal appeal. The American ideals of freedom, liberty and equality are universal. The sufferings and anguish portrayed in this poetic piece represents the anguished voices of all the marginalised oppressed groups who have been suffering for long. Just as the caged bird, in spite of its clipped wing and tied feet sang with its throat, the oppressed and marginalised people need to voice out their anguish so as to be heard by the world

at large. Such voices when reached to the masses raise the social consciousness of the society.

Such poems call out and talk back to the inhumane forces that threaten from above. They expose grim truths, raise consciousness, and build united fronts. Some insist, as Langston Hughes writes, "That all these walls oppression builds / Will have to go!" Others seek ways to actively "make peace," as Denise Levertov implores, suggesting that "each act of living" might cultivate collective resistance. (Poetry Foundation Web)

The caged bird was heard on the distant hill because it sang of freedom. Freedom is a universal gift which knows no boundary of class, colour, race, religion, language etc. It is a power or right to think, act or speak as an individual wants. The bird was conscious of its pitiable plight and cried out loud. An anguished voice of one oppressed group will find an echo in another marginalised group. It will always be heard far and wide. This will bring a collective self-awareness leading to the emergence of new consciousness from the experience of collectively shared oppression. Such protest literature stimulates people to work towards common goal. Therefore, protest literature should never be seen in light of its country of origin. It should be only viewed as literature of humanity. This will unify all marginalised voices to fight under the banner of humanism.

Works Cited:

Steven Yi's Portfolio. All About Protest. https://bu.digication.com/syimport/What_Is_Protest_Literature. Accessed 7 April 2020.

Poetry Foundation. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101581/poems-of-protest-resistance-and-empowerment>. Accessed 7 April 2020.

Poetry Foundation. Maya Angelou. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/maya-angelou>. Accessed 7 April 2020.

Yarnall, Lauren. "Caged Bird." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 1 Aug 2019. Web. 7 Apr 2020. <https://www.litcharts.com/poetry/maya-angelou/caged-bird>. Accessed 7 April 2020.

Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48989/caged-bird>. Accessed 7 April 2020. *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou* (Random House Inc., 1994)

PoetryFoundation.<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101581/poems-of-protest-resistance-and-empowerment>. Accessed 7 April 2020.

Dr. Nandita Mane

Assistant Professor
Matru Sewa Sangh Institute of Social Work
Nagpur.

Dalit Short Stories: A True Picture of Protest

**Heena Kausar
Varsha V. Vaidya**

Abstract

The present paper tries to depict the elements of protest with reference to the selected short stories of Dalit literature. Marginalized groups in the world have a similar type of oppression but the titles are different as per the class and class divide. In India it was under the pretext of the caste system and in the western world it was under the name of Race. But the main source is inequality which led to insecurity, exploitation and injustice. Concepts like 'race' and 'caste' are not new but as old as the history of human civilization. There are some grounds on which they can be compared and contrasted. Dalit literature is marginalized literature-arising out of the 'literature of Untouchables'. The authenticity and liveliness of their expressions are captured throughout their writings. Pathetic condition, anger, shame, sorrow, oppression and indomitable hope are the trademarks of this marginalized people and their literature. This paper will focus on the revolutionary characters depicted in the selected short stories.

Keywords: Marginalized, Oppression, Race, Caste, exploitation, Injustice.

The society plays a significant role in suppressing the people within the structure, using the power of established social system.

As French philosopher Michel Foucault's definition of power/knowledge dialectic, only those people enjoy the freedom of a given societal structure, which got to be in the centre. It is at this context that education plays a vital role. It is only when some particular sects come to know about the existence of a different kind of power-knowledge structure in the universe, through education, that they begin to raise voice against the age long system. This same conscience makes a writer retort against the society. With the aid of education, he too comes to know about the transient existence of power. That is the main reason most of the philosophers and writers of the world were subjected to exclusion from their society during one time or other because of their mere exterminations from the environment. The Dalit writers have attempted to differ from other thinkers and writers in the sense that they wanted to be recognized with their exterminations.

In Waman Hoval's *The Storeyed House*, after the funeral of Bayaji, people returned hanging their heads. As they are upset to think that they have come to celebrate the housewarming ceremony but they have the misfortune to attend the funeral of the host of the ceremony. All the people are sitting in a bad mood in the *pandal* when Bayaji's eldest son comes out with three or four baskets, a spade, a pickaxe and a hoe. He outlines a square with the pickaxe and began to dig. He is digging, the second is gathering the earth with his spade and the others are lifting it away in baskets. The guests are in great amazement they even ask Bayaji's sons that they are in mourning so what they are doing. One of the sons replies that their father's soul cannot rest in peace unless they do this. Still the guests want to know what they are doing exactly. The eldest son of Bayaji replies:

"We're starting on a house, not one with a concealed first floor but a regular two-storeyed house."

Arjun Dangle's *Poisoned Bread* (p.184)

Bayaji's seven sons resume with determination the work of digging the foundation of a two-storeyed house. His sons are

included in the category of capable characters as they resumed the work of a two-storeyed house for fulfilling their father's wish after his death.

Another capable character is the narrator Mhadeva of *The Poisoned Bread* by Bandhumadhav who gets furious after Bapu Patil's remark on profaning religion and abandoning caste. He could take it no more. He feels his cheeks burning. But he quells his temper and, cutting Bapu Patil short in the middle of his fiery tirade, burst out:

"Patil, will you kindly tell me what you meant when you accused us for forgetting religion, abandoning our caste and of polluting the god? And if a religion can't tolerate one human being treating another simply as a human being, what's the use of such an inhumane religion? And if our mere touch pollutes the gods, why were the Mahars and Mangs created at all? And who, may I know, who indeed created them? And would you please tell me the name of the god whom the Mahars and Mangs can claim as their own?"

Arjun Dangle's *Poisoned Bread* (p.168)

His retort makes Bapu Patil wild because first of all he addressed him simply as 'Patil' whereas the rest of his clan calls him Anna or 'elder brother'. And the top of it a Mahar is answering him back. Mhadeva is upset with the ongoing practice of discrimination. He blames hereditary land-right system for discrimination. He thinks that they should abandon the land-right in the sense that they must stop begging under the pretext that they are getting their rightful share of corn. And instead of enslaving themselves to life-long labour in exchange for that right, they must free themselves from the land-bondage and learn to live independently, with a sense of pride. He also adds that Mahars have been misled by the false notion of land-right, taking it as a rightful favour to beg for bread as long as they live. Mahars forget all the while that the crumbs upper caste people give them make them their slaves.

Bama's short stories in *Harum-Scarum-Saar & other stories* survive the process wonderfully with her clear, incisive prose shining through. At once her short stories are subversive and mixture of joy and terrible sadness. For instance, in the story 'Annachi' the leader laugh with the labourer who shocks his landlord by referring to him as 'brother', while on the other hand in Rich Girl the readers get chilled by the compensation offered to a dead labourer's family by the hypocritical landlord. In Pongal Madasami sent his middle son Esakkimuthu to school. He passed the tenth and also studied to be a teacher. But no job came his way. For the last two years he had done whatever work he got on daily wages, wandering around looking for a steady job. The story expresses in a suggestive manner that dalits are not still aware of the fact that their slavery and helplessness endanger their very existence.

The character of Esakkimuthu is the epitome of protest as he is against the slavery of the landlords by his family. When his father asks him to pick up the collected things to the landlord, he replies:

"Why do we have to take all this to the landlord? If we made a curry with them, we would have a hearty meal for once at least."

Bama's Harum Scarum Saar (p.3)

Esakki is of a different view for his family that for a small measure of *pongal* and a towel worth just ten rupees, are we so wretched that we have to give them a bird worth seventy-eight rupees, a huge pumpkin, sugar-cane worth ten rupees, a whole bunch of bananas and four measures of rice. If we ourselves cooked and consumed all this, wouldn't it be enough for us for four or five days. He also asks his family members as they pay visit to the landlord during *pongal*, isn't it right that he should also pay them a visit with his family during Diwali or the New Year? Does he ever do that? And at the end of the story, Esakki's father Madasami gets convinced of his revolutionary views. Esakkimuthu dumps the

pongal in the feeding trough but the buffaloes and cattle, finding something strange in it, ignored the new stuff and drank only the water.

The characters from the above mentioned short stories share the same type of oppression with the revolt of being kept out of the legitimate boundaries of human society. Earlier Dalits were the silent sufferers. After getting education, they settled down in their life and raised their voice against injustice to get their human identity. Thus Dalit short stories are the true depiction of protest by their revolutionary characters.

Works Cited

- Abedi, Zakir. *Contemporary Dalit Literature: Quest for Dalit Liberation*. New Delhi: Arise Publishers & Distributors. 2010. Print
- Arthur, John. *Race, Equality and the Burdens of History*, New York: Cambridge University press 2007.
- Dangle, Arjun, ed. *Poisoned Bread*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2009. Print.
- Bama, N. Ravi Shanker. *Harum-Scarum Saar & Other Stories* Pub Women Unlimited (Kali) New Delhi 2006.

Heena Kausar

Research Scholar

RTM Nagpur University, Nagpur.

Dr. Varsha V. Vaidya

Research Guide

Associate Professor (Department of English)

Taywade College, Koradi, Nagpur.

Protest Against Gender Discrimination and Plight of Eunuchs in Mahesh Dattani's *Seven Steps Around the Fire*

**Reema Kharabe
Vandana V. Bhagdikar**

Abstract

Mahesh Dattani has hold the pen to stage the issues which are deemed as taboos, the issues which need to be recognized, understood, accepted and to be solved without prejudice and contempt. The cultural, religious and social structure of Indian society had devised a bias concept of power and dominance which has not only made the social structure feeble but also a suffocated one where the individuality of a person is altered and kept at margins. Eunuchs are the persons who live the lives of outcastes and are shunned of every opportunity of education, relationship or development in their life. The topic of third gender is not discussed and accepted in the society. The persons of third gender join their own community to live a life but there too they are abused, victimized and suppressed by the powerful authorities of the society. Through his ink, Mahesh Dattani interrogates and demands answers on the treatment received by Eunuchs. This paper will attempt to study the protest against gender discrimination and plights of Eunuchs in the play of Mahesh Dattani - *Seven Steps Around the Fire*.

Keywords: Prejudice, taboo, contempt, bias, suffocated, transgender, eunuchs, outcaste, margins, abused, victimized, identity crisis, suppression, interrogates.

Literature is a mirror to society and drama is an effective tool to mirror the society with its flaws bringing about the social changes. In the history of ancient civilization like Greece, England, Rome and India, 'Theatre' and 'Drama' has been an integral part and parcel of people's lives. It served as means to portray religious acts and evolved as an effective mean of portraying social, political, cultural diversities and at the same time criticizing prevalent customs and traditions emerging as a culture of protest theatre. It is the best literary type too as it directly connects with people through its audio-visual presentation, purging the emotions and bringing about the desired effect on the audiences. Dramatist Mahesh Dattani has picked up this literary genre to use it as a means to protest the social evils. Dattani boldly enters into the psyche of the audiences making them think and ponder over the critical situation of this world.

The Queer issues are considered as 'sensational' by Sangeeta Das, 'Invisible' by Erin B. Mee, but they are very much part of this society we live in. India is growing at a fast pace and it is time that the changes taking place in the societies are brought forward which is the aim of Dattani and he is doing it with all his might. His plays decode the queer relationships in Indian society, which is contemptuously looked upon. Dattani expects change in the society in matters of acceptance of queer relationships. The appeal of homosexuals and eunuchs have been heard with the recent amendments in the 377 section of the Indian penal code, which considers that, "Consensual sex between adults in a private space, which is not harmful to women or children, cannot be denied as it is a matter of individual choice. Section 377 results in discrimination and is violative of constitutional principles" (Times of India: 1 Web). But Dattani heard their plight much before the verdict. He is the first dramatist to mention the predicament of homosexuals and

eunuchs. He was criticized but also appreciated for his endeavor as Dattani says in his interview with Erin B. Mee, “most of the letters were from gay people who were extremely closeted... it was heartening to see that it evoked such a strong response, and people felt they could identify with these characters so strongly” (Mee: 158). Dattani’s plays *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Do the Needful*, and *Seven Steps Around the Fire* gave much needed attention to the plight of this marginalized community.

The themes in Dattani’s plays are mostly contemporary issues dealing with marginalized section of the society like women, homosexuals, eunuchs and children. The sensational issues like homosexuality, gender-violence, gender-discrimination, gender-inequality, childhood sexual abuse and religious intolerance are dealt with seriousness and deep analysis in the plays. The themes of Dattani’s plays break a fresh ground as the issues startle the Indian audience who are not accustomed to such presentation on the stage. The existentialist approach is revealed in his plays voicing the Queer- as the mute sufferer of the society, who are ignored of their presence and compelled to live in oblivion. Gays, lesbians, bisexuals and eunuchs are the very part and parcel of the society we live in and they too have all the rights to live with dignity. By depicting the predicament of their existence in his plays, Dattani makes us perceive their lives and understand their dilemma and then compel us to introspect our thought process.

Transgender or Eunuchs are world over but the position of Eunuchs in India is identified as a ‘Hijra’. They are typically distinguished with their attire, their bold voice, clapping hands and blabbering continuous blessings and asking for money door to door. Dattani presents eunuchs and their community with all their attributes without prejudice to put forth the issue of inequality of sexes and give them a reputed life to live and equal opportunity to earn their livelihood.

The society where we are acquainted with two genders male

and female, we generally are not familiarized or talk about the third gender. The persons born or show the identity later in their lives live in oblivion; the discussion on this matter is closed and their family too rejects them. The family transfers such children to the eunuch community to live well. They try to adopt their customs and traits. The community of eunuchs lives on the margins and had to face political subjugation with the restriction of law. They had to encounter violence, abuse and health diseases. They are kept away from relationships and familial bindings. They face challenge for earning as they are kept away from education.

Dattani's *Seven Steps Around the Fire* is a story of Uma - the protagonist of the play and also a research scholar. Her research is about the gender related violence and during her investigations, she finds herself into the whirlpool of murder mystery of a beautiful hijra Kamla, which she solves in the end. Kamla has been burnt alive by the order of minister Mr. Sharma as his son Subbu had married Kamla, a 'hijra', secretly. A fellow eunuch Anarkali was charged of the crime. But at last during the marriage ceremony of Subbu, he discloses the matter and shoots himself with the gun. The Eunuchs faced the victimization at the hands of society, police and jurisdiction, and are denied justice during their life and even after their death.

In Society eunuchs community are not accepted and kept at distance. Dattani brings to the notice, the disregard people show while identifying them as a person. They are addressed by giving the pronoun like 'it' while calling them and also kept in prison with men. We come to know that eunuchs prefer themselves as a female and calls themselves as sisters. But the constable Munswamy calls her as 'it', "She! Of course it will talk to you. We will beat it up if it doesn't." (Dattani: 233). Throughout the drama he addresses eunuchs as 'it', "If you don't mind me saying, what is the use of talking with it?... It will only tell you lies." (Dattani: 234). Also they are addressed with the most offensive names by Munswamy, as "worthless pig!" and their community as, "You sons of ... loafers." (Dattani: 235). We see

that Salim too speaks with Champa - the guru of eunuch community with derogatory words such as, "Shut up, you old bag! I told you to send me her things. Where is her trunk?" (Dattani: 257)

They are discriminated and violated at the hands of police and the ministers. They are held guilty with little suspicion and jailed for no crime. The powerful people held them guilty without giving them chance to walk the steps of judiciary. As Suresh says:

SURESH. May be. Who knows, "if she runs away to another town? Who can trace these people?" Anyway, we only arrested her because there was no one else. There is no real proof against her. These hijras..... they cut off their balls ... they kill. It could be any one of them. (Dattani: 270)

Though a Chief Superintendent of Police, Suresh Rao ridicules about the existence of hijras and asks not to believe them as, "They are all liars." (Dattani: 237). When Uma asks about the treatment they are getting in the prison she confronts the views of her husband of gender inequality and intolerance towards the eunuchs. She is bewildered with the views she is acquainted with. Uma's humanist touch pleases Anarkali and she had the instinct to bond a relationship as a sister. We can say that they yearn for familial bindings and wish to live happily. Anarkali opens her heart out to Uma saying, "If you were a hijra, I would have made you my sister (Dattani: 242). Dattani's play has focussed on the characters representing the truthful traits of their personality by peeping into their community. As T. Marx observes:

Dattani has attempted to break the stereotypical views that society has about hijras. He has explored issues such as parenthood, friendship, denial and many more aspects. He asserts the audience with a positive message that hijras are successful parents and can bring up a child, because they too have the ability to offer love even though they cannot conceive themselves. Dattani celebrates the solidarity and loving hearts of the hijras through the character of Champa. (Marx: 79)

Dattani's play depict the social structure of the eunuch community. The family, relations and the binding of love as foundation of eunuch community. Maternal love is found in the heart of the Guru - Champa for Kamla and Anarkali both. Champa regards both of them as her daughters, and therefore Anarkali and Kamla are related as sisters as they are disciples of same guru. By portraying the social structure of this community like the head hijra, chelas, the decision of successor to the community, sisterhood, motherhood, caring and sharing they preserve their familial love in the society intact. Uma is compassionate towards Champa and Champa had recognized that Uma is a concerned human without the malign thoughts in her mind. She tells her of the marginalized treatment such as inequality they get and feels relieved when Uma is acquainted with her feelings.

The law does not favour the transgender, it is matter of inconvenience to them. They are held unnecessarily and physically abused in prison by the police. Champa expresses her pent up anger towards the law enforcers as, "If I had the money, I would throw it on that superintendent's face and get her back. Sons of whores, all of them" (*SSF*: 256). The denial of acceptance of their identity makes them scornful towards the society. They too assert their hatred by showing disregard in speech and actions towards these people. In the prison Anarkali uses abusive language for Munswamy as 'sister-fucker' (Dattani: 240) She even says to Munswamy that she doesn't want to meet Uma in impudent words, "I don't care if you are mother of all the whores (Dattani : 235).

The eunuchs face discrimination from persons with high position also and therefore they are afraid to get help from anybody as they feel that all are involved in it. The murder of Kamla is executed by the minister Mr. Sharma and so when Uma asks who killed Kamla, Champa tells Uma, "No. Not Salim. There are others more dangerous than he." (Dattani: 272). She further states, "Not even your father-in-law can put them in jail." (*Dattani*: 272). When Uma says that she would help them by getting them arrested by her

husband but Anarkali tells her that no one can arrest them as they are highly reputed and they can kill a hijra as they do not have any reputation even in the eyes of the police. She says, "one hijra less in this world does not matter to your husband" (Dattani: 272). The insignificant identity of eunuchs has pushed them to live on the periphery thereby ignoring their existence in the society. The life and death of eunuchs are very significant. Eunuchs in Indian society are oppressed as well as victimized for their existence. They are treated discriminately as per the wish of authorities. As Miruna George opines:

Seven Steps Around the Fire takes up the plight of the transgender community which has always suffered from discrimination, exploitation and victimisation in their marginal state of existence. It is a condition that denies the transgender not only right to space but also a rightful claim to a life of dignified selfhood. (George: 33)

The community that they live in is secluded from the mainstream society. They can alone take the responsibility of their last rites. In the play there is no one to take the responsibility of death body of Kamla. When Uma questions about finding Kamala's body Munswamy replies, "the body was found by some passer-by, after four days. The temple priest complained about the stench. It was thrown into the pond after being burned" (Dattani: 247).

We see that in our society they are marginalized and without education they thrive for their living by begging and asking for money, blessing the married couple for the upcoming good life with fruitfulness and happiness, blessing the new child. But we see they are deprived of keeping relationships and family. They long for love and trust. But they just get despair and distrust.

The thought of man marrying a hijra is unsinkable for the society. Even Munswamy says that it is unimaginable that a Eunuch would think of marrying someone. He says, "Marry! Who would want to marry....? Tchee! What kind of people are there in this world?" (Dattani: 263). And so does Mr. Sharma had been revolted

with the thought that his Son loves a eunuch which a total no-no for him. So when the son of a minister Subbu marries a beautiful hijra Kamala he kills her and blames comes on Anarkali. Even the minister tries to marry his son with the daughter of reputed family.

The mystery of the murder of a beautiful eunuch Kamala reveals at the end when Subbu declare that Kamala had been killed because they love each other which is against the norms of the society. Kamla was murdered for marrying Subbu by the orders of the minister- his father. The rejection of social acceptance draws her towards her tragic death. Dattani emphasizes the problems faced by eunuchs and their struggle in expressing themselves in the social spaces which are denied to them. He has also portrayed their caring nature for each other's life. As Gajanana R. Bhat opines:

The non-entity of eunuchs is the major concern of the dramatist in depicting their suppression and marginalisation. The struggle of the characters is for their visibility, their voice and social space, not to be frozen into stereotypes but to have freedom of choice as individuals. (Bhat: 192)

Thus the drama concludes with the eunuchs on the periphery of the society yearning for the justice and equality for their life.

UMA. --- have no voice. The case was hushed up and it was not even reported in the newspaper --- Subbu's suicide was written off as an accident. The photograph was destroyed. So were the lives of two young people --- (Dattani: 282)

Justice is denied to the eunuchs, which is a very big defeat of judicial system. But still the attitude of police, politician and judiciary system towards eunuchs is pathetic and discriminating. The eunuchs are not seen as a human being. Purnima Kulkarni as rightly questions the role of society:

I ask, do antiquated and regressive people like Mr. Sharma deserve to be catapulted to high positions? Don't

we want our ministers to make people aware of the prerogatives of the underprivileged? Shouldn't the ministers create awareness about potential endocrine treatment among eunuchs like Anarkali, Champa, especially Kamla? (Kulkarni: 90)

The play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* remains the alone work in the Indian English drama, which has voiced the cries of Hijras of India. It is encyclopedia of the plights of eunuch community mentioning their pathos, desires, dreams, expectations etc. Dattani advocates the need for understanding the injustice they are subjected to by the society, judiciary and police. As Aditi De observes:

What sets Mahesh Dattani apart from other contemporary Indian playwrights in English today? Dattani has treated each subject with a deep-seated identification rooted in everyday angst. Such charged emotions spare no one — neither the players and the director, nor the audience. Deep within platitude-ridden Indian society, his characters seethe and reveal, probe and discern, scathing their families and neighbours, leaving each reader or watcher with a storm within as the aftermath. An essential storm for our evolution as socially sensitive individuals (De: 1 Web)

Through *Seven Steps Around the Fire* Dattani makes the reader aware of the gender inequality faced by the Eunuch community. Through the characters of Anarkali, Champa and Kamla he has highlighted their struggle with the society for their survival. Dattani also brought into notice the injustice they have to face before law and judiciary and appeal to the society for their acceptance as a third gender. The identity of eunuch or hijra is related to one's anatomy and should be accepted as such but when it is perceived through the societal roles it becomes difficult for them to express and get acceptance. This ultimately leads them to live a life of suppression and victimization. The societies negligence and denial towards the marital status and familial bondings makes

them crave for it. They are abused by the law enforcers, discriminated by the citizens and neglected by society. The dream of a happy and acceptable life is what they desire. The acceptance of their individual identity with self-respect and justice will create a receptive world for them to live in. Thus Dattani in his plays has voiced the plight homosexuals and eunuch and protested against the treatment meted out to them by the society.

Work Cited

- Bhat, Gajanana, R. "Theme and Technique in Dattani's Plays with Special Reference to *Seven Steps Around the Fire* and *Do the Needful*." *The Theatre of Mahesh Dattani*. ed. Mohini Khot. Jaipur: Aadi Publications, 2015. Print. 227
- Dattani, Mahesh. *Seven Steps Around the Fire, Collected Plays Screen, Stage and Radio Plays*, Vol. II. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2005.
- Dattani, Mahesh. Interview by Erin B. Mee. "Invisible Issues: An Interview with Mahesh Dattani." *Mahesh Dattani's Plays: Critical Perspectives*. ed. Angelie Multani. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2011. Print.
- De, Aditi. "Unmasking Our Worlds." *The Hindu*. Web retrived on 15 September 2017 <<http://www.hindu.com/lr/2005/08/07/stories/2005080700140300.htm>> Web.
- George, Miruna. "Resistance in Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man*, *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, and *Final Solutions*." *The Theatre of Mahesh Dattani*. ed. Mohini Khot. Jaipur: Aadi Publications, 2015. Print.
- Kulkarni, Purnima. "A Reconsideration of Mahesh Dattani's *Seven Steps Around the Fire*: Enthusing, Enlightening and Empowering Eunuchs." *The Theatre of Mahesh Dattani*. ed. Mohini Khot. Jaipur: Aadi Publications, 2015. Print.
- Marx, T. "Queering the Canon: Defying Voices in Mahesh Dattani's

Plays.” *Girish Karnad and Mahesh Dattani*. ed. G. Baskaran. Jaipur: Yking Books, 2012. Print.

The Times of India. “Gay sex is not a crime says Supreme Court in a history judgement”. Web retrived on 8 september 2018. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/gay-sex-is-not-a-crime-says-supreme-court-in-historic-judgement/articleshow/65695172.cms> Web. 232

Dr. Reema Kharabe.
Mahila Mahavidyalaya
Nagpur.

Dr. (Mrs.) Vandana V. Bhagdikar
Principal, Mahila Mahavidyalaya
Nagpur.

Female Protest Against Stereotype in Bharti Mukherjee's *Jasmine and Desirable Daughters*

Kanchan Joshi

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to explore Bharati Mukherjee's fictional world, her vivid presentation of womanhood and their spirit to carve a niche for them in the society. The repression and subjugation of woman in Indian society is presented through the portrayal of Jasmine and Tara. Gender discrimination and sexual violence is at its top when Jasmine protests against marginal status of women. Tara also retorts against old age taboos and try to live free life in America. In this journey, physical as well as psychological sufferings of the heroines are exquisitely narrated by the writers. The constant protest and courage to fight of the protagonists helps them to create their own identity.

Literature is a mirror of the society. It is beyond mere pleasure as it transforms the experience into words which speaks about society, cultural values, psychology of the people and traditions. Through literary pieces writers criticise the social evils and expect reform in the society. Protest literature is a genre which records objection, complaint or revolt against real socio-political issues. Protest literature does not change the world but it points out the social problem and perhaps give the solution. Social novel or social protest novel is a "work of fiction in which a prevailing social

problem such as gender, race, or class prejudice is dramatized through its effect on the characters of a novel" (Britannica.com). In tracing history, one can see the non-conformists resist against existing system in quest of freedom, liberty and justice. Protest is the human consciousness of one's fundamental rights and voice against inhuman treatment. Protest is the first step towards ideological philosophy about human existence. It advocates the social justice, equality and liberty in the society.

Feminism is the wave which speaks about women's right. It grows from the consciousness about human rights and desire to live meaningful life. It is a protest movement led by women for social, political and legal rights. Protest is made for enriching women's status in the male dominated society. In 19th century feminism speaks about suppression of women's rights. Literature has been used as a great medium to showcase the prevailing social norms, structure of the society and marginal status of women in it. Literary protest gives voice to the anguish and suffering of the people through characters, images, and symbols.

Protest literature challenges the role of women as a weaker sex and her position in domestic life. It tries to show the significance of women, her courage, varied capabilities, and her intellect. It insists the equal status to women and her role in the society. Earlier the women had no role to play in Indian English fiction. The works of early writers used to show the secondary position of women, her helplessness and subordinate status. "The early works of Anand and Narayan are dominated by the male point of view. Both have observed, shown and given prominence to the boys in Indian families in their novels. The girls are shown as subordinate creatures. They are rarely shown in depth and come before us mainly as pictures of pity and suffering." (Chelliah 2)

In later years women novelists started depicting the subjugation of women, their dilemma between traditional and newly acquired values and their true potential. They portrayed

women as a central character and all other incidents happen around her. Writers like Shashi Deshpande, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee explored gender discrimination, diverse feelings and emotions of women.

Bharati Mukherjee an Indian American writer who delineates lives of immigrants their psychological and physical struggle to live in a new society. Her novels like *‘Wife’*, *‘Desirable Daughters’*, *‘The Bride’* and *‘Jasmine’* focus on the psyche of the immigrants, cultural rift and alienation. However her novels *‘Jasmine’* and *‘Desirable Daughters’* shows gender discrimination and male domination in patriarchal society. She emphasises inequality between man and women and stresses the hostile social forces against the women in Indian social structure.

Jasmine is a tale of an Indian born Punjabi girl who struggle hard to mark her identity. Her journey is replete of turns and twists which indeed tests her metal. In the patriarchal society the birth of a girl is considered as a punishment of some sin. The father of Jyoti also thinks that ‘daughters were curses’ and ‘had to be married off before she could enter heaven’ (Jasmine 39). Born in a poor family in Hasnapur Jasmine’s life is a string of blind beliefs, fatalistic fears, rituals, superstitions and customs. In the name of religion scholastic opportunities are denied to Jyoti and her freedom is bounded. In contrast to her brothers she nurtures desire for learning. Jasmine cannot continue her education after eighth standard due to societal pressure. She was an intelligent student of masterji “she was a whiz in Punjabi and Urdu, and the first likely female candidate for English instruction he’d ever had” (Jasmine 40). Mukherjee has shown Indian women are conditioned from their childhood to serve and care for the male members of the house. So as Jasmine and Tara, the heroine of *Desirable Daughters* are also trained in the same way.

These leading characters works hard in their homes but they are not feeble. Mukherjee’s protagonists are not weak mentally

as well as physically. They exhibit immense power to retaliate against exploitation and oppression. In the very beginning of the story the astrologer foretells Jasmine her widowhood and exile, she protests against this prediction, while retorting back she tells him “You don’t know what my future holds” (Jasmine 3). Truly she shows the courage and strong will to change her fate. She looks better life for herself and abolishes evil from the society. She falls in love with educated Praksh and marry him in an iconoclastic way “no dowry, no-guests Registry Office wedding in a town” (Jasmine 75). After Prakash’s death she moves from India. She changes her own fortune by embarking the journey to America a dreamland away from rigid Hasnapur.

In the course of her journey she meets many difficulties. She becomes the victim of widowhood, exile, sexual violence and cross cultural encounter. She is brutally raped by Half-face who considers her as an object of sex. At that time she shows immense courage and kills the rapist. Truly she has a fighting spirit as well as an essence of an adapter. She sheds off her identity and moves on in life. Mukherjee highlights the constant struggle of her protagonist to establish her identity in India as well as outside India. Jasmine is not a stereo type survivor but she is a fighter, adventurer and aspire for the dominant position in the society. In *Desirable Daughters* all the three sisters face the domination of their father in their lives. The father imposes his judgment on them and tries to control their lives, “Padma, the first, and six years my senior, was forced by our father to turn down movie offers. Parvati, three years older than me, took the annual “Miss Brains and Beauty” cover of Eve’s weekly” (*Desirable Daughters* 22). Tara fails to pursue higher education and she has to marry Bishwapriya Chatterjee an intelligent engineer chosen by her father.

The defiant attitude of the three sisters are seen in the future. They lead their lives according to their own wishes. Tara’s rebellious attitude is a reaction to patriarchal dominance. She takes divorce from her husband, a Silicon Valley tycoon Bishwapriya

Chatterjee and lives alone with her son in San Francisco. *Desirable Daughters*, presents the disapproval of restrictions imposed by old-fashioned society. In search of identity Tara and Padma undergo a sea change by challenging deep-rooted customs. Even in America Tara experiences marginal existence and wishes for central place in her marriage. After separation from her husband she sets her own standard to live. She starts working in school as a teacher. She finds her happiness with Andrus. She tries all the things about which she is fascinated. She shows the courage to throw away the societal pressure, family values and ethics for her own desires. Jasmine also experiences marginalisation of woman at Flushing in professor Vadhera's house, the teacher of Prakash. As a widow she has to do all house chores and take care of professor's old parents. Vadhera family expects Jasmine to wear simple white saree as a widow of Prakash. They ask her to cast off her jeans and shirt. She thinks "In this apartment of artificially maintained Indianness, I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti-like. To them, I was a widow who should show proper modesty of appearance and attitude" (Jasmine 145). She manages to escape from Flushing and resume her journey of self-realisation.

Three Bhattacharjee sisters decide their own path by making their own choices. The extraordinarily beautiful sisters Padma, Parvati, and Tara choose to settle down in New Jersey, Bombay and San Francisco respectively. Padma becomes a TV star in Bengali channel while Parvati chooses a conventional life with Aurobindo Banerjee who is not her father's choice. Tara becomes revolutionary to break her marital bond after almost ten years of marriage and starts her life afresh.

Tara and Jasmine are strong personalities as they survive in the foreign land, facing many hardships. They struggle a lot to acclimatize with American ways of life. They bring changes in their attitude, behaviour, language and attire. Jasmine's metaphorical rebirth gives her power to establish herself as an individual and not an appendage. She becomes independent, free and open minded

survivor in the male dominated society. In this regard Ravichandran opines:

“Throughout, the novel Jasmine experiences numerous situations that bring violence with them. She is not always the subject of these situation but they are always connected with her. It is not only the physical violence experiences, but also mental violence that influences Jasmine further way of life and forces her to reborn as a different person” (Bano 291)

Through the characterisation, writer delineates the psychological, philosophical and emotional progress of the protagonists. In the house of Taylor and Wylie, Jasmine understands the true equality, humanity, individuality and self-dependency. She becomes confident modern working woman. Jasmine always proves to be a supporter not a dependent to Taylor and Bud. The theme of transformation is seen through development of characters as they find themselves far from orthodox Indian culture. Tara and Jasmine realises their desires and they respect it. Tara leads unconventional life by creating a space for herself. At the end when Bish got burnt in the bombing she stands for him and nurses him. She lives according to her own rules and protests against age old taboos.

Bharati Mukherjee's both the novels, reveals the existing gender discrimination, sexual violence and marginal status of womanhood. Unlike usual submissive woman characters, her protagonists goes against the traditional codes. They show the power to fight against all the odds to create a niche for them. Jasmine becomes a new woman with indomitable spirit, aspire for her independence. She shows immense courage and will power to protest and succeed in her mission of 'reposition the stars'. Mukherjee's heroines are the real heroes of her novel as well as their own life. Truly Mukherjee is the most influential diaspora writer who has portray the repression of Indian woman and at the same time their 'emancipation' and 'actualization'.

Works Cited

Mukherjee, Bharati. *Desirable Daughters*. New York: Theia, 2002.

Mukherjee, Bharati. *Jasmine*. New York: Grove Press, 1989

Britanica.com. Definition of social problem novel,
web<https://www.britannica.com/art/social-problem-novel>

Bano, Sanjeeda. "Gender Discrimination, Sexual Violence and Female Protest: An Analysis of Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*" *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Translation Studies*. Vol. 3. Issue.2, 2016 (April-June), pg no 291 <http://www.ijelr.in/3.2.16/289-296%20SANJEEDA%20BANO.pdf>

S. Chelliah. "Bharati Mukherjee as an adept in her genuine portrayal of 'Women' and candid depiction of the rootless life of an Indian woman as reflected in her fictional world: An Appraisal". *IJRAR- International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, volume 4, issue 3, July – Sept. 2017, Pg no.2.

Kanchan Joshi

Shri Niketan Arts and Commerce College,
Nagpur.

Women Empowerment in Girish Karnad's plays

Madhuri Tayade
Priya D. Wanjari

Abstract

Girish Karnad is a dexterous personality who has not only strengthened Indian drama in English but enlarged its scope by introducing new themes. There are so many protest movements which are adhered in India for the empowerment of women. Karnad protests against the exploitation of women. He goes back to ancient Indian culture, myths, mythologies and folklores, studies puranas, takes women as presented in the then prevalent culture but combines them with contemporary world where women are struggling to establish their identity and space of esteem. In his plays, he very ingeniously pictures the condition of a typical Indian female ruled by the patriarchal order fenced by tradition. The men in patriarchal culture abolish the intellect of women and they try to prove that women are idiotic and mindless. His women are the products of the postcolonial world who desire to accomplish what they lack. They revolt against the patriarchy and male dominance, and flatten culture and tradition anticipating transformation in the outlook of the male dominated society.

Keywords: Protest, identity, patriarchal, feminism, abolish, flatten.

Every society in course of history has undergone a process of protest movements. In fact they have played a remarkable role in

bringing about social change as well as a driving force behind social mobilization. This research paper is about the protest against women exploitation depicted in Karnad's plays. Protest may be expressed passively or actively. Passive Action, or Passive Protest, is trying for change in a system. This has been done in many ways. A message has been conveyed and gain attention, without disturbing a system. Protesters seek to change and appeal. Protests can sometimes be the subject of a counter-protest. In such a case, counter protesters demonstrate their support for the person, policy, action, etc. i.e. the topic of the first protest. It also called a remonstrance or a remonstrations and is an expression of objection by words or by actions to particular events, policies, or situations.

Protests can take many various forms; from individual statements to mass demonstrations. According to John Barned Smith, protesters may organize a protest as a way of publicly making their opinions heard in an attempt to influence public opinion or government policy, or they'll undertake protest in an attempt to directly enact desired changes themselves. (St. John Barned-Smith, 17-25)

Artists use their arts such as films or photographs for protest which is a passive form of protest. Literary artists use literature for protest. Literature is a way and art of expressing emotions, values, concerns, and lessons. Protest literature is a passive protest and it contains numerous meanings and definitions. This Literature has existed in several forms throughout literary history. Some of the best writers in history have employed their talents toward awakening the general public to injustices locally and world-wide and Karnad is one of them. Protest literature found permanent space in a seminar recently organized. John Stauffer prominently defined protest literature as "a text that not only criticizes and protests society, but that suggests, either explicitly or implicitly, a solution to society's ills." Stauffer expressed three essential things for protest literature: sympathy, shock value, and symbolic action, during which sympathy encourages, shock value

inspire emotions and desires, and symbolic action promotes interpretation. (John Stauffer Arts A-86)

Karnad is among the prominent writers who prominently protest regarding the inhuman treatment prior to women. This paper will focus on women empowerment through the protest shown by female characters in two plays by Karnad: *Hayavadana* and *Nag-Mandala*.

Protest in Indian English Literature is more of expectancy than an expression of a society. Protest is individual and at the same time collective. Protest transcends the boundaries of reality. The Indian society believes that men have the power and cultural dominance in the society. A peculiar feature of the Indian society is that men defend maleness and consider women not manly which is not mostly human. Women are marginalized through cultural institutions and religious rituals. Feminist movements have been trying for removal of this marginalization. The strong wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s helped theorize a woman's discourse. A feministically read text can lead to a better understanding of the woman's condition. Thus the very basis of feminism which is reformist in nature helps women to understand their position in a better manner. In this context Linda Gordon's opinion is that "feminism is an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out to change it deserves a mention". (Linda Gordon, 05) The women-centered perspective now locates specific virtues in the female experience. This should, conceptually speaking, take to a concentrated study of feminism so as to place in the proper perspective whatever is vital about woman in life and literature. An ancient lawgiver of Hinduism, Manu says, "The father takes care of her during childhood, the husband protects her during youth, and therefore the son takes care of her when she becomes old. Woman is never fit for freedom". This forms Indian view of womanhood that relates primarily to the Indian fabric of living. It is necessary therefore, for the feminist to remember that the Indian society has provided a very complex picture of

womanhood. In the modern times we have great political luminaries as Kasturba, Sarojini Naidu, Indira Gandhi who took leading part in making India free. Services of Tara Bai, Ahalyabai, Razia Begum, Rani Durgaavathi, Jhansi Laxmi Bai etc to our nation are rare and remarkable in nature. Women like Gargi, Maitreyi of ancient times enriched our spiritual heritage. They are also examples of emancipated women. Virginia Woolf is indeed a revolutionary feminist. A critic Elizabeth Hard Wicin wrote, "Virginia Woolf had a feminine mind different from the masculine".

According to Wicin, Virginia's feminism is positive, constructive and deep. Her feminine views are different. Woman since ages has been under man's control and her attitudes have changed under the influence of masculine standards. Now she has to find out her own ways, without yielding herself to the criticism of any Taskmasters. Woman should be able to live her own life as she wants. Woman has been living in darkness of ignorance since ages but now she is moving towards light by slow degrees.

Primarily the modern Indian feministic movement may be said to have begun with Raja Ram Mohan Roy's success in making the East India Company Government pass a bill making it illegal and punishable for widow to bum herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. Later, the Brahmo Samaja and Arya Samaja worked for the upliftment of women. In Maharashtra, Ramabai Ranade did laudable work for upliftment of women. Later, into the political sphere stepped women like Sarojini Naidu, Vijayalaxmi Pundit and others who fought shoulder to shoulder with men for political freedom under Gandhiji's leadership.

If we talk about defining women empowerment, it simply means giving the women pivotal authority. It has been proved since time immemorial that women are more responsible when tackling a situation, so delegating authority with confidence is the first step towards women empowerment. It also means to give rights to women to face the challenges of life. The empowerment of women emphasizes on inspiring women with the courage to break free from

the barriers of patterns of society or religious norms that kept traditionally women suppressed. It is known fact that women, particularly in India are still backward and they are not aware of their rights that the constitution has furnished. The mission of many reform institutions in India is to make them aware of all these facts and fight against the torture and all wrong things caused to them by the society and the husbands and people is known as "Women Empowerment". It is instilled by many with the aim of giving power to women to make their own decisions in their lives. It includes social, economic, legal, political and health empowerment. It is a central issue which is growing at a slower pace.

Modern writers have tried to transform this image of woman as depicted in the myths by portraying them in a more realistic manner. One such writer is Vijay Tendulkar, the avant-garde Marathi playwright. In his plays 'Vultures, Silence! The Court is in Session! Sakharan Binder and Kamla, he has given different roles to women from the roles played by women in traditional literature. He deals with women issues: their struggle for existence, alienation from the society and her itself. On the other hand, Hindi drama played an important role in the development of modern Indian theatre. Mohan Rakesh's women are exceptionally strong in dealing with the pressures of convention or circumstance, and so memorably vital that he has often been accused of rendering his male characters too weak and hesitating. Yet, despite his obvious sympathy with these extraordinary women, he makes some very stereotypical assumptions about womanhood.

H.S Shiva Prakash, a critic in his overview of Kannada theatre says, "Imaging Woman in Kannada Theatre" looks at the women from the perspective of a playwright. He observes the images of women as falling into the categories of maya (temptress), mata (comforter) or just a victim. (H.S.Shiva Prakash,) He contrasts these traditional role imposed by a patriarchal society with the powerful women characters in pre-modern Kannada theater. In his view, modern Kannada Theater has failed because it has cut itself off

from popular and rural theatre and imitates “arbitrarily chosen western models”. Later Kannada Theatre was in the foreground of the innovations and experiments of modern Indian Theatre. Karnad, a mainstream Kannada dramatist, evolved new ways of looking at the theatre. The conflict between conscious and unconscious desires is central to Karnad’s image of women.

Karnad is a multitalented personality who is an actor, director and playwright. He is the awardee of Jnanpith Award for Kannada, the greatest literary honor conferred in India; he is also conferred Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan by the government of India. More than four decades he has been composing plays, often using history and mythology to deal contemporary issues. He is one among the eminent playwrights in the modern India. He has considerably enriched and enlightened the tradition of Indian English drama. During his childhood days in country side of Karnataka he encountered with some Natak Mandalies which are indelible impression on his dramatic works. He represented an era of a certain kind of liberal imagination. With irrepressible creative energy, rare in any age, Karnad has many successes across several spheres of culture: cinema, acting, direction, cultural imagination and, towards the end of his life, politics of protest. Karnad has composed eight plays. All these plays are originally appeared in Kannada and later on they have been translated into English. He started his dramatic career with the publication of his maiden play *Yayati* in 1961. He has efficiency of comprehending requisite of stage production of the play. Karnad’s plays reflect such social situations and cultural practices taking place in our country. Liberation of women from the variety of bondages and rigid patriarchal control are the essential feminine concerns of Karnad plays. Feminism in Karnad’s Dramatic Oeuvre Patriarchal structure of Indian culture, social practices and traditions and standard compositions still sustain the subordination of Indian women. Karnad championed the reason for silenced womenfolk in Indian orthodox society through his plays. Karnad is very much familiar

with feminist belief systems and the destruction fashioned by patriarchal philosophies in Indian society. All the plays of Karnad have strong feminist constituents yet his two plays: - Hayavadana and Naga Mandala merit exceptional mention.

Hayavadana:

In the play 'Hayavadana', Padmini- the sole female representative of the play wants to fulfill her desires and emotions at any cost. She is not like a traditional woman who silently follows the codes of societies and her fascination for two men at the same time is unacceptable for a traditional Indianite society. Karnad has projected the character of Padmini in such a way that she challenges the society's assumption of female inferiority. In this context, Abhishek Kosta observes, "Karnad has explored the awakening of female consciousness often dramatized in literature" (Kosta, P-71). Devadatta and his friend Kapila, holds the position of two extreme polarities when Padmini interferes between the two. Padmini, Devadatta's wife feels fascinated by Kapila's muscled body which can attract any women. Similarly Devadutta poses a scholarly personality for his poetry and wisdom who acquires an honourable position as a learned Brahmin for which Padmini married him. But Padmini wants to get the best of both the men the fabulous brain of Devadatta with Kapila's manly body as both of them lacks in each quality such as Devadatta poses a weak body while Kapila a dull brain. Suman Bala points out that, "Padmini's predicament is the predicament of a modern, emancipated woman in our society who is born between two polarities, a woman who loves her husband as well as someone else for two different facets of their personalities" (Bala,P. 197).

Even the song performed by the feminine chorus commemorates Padmini's plight:

Female Chorus (sings): Why should love stick to the sap of a one body? When the stem is drunk with the thick yearning of the many-petalled, many-flowered lantana, why should it be tied down to the relation of a single

flower? A head for each breast. A pupil for each eye. A side
for each arm. I have neither regret nor shame. The blood
pours into the earth and song branches out in the sky
(Karnad, 82)

Padmini possesses the attitude of modern woman. She doesn't keep any hesitation while interacting with her husband's friend Kapila. In the very first meeting Padmini and Kapila gets engaged in an interaction in such a manner that foregrounds the first love and sensual attraction between her and Kapila. Actually, Karnad not only attempts to handle the subalternity issue by focusing the lives of women in his plays but also energized the women class to raise their strong voice which shifted their portion from 'margin' to 'centre'. Padmini is accustomed to the age old dictums of tradition and society which underscore her predicament as an object of social subjugation when she cries out: "I've touched everyone's feet in this house some time or the other, but no one's ever touched mine?" (Karnad, 125) which sensitized her belonging to a traditional background family. She realizes that a woman could be easily manipulated into becoming an object of male desire. Here, Padmini turns out to be the negator of traditional Indian womanhood through her self-sufficiency, boldness and courage, who even not dare to expose her dark secrets. Here, it reveals that Padmini is quick to assert her sovereign essence by compelling Kapila to bow down his head over her feet to a contemptuous subjugation despite being the representative of male hegemony: "Kapila : Madam, please. I have some important work. I will touch your feet" (Karnad, 125). Karnad has exposed the norms of society imposed on women for which they fall under a treacherous masculine regime. The hypocritical stances of society allow a man to marry more than one woman but the same society never allows a woman to marry more than one man.

Nagmandala

In another play of Karnad, Rani, the heroine of the play Nagamandala, as her name itself justifies she is like a queen and

beautiful princess. Asserting her personality, Karnad describes her as “Queen of the whole wide world. Queen of the long tresses” (Karnad, 253). A reverse case happens in her husband’s house as she is treated like a mere servant for whom she is thrashed in tears, and meanwhile he has an extra affair with a concubine. He locks her in the house where she lives a life without any future and identity. Rani is ignored by her husband Appanna and the rights of a wife are given to that concubine. At the beginning Rani emerges as the very image of an ideal Indian woman demure and unquestioning just as the epitome of ‘second sex’ where Rani is imprisoned in her own husband’s house. Women in India are taken for granted as men have failed to realize that she too has feelings and emotions. She is exploited simply because she is a woman and no one cares to ask for her consent. In the empty house of her husband, Rani is locked up “like a caged bird”(Karnad, 257) symbolizes the chain of restrictions placed round women, which denies even her legitimate rights and hinders her natural growth. Now Rani realizes the importance of recovery of identity that awaits another reversal as though it seems Karnad is giving a twist to this age old conventions by portraying Rani’s firm decision to get release from the tyranny of these circumstances. Here Karnad seems to legalize the sexual intercourse between human and subhuman world that provides peace and joy. Actually Karnad poses the problem of the identity of women that provide him a space to tackle the women issues. Now Rani has started her journey from complete innocence to fulfillment of experience to claim her identity. It is at the behest of Kurudavva, an old woman neighbor offers Rani magic root that is a potent love potion. With the help of that magic root, she finds Naga, a form of mythical snake provides the role of a passionate lover to give the pleasure of sex to Rani.

Karnad locates the complicated dilemma of Rani’s situation which ultimately helps her to break out of the moral codes inflicted by society. She also wants a male companion in her life with whom she craves for happiness. Her inner urge remains repressed and at any cost she has to fulfill her sexual inclinations. With the entry of

Naga, Rani gets confidence in her body. She finds heavenly marital bliss in Naga's company that becomes an idyllic world for her. By which Karnad gives a twist to the conventions. Naga assumes the form of Appanna and starts visiting her during the night which helps her to forget the demonic world of her rude husband. Her ability to recognize her own selfhood leads her position to acquire a subject status beyond the status of male. She seems to be a free woman who shows the courage to overcome the paradigm of gender bias. The snake-lover Naga who fulfils the desire of his beloved Rani to attain motherhood ultimately has to sacrifice his life for the sake of his love.

Whatever the intense care and love she does not get from her husband in reality, Rani gets it from Naga. In the arms of her lover Naga who comes in disguise of her husband, she starts to feel secure and comfortable thus breaking her isolation when she says to Naga: "Let it. I don't feel afraid any more, with you beside me" (Karnad, 273). Rani wants to experience the marital bliss in the company of her lover Naga. Even she tells Appanna who represents patriarchal egoism in his deeds to accept the reality of his wife in front of society when she becomes pregnant. Though Appanna questions her chastity when she is put on trial, she proves her innocence by virtue of the snake ordeal in front of the elder villagers without subjugating her position. Consequently, Rani established her identity when the whole village acclaims her 'a goddess incarnate' and her husband is forced to accept her before public as the Elder announces, "Appanna, your wife is not an ordinary woman she is a goddess incarnate. Don't grieve that you judged her wrongly and treated her badly. That is how divulge reveal themselves to the world. You were the chosen instrument for the revelation of her divinity" (Karnad, 40). Karnad thus making a challenging task by balancing the power to remove patriarchal dominance and the identity is restored when he declares, "Rani lived happily ever after with her husband, child and servant" (Karnad, 293) and Rani recovers her identity as a wife.

Conclusion

In these two plays, Karnad has deliberately employed the women characters to raise their powerful voice against injustices and oppression which signifies a positive impact on our society. By exploring the lives of women caged by patriarchal domination, he has taken the responsibility of subordinated women to free their lives from the bondages of male chauvinism. Actually through these women he has explored the symptoms of modern sensibility which has enabled them to fight against the conventional norms of patriarchal society. Rani reaffirms her position from total abjection to unqualified power. Padmini openly confesses her own desire for Kapila's muscled body in spite of being a married woman to get a perfect man who must possess the combination of sexual and intellectual power. Karnad's adoption of various old mythical, historical and folk sources and creation new characters in his plays exhibit many tendencies of feminism. He exposes the ill-treatment of women and incorporates a protest against it in a very masterly manner.

Work Cited

Bala, Suman, "This mad dance of incompleteness: Search for Completeness in Hayavadana" in J. Dodiya's(ed.) *The Plays of Girish Karnad* (New Delhi : Prestige, 2009.

Elizabeth Hard Wicin, Quoted in Shirley Foster, *Victorian Women's Fiction: Marriage, Freedom and the individual*, (London and Sydney: Arnold Heinemann. Crome Helm Ltd., 1985.

H.S Shiva Prakash, Shodhganaga, Inflibnet.ac.in.2002.

John Stauffer, Professor of English and American Literature and Language at Harvard University.2005.[http://www.thecromson.com/article/2005/4/4/panelistdiscuss protest-literature](http://www.thecromson.com/article/2005/4/4/panelistdiscuss%20protest-literature)

Kosta, Abhishek, *The Plays of Girish Karnad* (Atlantic Publishers, New Delhi,2012).

Karnad, Girish, Collected Plays Volume one (New Delhi: Oxford : 2005).

Linda Gordon's opinion Quoted in Cameron Deborn, Feminism and Linguistic Theory, (London, McMillan, 1985).

Manu smriti, Wikipedia.org

Ms. Madhuri Tayade

Ph.D. Scholar
RTMNU, Nagpur.

Dr. Priya D. Wanjari

Officiating Principal and
Head of English Dept.
Santaji College, Nagpur.

Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock*: A Tale of Marital Discord

**Vandana Bhagdikar
Renu Dalela**

Abstract

Anita Desai is one of those few Indian novelist, who represents the welcome “creative release of the feminine sensibility”, which began to emerge distinctively on the literary horizon after the Second World War. Her novels deal with the probe into the distressed sensibility of her characters. As a novelist of considerable merit, Desai has enriched the thematic convention of the Indian novel in English. She contends on analyzing her characters and the story is important only in so far as it reflects the obsessions of her characters. Her work is an accelerating exploration of the psychic self. She tries to look for the deep desires, emotions and feelings felt by her characters and shows them as the influencing factor behind their action. Her portrayal of marital relationship is influenced and conditioned by complex social milieu. She basically portrays the plight of modern woman in the existing male dominated society where she makes an effort to voice herself. She basically portrays the disparity in temperament as affecting the marital relationship. This paper proposes to study the factors responsible for marital discord as reflected in the novel *Cry, the Peacock*.

Keywords: Marital. Discord, Psychic, Plight, Relationship

Marriage is a necessary bond in the life of human beings which has its foundation in understanding between man and woman. The novel *Cry, the Peacock*, exhibits the theme of incompatibility and lack of understanding in marital life. It portrays the psychic tumult of a young and sensitive married girl Maya who is haunted by a childhood prophecy of a fatal disaster. The novel centres on the hostility in the relationship between Gautama and Maya that leads to the longing for a soul mate of the female protagonist. In the novel, Desai doesn't represent the futility of marriage but explores the psyche of the female characters through marriage. She portrays the inherent disparity in male and female characters. Females are emotional whereas men rational. Women have shown to be emotionally as well culturally dependent on their mates; any loss in relationship becomes a total loss of self.

Cry, the Peacock is a modern novel and it presents an incompatible marriage of the protagonist Maya. The entire story is "remembrance of things past" by Maya herself. The novel is a tale of a sterile woman, Maya, highly sensitive and emotional on one hand and on the other hand her husband, Gautama who is too much engrossed in his own affairs to meet the demands of his young wife. Maya is a spoiled and pampered daughter of a wealthy Brahmin and is married to Gautama, an older man, insensitive, pragmatic and rational lawyer, who fails to understand her sensitive nature. The novel takes the form of interior monologue, delineating the tragic mental breakdown of a young Indian woman, Maya. She suffers from father obsession and looks for the typical father image in her husband. Childless, with an uncaring husband, she is lonely and loneliness is the bone and burden of her psyche. The novel begins with the sentence, "All day long the body lay rotten in the sun" (5).

The opening chapter of the novel sets the tone of marital discord between the protagonist Maya and her husband Gautama. The death of Toto, their dog, may be trivial for Gautama, a rational and professionally busy man in the beginning of the novel but for Maya, she loses her mental balance, being childless, she is much

attached to the dog and it appears that the dog was a child substitute. She is highly emotional and hysterical due to the death of Toto. She is shown rushing to the tap to wash the vision from her eyes. She thought she saw the glint of a blue bottle and grew hysterical, the evening sun appears to be "swelling visibly like - she thought - a purulent boil until it was ripe to drop" (6). On the other hand Gautama dismisses her grief at Toto's death with a mere expression of "It is all over" (8). Maya as the representative of 'feminine principle' is hurt to the core. The death motif is built skillfully into the theme of the novel by Desai. Toto's death brings, sharply contrasted worlds of Maya and Gautama representing the feminine and masculine principles in their extremities. Although their marriage has been a complete failure, they continue to be together leading a mechanical life. Maya, herself reflects upon her marriage, which has become a misalliance. She states:

It was discouraging to reflect as how much in our marriage was based upon a nobility forced upon us from outside and, therefore, neither true nor lasting. It was broken repeatedly, and repeatedly the pieces were, picked up and put together again. (45)

Unable to establish a rapport with her husband and to find a meaning in her existence, Maya remains throughout an utterly lonely creature, in this helpless and indifferent world. Her neurosis is further heightened by her awareness of her horoscope and the macabre prediction of the albino astrologer, which leads to her killing Gautama and her committing suicide. Desai has explored different aspects of feminine sensibility and feminine psyche which also includes man -woman relationship. As Suresh Kohli points out, "No other writer is so much concerned with the life of young men and women in Indian cities as Anita Desai is"(Kohli:3).

Maya's marriage with Gautama was more or less a marriage of comfort and convenience. Gautama and Maya's father were friends. They have similar way of thinking. Gautama evermore used to come to Maya's father. Maya remembers:

Coming slowly upon his bicycle, in the evenings, it was my father Gautam used to come to call upon and had it not been for quickening passion with I met, half way, my father's proposal that I marry this tall, stooped and knowledgeable friend of his, one might have said that our marriage was grounded upon the friendship of the two men and the mutual respect in which they held each other, rather than anything else. (40)

They have dissimilarities in age, in temperament and in the strain of their physical and mental outlooks to bring them to close tie. As Kajal Thakur points out ,

She loves life in all its forms. She enjoys beautiful sights and sounds. She is an epicurean to the core. In contrast, she is married to Gautama, a friend of her father very senior to her age and a prosperous middle aged lawyer. He is, cultured, rational, practical and busy with his own affair of business. His opinion about her love for good things is nothing more than sentimentalism. Maya longs for companionship which to her despair she never finds in her marriage. (Thakur:226)

Maya is deeply scattered at the insensibility, hypocrisy and contempt exposed through other marriages around her. There we find no reference of her own mother. Maya does not even mention a photograph or any discourse with her father about her mother. It appears that it might be a pathetic and disgusting episode in her father's life. So he might be concealing it from Maya. Gautama's parents also lived an unnatural marital life. Each one kept himself or herself busy with his or her vocation. Another character in the novel, Laila, Maya's friend, marries a tubercular man against the wishes of her parents. She is a teacher in girl's school and then she marries a man knowing his disease. Her life is fatalistic. She is gloomy and ascetic wearing no bangles or jewelry. If Maya is absorbed with the albino's prediction, Laila has accepted her destiny and does not complain. She feels, "It was all written in my fate long ago" (40). She reveals the mockery of the marriage, yet

forbears all childish fantasies of her husband. Other character like Mr. and Mrs. Lal are pen portraits of hypocrisy. The Sikh wife denounces her husband as a quack and opportunist, disclosing the deep rooted antipathy of a maladjusted working. All these relationships between man and woman portrayed in the novel are the plus points and minus points of brides and bridegroom throughout the novel. Whatever marriages are referred to in the *novel*, are not contented marriages in real sense of the term.

Desai not only portrays the feminine psyche of a common woman but also the subnormal bordering on abnormal woman. The women who are under so much of psyche pressure that they cannot be known for insanity but then they are explicitly normal. Maya struggles against the oppressive environment as a result of patriarchal domination. She is put in urban location, suffers from a type of Oedipus complex, idolizes her father but became miserable as her search for a further substitute in her husband does not measure upto her expectation. The neurotic difficulties of Maya spring from a motherless childhood apart from other complementary causes. Although her father doles out love and Gautam harbours tolerant and sympathetic attitude, yet this fails to give her sense of fulfilment and security. Mother, it is felt, would have trained her for life in a better manner than her father could. Her bareness coupled with an albino fortune teller's prediction of impending demise of one of the partners after her marriage agitates her mind, occupies her wakeful thoughts and precipitously pushes her towards insanity.

Maya starves for her husband's companionship and spends sleepless nights consuming with his starvation. She pines to satisfy her physical starvation, but he takes no attempt to any interest in things. She thinks over her husband's lack of love for her and once, in a fit of intense despair and agony, tells him: "Oh, you know nothing of me and of how can I love. How I want to love. How it is important to me. But you, you've never loved. And you don't love me...." (96). Temperamentally Maya and Gautama are poles part.

On one hand Maya's, name itself stands for the world of sensations and Gautama's name on the other hand, symbolizes asceticism, detachment from life. Maya, displays romantic love for the beautiful, the colourful and the sensuous. She wants to enjoy life to the utmost. She loves life in all its forms. Gautama's on the other hand is realistic and rational. He has philosophical detachment towards life as preached in the Bhagwad Gita. He quotes Gita: "He who, controlling the sense of the mind, follows without attachment the path of action with his organs of action, he is esteemed"(116).

Gautama fails to satisfy Maya's physical needs as well. On one occasion, in spite of her seductive postures, Gautama remains rigid and cold. On another occasion, Maya laments: "longing to be with him, be close to him...make haste in undressing.... But when I went... he had closed his eyes not with mere tiredness, but in profound, invulnerable sleep, and was very far from any world of mine, however enticing" (93). Thus she remains physically dissatisfied. As Anugrah Tiwari opines, "Such irreconcilably different temperaments and disparity between them are the prime causes of discord in their marriage" (Tiwari:615).

Maya began to look upon her relationship with Gautama as a relationship with death. The foreteller albino is merely a literary device used to reveal her concealed awe and under the emphases of this awe she became insane and argued that since Gautama was not involved with life and did not care for it, it was unimportant to him whether he was alive or not. And if only one of them was to live naturally she should live because she kept saying it was she who was meant to live, and so she killed Gautama in a fit of frenzy and soon she avowed and met her own death.

Thus it is observed that the novel oscillates between two poles, on the one end we have Maya, obsessed with the feelings of love, compassion and sympathy and on the other hand Gautama, realistic and rational. Maya is caught in the trap of marriage and languishes in misery. Their marriage reveals lack of trust in their marital relationship which inevitably ends in lack of

communication. The real cause of discord in marriage of Maya and Gautama is the temperamental disparity between them. Thus the novel is a harrowing tale of blunted human relationship resulting in marital discord.

Works Cited

Desai, Anita. *Cry, the Peacock*. Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1980. Print

Kohli, Suresh. "Indian Women Novelist in English", *Times Weekly*, 8 November 1970, Print.

Thakur, Kajal. "The Concept of Man Woman Relationship in *Cry, the Peacock*". *International Journal of Social Science & Interdisciplinary Research* Vol.1 Issue 7, July 2012. www.indianresearchjournals.com. Web.

Tiwari, Anugrah. "Marriage Conflict Characterized in Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock*". *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*. Vol III, Issue VII, Sep. 2015. www.ijellh.com. Web

Dr. Vandana Bhagdikar

Principal & Head, Department of English
Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur.

Dr. Renu Dalela

Head, Department of English
Prin. Arunrao Kalode Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur.

Social Protest in the Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa and Boman Desai

**Nisha M Sharma
Priya D. Wanjari**

Abstract

When Parsis came to India, during the Mughals, they required official permission to settle down in a new land. India became second home for them, but at the same time they were marginalized and an ethnic minority. Their plight and protest found way in Parsi writings which highlight the social contradictions of class, gender, ethnicity and language. This paper traces the representation of social protest in the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa and Boman Desai. Both these writers raise their voices against the social and cultural inequalities faced by Parsis. Their novels depict how the community suffered and they narrate the minority discourse.

Keywords: Minority, protest, migrants, Parsis, culture, ethnicity, literature.

Man in society, is given to mutual trust and love but when he faces discrimination on the basis of religious differences, class privileges and individual prejudices, social protest is the inevitable reaction. According to the Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, the word 'protest' means a statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something. It can assume different forms, from individual statements to mass demonstrations.

Jacquelien van Stekelenburg and Bert Klandermans have made a seminal contribution to the interwoven issues of grievances, efficacy, identity, emotions and social fixity. Both of them created a model on social psychology of protest explaining: "Grievances originate from interests and/or principles that are felt to be threatened. The more people feel that interests of the group and/or principles that the group values are threatened, the angrier they are and the more they are prepared to take part in protest to protect their interests and principles and/or to express their anger."

Literature works as a catalyst for social change. It is an art of expressing emotions, values and concerns. When writers highlight their protest through their writings, society wakes up to realize and acknowledge the injustice that has been done. Protest literature brings about social change. Abraham Lincoln had stated that, "To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men." Totawad Ramrao also identifies minority literature as a literature of protest which talks about the minority experiences. He describes that: "Minority literature is known as a literature of protest against cultural and social categories. As a protest literature, it voices out against the existing system and tries to find an alternative. It also aims to bring out a picture of minority lives 'as in' in a fictional representation."

Many writers worldwide have kept this social reformation as their purpose of writing. Charles Dickens used social criticism to reflect the controversies of the day. Victor Hugo depicted corruption and depravity through his famous work, *Les Misérables*. Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky also wrote *Crime and Punishment* to criticize the younger generation. Another writer of social protest is Mark Twain who got acclaimed for his novel *Huckleberry Finn*. He highlighted the flaws of American society. In the same manner writers from minority community have also used literature of protest to express their opinions on various issues. Parsi writers through their narratives create a new world for those who have been marginalized or regarded as unacceptable by the

society. They give voice to such individuals and create an identity for homosexuals, women and blacks.

The premise of the paper will primarily use the thematic analysis of the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa and Boman Desai. An attempt is made to comprehend their minority discourse as a way of social protest. The paper aims to study social protest in general and voices of Parsi perception in particular. The premise of the paper revolves around: *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *The Pakistani Bride* (1983), *An American Brat* (1993) by Bapsi Sidhwa; and *The Memory of Elephants* (1988), and *A Woman Madly in Love* (2004) by Boman Desai.

Minority literature delineates the writer's personal and community experiences. Their subject and canvas revolves around their own ethnic experiences but involving the large picture of humanity. On one hand, these writers try to build a bridge between minority and mainstream community and on the other hand, they raise voice against the social and cultural inequalities like religion, caste, creed and gender. Some religions originated in India, while religions like Islam, Christianity and Zoroastrianism came from outside, therefore Indian subcontinent has unity in diversity. All the minorities have made their mark at cultural and social level in this multicultural nation. The writings from minority cultures and communities are important documents showing the diversity of the country. It also serves as a study of cultural conflict and social protest. Their literature helps the reader to peep into their religious, social and psychological life. Their complex and unresolved problems are put forth through their works.

Parsi writers in India have contributed a lot to the literature of the country. They have ventured deep into the field of creative writing. There are several Parsi writers whose writings in English have brought them immense fame and placed them high in the social structure. Although the number of Parsis was not large in number, their influence has been considerable in India. One has to acknowledge the Parsis for their considerable and significant

contribution to various facets of national life. Mahatma Gandhi once said about them: "In numbers Parsis are beneath contempt, but in contribution, beyond, compare."

Sidhwa is a well-known Parsi writer of international acclaim. She writes on varied range of topics but her focus is more on women and their exploitation. Her novels like *The Crow Eaters*, *Ice-Candy-Man* and *An American Brat* are the perfect examples of Parsi life. Her writings revolve around the socio-cultural arena of the Indian subcontinent. She has to her credit five novels and short stories. She uses literature to unveil the realities of the society and paving the way to development. Her women characters in the fictional world are memorable. They are fairly beautiful, intelligent, modest but strong willed, and courageous. They try to cope with the parental, societal and cultural pressure in their life as much as they can but when they find their very life or identity in danger, they throw off all shackles and fight with full force to foil the foul attempts of their adversary. Their tactics vary with the nature and strength of their opponent. Sidhwa's protagonists are mainly women and they invariably win against men in their struggle for survival and honor.

The resonance of equality is commonly in Sidhwa's novels. She beautifully explores the theme of oppression of women in *The Pakistani Bride*. The similar theme of subjugation is dealt with in *An American Brat* also. In Pakistan, poverty, sickness is some of the burning problems. Sidhwa describes the status of women there which is really disturbing. The novel brings forth the gender inequalities and women resistance in Pakistan. Through the depiction of gender and cultural differences, Sidhwa gives voice to the marginalized figures of the society. *The Pakistani Bride* is a tragic story of the interaction of two different cultural paradigms—the patriarchal mountainous tribe and the westernized urban plain. The novel is based on a true story and highlights the plight of women in the patriarchal society. They are supposed to cater to every whim and desire of men. Men are so tyrannical that

they abuse and beat even their mothers. Sakhi hits his old mother with a stick on her shoulder and legs when she tries to stop him from beating the ox. When Zaitoon intervenes, he strikes her on the thighs and head, shouting, “you are my woman! I’ll teach you to obey me!” (172-173) Likewise another female character, Ayah who becomes a victim to the lust of men during the Partition riots in *Ice-Candy-Man* is another victim-figure. Ayah is the highly victimized woman who suffers excruciating pain and agony at the hands of the mob that tears her apart.

An American Brat is the story of a young woman who journeys through three cultures—her own community, Pakistan’s Islamic culture and the western culture. The novel talks specifically of Firoza’s understanding of her own culture and other cultures that distance offers. In this novel, Bapsi explores the conflict between Parsiness and the temptation of the Western world. Firoza went to America to become liberal, but actually she became more liberal than her family’s expectations. Her struggle becomes representative of all the Parsis in Diaspora. The theme of women victimization is handled beautifully by Bapsi. Firoza’s quest for belonging is personal when she wants to know all about the political activities in Pakistan saying ‘I should know all about my country’ (231), she struggles inside when she attempts to be modern outwards. “Every time she went out with Jo and flirted modestly with strange young men, she wondered what her family would have to say of her conduct if they knew.” (163) Her conflict is social also when sudden swing from Lahore to New York disorients her.

Boman Desai is a talented Indian Parsi Diasporic writer. He has four novels to his credit, two non-fictions and few short stories. He was honored with an Illinois Arts Council Award for a short-story *Under the Moon* and a Stand Magazine Award for another short-story *A Fine Madness*. He published his first novel *The Memory of Elephants* in 1988 which is set against the backdrop of history of Parsi religion. It concerns with the question of Parsi

identity- all the identities like religion, ethnicity, history and consciousness of elite status are dealt with. His use of distinctive characterization and rich narrative style makes Desai the most prolific and quint essential contributor in the list of Parsi novelists with, Firdaus Kanga, Bapsi Sidhwa, Farrukh Dhondy, Rohinton Mistry and Saros Cowasjee. His personal experiences gave him subtle understanding of different cultures which are sensitively reflected in his novels.

Boman in *A Woman Madly in Love* unfolds a rich, talented Parsi woman's exploitation in various ways by selfish men. A young, modern Farida from an upper-class Parsi family, met her fate in the form of infidelity of her husband Horace. Horace asked her not to create a scene. He called it her enlightenment. To his surprise, Farida "grabbed his tie, jerked his head down to slap him. She held him by his tie like a dog on a leash, slapping him again." (322) She decides to take divorce and comes back to India. She realizes that she has been running away from life and she needs to confront it. She remained strong and wanted to lead an independent life. Desai succeeds in presenting his women characters as hardworking and independent. She decides to explore her options "in the anonymity of Chicago where she was just Farida, if anything handicapped by solitude, her color, and lack of antecedents, than in Bombay where she would always be first a Cooper. In each case she felt left out, marginalized. However, more than the actual side-lining it is her own perception which marginalizes and isolates her. Farida's predicament is that she keeps herself locked away feeling her marginal position as a woman, as a minority and as an immigrant segregates her and she is unsure about belonging. "Parsis were a minority in India, in America a minority within a minority, and she had distanced herself not only from the community of Parsis and Indians, but from all the institutions that provided stability: family, religion, country." (157)

Rashna B Singh identifies this cultural difference as one of the characteristics of Postcolonial Parsi fiction writers. She

explains: “Writers such as Bapsi Sidhwa, Boman Desai, Thrity Umrigar, Rohinton Mistry and others reconstitute Parsi identity as always provisional and recognize myriad choices and selves within it. Since marking difference is crucial to the narrative of monolithic nationness, these writers differ in the Derridean sense of difference.” It is this distinct ethnicity what Narendra Kumar suggests with the help of Ghettos and Baags. The Parsis have built themselves into ‘Baags’ or small enclosed communities of residential housing donated by philanthropic Parsis. He feels that the blacks and the Parsis share a common predicament. He asserts that “The Parsees in general and the Parsees in post-independence India in particular, shut themselves out from the mainstream Indian life. They live in a self-imposed exile. The existence in ‘baags’ is one of degradation. Rather xenophobic, they lead an insular life in which socio-cultural paradigms of Zoroastrian worldview are accorded due priority.” These characteristic Diasporic features of problems of identification suggesting the possible efforts to establish their own space are found in Parsi writers.

Parsis feel the need to protest socially because their community is very small. In an attempt to safeguard their cultural and social set, what they strive hard to preserve, they find it difficult to endure the behavior and treatment of the majority people. Parsis are peace loving people. Adaptation and loyalty are their qualities. Both the writers, have an expansive view of life. Both of them treat human foibles and follies with corrective humor and irony. The theme of cultural difference weaves and initiates their writing. Parsis form as an ethno-religious minority who are the faithful followers of Zoroastrianism. Being the minority community, the Parsis feel insecure, alienated, and nostalgic and feel threatened by the dominant Hindu culture. Parsi writers then are inclined to write about contemporary socio-political issues faced by Parsi people. These writers represent their protest against their minority status. In an attempt to preserve their ethnicity, they show resistance to cultural assimilation.

Desai's characters never seem to have the desire to break their social reserve. Longing and belonging is additionally handled by Desai as an effective defense mechanism. Desai's protagonist Homi, in *The Memory of Elephants*, terribly agonized by his disappointment in his love affair with Candace feels that he is nearing death. He resolves thus: "If I couldn't be with Candace the way I wanted, I would be with her the only way I could, by repeatedly reliving the memory of my night with her until it became my whole life". (403) Homi, after going to the west for studies faces rejection there. Rusi, his younger brother is all enchanted with western culture. America is 'the land of promises' for him. Like Feroza in Sidhwa's *American Brat*, Rusi experiences hostile treatment in America. The process of acculturation becomes painful there. Homi's reaction; however to this rejection is to take refuge in his own religion, Zoroastrianism, though he knew that he was not devout. He is never ready to convert to Christianity. "I was born a Parsi. My religion is Zoroastrianism but I am not devout. I believe in God, but not too much in any one religion." (386) Boman's *The Memory of Elephants* addresses itself to the relation of Parsis and India as a country to refuge what Homi resolves to call 'home'. The young characters in the novel are Anglophile Parsis, encouraged to go to Western universities. "This may be because after India's Independence, the intolerance of minorities and the 'otherness' increased here in India." (33) Parsis consider India as their homeland. Boman Desai explains the two distinct realities of Diaspora through the examples of Homi and Rusi. Rusi is all fascinated in America, got a Jewish girlfriend and is assimilated in American mainstream. But Homi could not sustain American life and craves to come back to India. He accepts his identity both of religion and country to which now he belongs. The novel after American migration finally comes to a hopeful conclusion in Bombay. Eminent critic Indira Bhatt, while reviewing the book, observes Parsi behavior to continue to follow their own religion in spite of westernization. She feels that: "Desai attempts to redefine

the Parsi anxiety of existence and survival. It is on one hand the ethnic anxiety of the Parsis for their community and on the other hand it is collective unconsciousness that Boman portrays in the novel.”(Bhatt, 21)

Both the writers belongs to Parsi community which is an ethnic minority community in India, they become the voice of the oppressed, suppressed and the depressed marginalized communities in general and the Parsi community in particular. They explore the challenges faced by the Parsi community. Their writings portray the endeavors of the community to stay on board in the wake of the challenges originating from their displacement. In this regard, Narendra Kumar’s observation is worth quoting. He says, ‘Parsi novel in English, that is novel portraying Parsi life, is a potent index of the Zoroastrian ethos. It voices the ambivalence, the nostalgia and the dilemma of the endangered Parsi community. “The fiction of Bapsi and Boman present the theme of assertion of ethnic identity. They are referred to as the writers of the second generation Indian English novelists. Novy Kapadia states: “The texts of these Parsi writers have given them and their community an identity within the dominant culture of the Indian context.”’(79) Both Bapsi and Boman’s novels exhibit characteristic features of minority discourse highlighting the socio-cultural conflicts.

Works Cited

- Bharucha, Nilufer. “Reflections in Broken Mirrors: Diverse Diasporas in recent Parsi fiction.” *Wasqfiri* (n.d.): 32-35.
- Bhatt, Indira. “Ethnic Anxiety or Collective Consciousness? A Study of Memory of Elephants.” *Parsi Fiction 2* . 2001.
- Desai, Boman. *A Woman Madly in Love*. New Delhi: Roli books, 2006.
- . *The Memory of Elephants*. Chicago: University Chicago press, 1988.

- Kapadia Novy, Jaydipsingh Dodiya, R.K.Dahavan. *Parsi Fiction*. New Delhi: Prestige, 2001.
- Klandermans, Jacqueliën van Stekelenburg and Bert. "The Social Psychology of Protest. *Sage n.d.* (2015): 12.
- Kumar, VLVN Narendra. "Ghettos and Baags: A Quest for Social Space." *epitome journals issue 1 volume 1* (2015): 140-142.
- Ramrao, Totawad Nagnath. "Minority Literature: A Critique of Retrospect." *epitome journals* (2015): 1-6.
- Sidhwa, Bapsi. *The Crow Eaters*. Milkweed editions, 2006.
- . *The Pakistani Bride*. overlook books, 2008.
- Singh, Rashna B. "Trversing Diacritical Space: Negotiating and Narrating Parsi Nationness." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (2008): 29-47.
- Tarpoorvala, Sooni. *Parsis: The Zoraastrians of India: A Photographic Journey*. overlook books, 2004.

Nisha M. Sharma

Research Scholar, RTMNU, Nagpur.

Dr. Priya D. Wanjari

Officiating Principal & Head,
Santaji Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur.

Where Did I Leave My Purdah

Urmila Dabir

Abstract

Where Did I Leave My Purdah?, is a stage play written by Mahesh Dattani. The story of the play is about a feisty, passionate and self-absorbed aged artist Nazia, who is driven by a compulsion to fulfill her artistic needs to the extent that she sacrifices her family and country. In the fulfillment of her passion she has to undergo much travail in her life. Dattani has beautifully weaved the past and the present events in the life of Nazia against the backdrop of partition of the Indian sub-continent in the play to draw attention to the guilt-ridden past and success filled career of a theatre artist, Nazia, spanning nearly sixty years.

Keywords: Protest, Rape, Motherhood, *purdah* or veil, Femininity.

John Stauffer attempts to define and explain the concept of protest literature and its effect on society in his Foreword to Zoe Trodd's *American Protest Literature*. He believes all literature to be a form of protest; he defines protest literature as a use of language that is meant to transform society and the individual living in it. Stauffer also believes that this type of literature functions as a catalyst, guide or mirror of social change. He further believes that it also goes one step further by offering solutions for changing the status of something in society that the masses are not happy with. This belief of Stauffer is appropriate in Dattani's *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?*

This play opened on 27th October 2012 at Tata Theatre, National Centre for the performing Arts, Mumbai, with Lillete Dubey as the producer and director of the performance. The story of the play is about a feisty, passionate and self-absorbed aged women artist Nazia, who is driven by a compulsion to fulfill her artistic needs to the extent that she sacrifices her family and country. In the fulfillment of her passion she has to undergo much travail in her life.

Nazia, the protagonist of the play, is theatre actress in her eighties. She has been a booming theatre actress for sixty years but is now confined to the role of grandmother in the films with few dialogues and little space on the screen. Embittered Nazia leaves her role of grandmother because cinema is too small for her which she expresses in these words:

NAZIA: . . . I want more dances. Dances that nobody can take away from me. Oh! This van is too small! It can't take my dancing. Your cinema is too small for me. My life is big. I am BIG and GENEROUS! Only the theatre deserves me! (MMP, WDP, 59).

This clearly gives an impression of Nazia as a passionate theatre artist. Nazia leaves cinema and wants to revive the 'Modern Indian Theatre' which she had started in Nineteen forty-six and some sixty-five years before, with a new name 'Post-Modern Indian Theatre'. She wants to revive Kalidasa's Sanskrit play *Abhigyan Shakuntalam* with the title *Shaku*, a modern version of it to match with the interests of the present day audiences.

Nazia has started the 'Modern Indian Theatre' company when she came to India from Lahore in 1948, the period of partition of India into India and Pakistan. Her company toured India as well as abroad with the play *Abhigyan Shakuntalam* along with other plays, though *Abhigyan Shakuntalam* was the company's grandest performance and Nazia had played the role of Shakuntala in it for forty years. No other actress was allowed to play that role by her.

Nazia, born and brought up in Lahore, has to leave the land

because her drama company was not allowed to perform drama then. During one of the performance of the dance drama *Shakuntala* in Hindustani, there was riot and Hindus were sought and were killed. There was one Hindu actor, Suhel, who played the role of Dushyant in the dance drama. He has to leave for India for his safety. Nazia too joins him and convince her sister Zarine also to join them with the words that they will set up their own drama company when they reach India. Nazia not even cares to inform her parents about their move, because she was sure she will not be allowed to move from Lahore and while living in Lahore she won't be able to continue with her dance drama and also Nazia and Suhel loved each other. Suhel reminds Nazia of the dangers she will come across on leaving Lahore. But determined Nazia confirms him with the words;

NAZIA: I don't care. I would rather die with you
than live without you (*MMP, WDP, 79*).

That night itself the three board the train to India. The entire train was occupied with Hindus migrating to India. Nazia and her sister were the only Muslim girls. On the way, when the train was to cross the border of Pakistan, they are attacked by rioters. To escape their wrath, Suhel wears a Muslim prayer cap, Nazia tries to rummage her 'burqa' – 'purdah' or 'veil' in the trunks they have carried with them which had their costumes and other things, but is not successful. Zarine gives Nazia her *burqa* and helps her to wear it. Suhel and Nazia with Muslim identity are left by the rioters, but Zarine without Muslim identity is killed by them. Zarine bids final goodbye to Nazia with the words:

ZARINE: Goodbye, my sister! Do well! Make a name for
yourself. Let your dreams be fulfilled! Inshallah, I will see
you one day in Paradise! (*MMP, WDP, 131*).

Suhel and Nazia escape the rioters; walk to cross the border to reach India. She is still wearing the 'burqa'. There she is attacked and gang raped by seven to eight Hindu men and Suhel is helpless. Her feeling of hatred and anger is appropriately expressed by the playwright:

NAZIA: . . . They pushed me down behind the bushes. Five or six or seven, eight of them. I don't know. They tore at my clothes and at my flesh. All I could think of was why isn't Suhel saving me? These are his people! I stopped looking at those eyes, so much anger and hatred! Hell-bent on humiliating me. I stared back with hatred too, but they hurt me even more till – I stopped looking into their eyes (*MMP, WDP, 132*).

Suhel and Nazia then reach the train they have left and which is loaded with dead bodies. Amongst the tangled bodies, they somehow could identify the body of Zarine. Nazia covers the body of Zarine with the torn 'burqa' she is wearing and buries her. Since then she has never worn any 'burqa' or 'veil' or 'purdah' in her life.

Suhel and Nazia reach Delhi, they start their drama company, and they even marry. Nazia becomes pregnant, not with the child of Suhel, but with the gang rapists. Nazia did not hide this from Suhel. Suhel in turn promises Nazia to bring the child as his own child. But in spite of Suhel's assurance and soothing words Nazia could not remain normal and natural in her marital relationship with Suhel which she expresses thus:

NAZIA: . . . every time he came close to me I could see that look in his eyes, I could sense it in his touch. Somewhere, we had forgotten each other . . . We only remembered the pain (*MMP, WDP, 132*).

She gives birth to a girl child, Ruby. She nurtures hatred with the child which she expresses later in the play to her thus;

NAZIA: . . . I couldn't look at you, without all that coming back! You were my flesh, wounded, humiliated. I didn't cry when you came out. I was relieved – that the tapeworms infesting my belly, left by those pigs who ate at my flesh, were out of my body (*MMP, WDP, 132*).

Suhel tried to make Nazia hold Ruby. But every time he tries, Nazia tells him to take her away. Suhel has an opinion that holding the baby will revitalize her motherhood and things will get

normal. Here observations of Adrienne Rich can be appropriately noted;

Though motherhood is the experience of women, the institution of motherhood is under male control and the physical situation of becoming a mother is disciplined by males. This glorious motherhood imposed on women conditions her entire life (Rich 45).

Ruby grows as a dejected child. Nazia never acknowledges Ruby to be her child; rather she introduces Ruby as her dead sisters' child who died while giving birth to the child. Her protest to the past incidents in her life makes the life of Ruby abandoned. Ruby was nurtured by the other actress, seamstress or washerwoman. She was made to execute trivial things like mending or sewing, or bringing cushions or flowers, or handing over a bouquet to the chief guest. Ruby longed for the love of Nazia, but instead she received disregard from her. She could even get sympathy from people around her with the words, "Poor girl, her own aunt does not want to look at her" (*MMP*, *WDP*, 124).

The anger and the resentment Ruby nurtured in her life is not confined to her, but is passed to her child, Nikhat, to the extent that the later has to seek help from a therapist in New York. Nazia's protest to the past events leaves the life of three generations including her devastated and ruined. Also, Nazia and Suhel are separated because she could not maintain healthy marital relations with him. Towards the end it is revealed that the life of Suhel is restricted to wheelchair and that he dies lonely.

About her personality Lillete Dubey has expressed in, 'A Note on the Play' thus;

... irrepressible, irreverent, iconoclastic and utterly human Nazia, who is inspired by a legion of Amazonian legends that have blazed across the stage, living, loving and even sacrificing all for their art (48).

Dattani has beautifully weaved the past and the present events in the life of Nazia against the backdrop of partition of the

Indian sub-continent in the play to draw attention to the guilt-ridden past and success filled career of a theatre artist, Nazia, spanning nearly sixty years. The actress has taken a psychological journey, while she decides to move to India during the partition, leaving behind her family and more importantly her *purdah* (the symbol of Muslim tradition) in order to establish her own theatre company in India.

Note:

The play *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?* of Mahesh Dattani selected for the present study and quoted in the body of the present research paper is abbreviated as *WDP* while referring to it.

The play has appeared in the book;

Dattani, Mahesh. *Me and My Plays*. New Delhi, India, Penguin Books, 2014.

This book has been abbreviated as *MMP* for *Me and My Plays* while referring to it in this research paper.

Works Cited

Dattani, Mahesh. “Where Did I Leave My Purdah”. *Me and My Plays*. Mahesh Dattani. New Delhi, India, Penguin Books, 2014.

Dubey, Lillete. “A Note on the Play”, *Where Did I Leave My Purdah? Me and My Plays*. Mahesh Dattani. New Delhi, India, Penguin Books, 2014.

Kaushik, Monika and Sigroha, Suman. *Facticity and Fictionality: Mahesh Dattani’s Where Did I Leave My Purdah?* School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Mandi, mellow.in/public/uploads/article/34.pdf, accessed on 24 April 2020.

Rich, Andrienne. *Of Woman Born*. New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1967.

Stauffer, John. "Foreword to American Protest Literature". *What is American Protest Literature???*,

[bu.digication.com/theunitedstagesofamerica/
John_Stauffer_Foreward_to_American_Protest_Literat](http://bu.digication.com/theunitedstagesofamerica/John_Stauffer_Foreward_to_American_Protest_Literat),
accessed on 21 April 2020.

Dr. Urmila Dabir

Principal & Head,
Rajkumar Kewalramani Kanya Mahavidyalaya,
Nagpur.

Gully Boy & Super 30: Exteriorized Class Conflict in Bollywood

Priya D. Wanjari

Abstract

In modern world, the study of entertainment media of the region proves to be the simplest way to get an idea of the culture of people living there. A movie from Norway would give the glimpses of the customs, values and the community living there. Films are the art of performing literature. The land of Bollywood is a city of Bombay, a melting pot of many cultures. The narratives of films are essential in understanding their impact on culture, and in return, the impact of culture on films. Bollywood cinema has tackled the conflicts and opposed a number of social problems prevailing in Indian society. The present paper attempts a thematic reading of the Bollywood films, 'Gully Boy' and 'Super 30'. Both the movies deal with the struggle of dark horses of Indian society who dared to change the situation around them. The class system and economic disparity in India can be studied through these films. It also showcases the external conflict of the protagonists.

Keywords: Class system, Bollywood, culture, class conflict, economic disparity.

Writers were always aware of the concept of social equality. They took class conflict as a detestable condition which should be redressed. Through their writings, they tried to eliminate social injustice and exploitation of lower class. Authors have shown the commitment towards the upliftment of the society. They point out

that poverty, ignorance, and illiteracy have all resulted into the economic inequality among the classes and the masses. Authors' determination to rid Indian society of the evils of caste and class conflict led them to write. The class struggle in the Indian context is based more on the social status of the characters. The protagonists of the Indian English novels have shown the difference in thinking. The writers through their pen pictures show that this class-consciousness born of money or social status has crushing effects on those that are at the lower rungs. They have highlighted the subaltern issue in various genres and have brought home the idea that in the story of India's progress the role of the underclass is important.

In general terms and in the western tradition, the word "class" means division. "The word "classis" means a division according to the property of the people. In its simplest form, class can be divided as a "system of ranks in society" (Hornby 153). While explaining the relation between caste and class, Sharad Patil says that

The transition from Varna to Jati marks the transition from early tribal slave societies to the feudal societies before India was colonized. With colonial society, new class relations came into being. It should be emphasized that the ruling classes of capitalists and landlords and their parties increasingly rely on caste and religious support in the race for parliamentary power.

He expresses that these differences are often linked to social ranks, access to money, usage of money, work, education, political power, lifestyle, neighborhood and social connections etc. Possession of wealth or property, social status on the basis of social positioning like caste and race are some of the criteria which decide social class. With changing time, these major elements that exacerbate class conflict such as caste and race are now fading. The rigidity of class and caste is losing its hold due to globalization. The boundaries of class and caste are becoming blurred with the spread of education and technology. Caste has also been discussed widely because caste and class are the two interlinked concepts in Indian context. A study of this concept from the economical, sociological

political and cultural aspects should be attempted. Both books and movies are sources of knowledge and are used for entertainment purposes. They have a dynamic correlation as expressions of different genres. The writers like Arvind Adiga and Mahesh Dattani expose the society in form of fiction, whereas the directors like Deepa Mehta and Zoya Akhtar make us perceive the reality through the visuals. Movies have become a new medium of expression imbued with artistic sensibility. What Montgomery feels for twentieth century is applicable for twenty first century too. "In the twentieth century, there are two culturally dominant ways of experiencing fiction available to us: the visual forms of film and the prose form of novel."

Cinema today is the record of the sharp and glaring look at India. It exposes the ancient division between the rich and the poor, existing caste system, corruption in Indian politics and the miraculous economic growth in India. It shows how it can make economic division. These movies are based on the disparities of two worlds: darkness, inhabited by poor; and the lighted world, inhabited by politicians, businessmen and land lords. Indians are confined behind bars of class, caste, economic disparity, illiteracy, zamindar system and poverty. Entertainment media is a powerful tool to transform philosophies into cultural products. Films reflect the cultures in which they are embedded. The pleasure that commercial films offer and the desire they create make them a vital part of popular culture and an important site of cultural interpretation. They are the art of performing literature. There is no doubt that some films are less realistic in their interpretation and projection of everyday reality than others. In Hindi cinema the costumes, the sets, and the lifestyles shown are often wishful rather than realistic. The narratives of films are essential in understanding their impact on culture and, in return, the impact of culture on films. The advantages of studying films for understanding cultures are manifold, even if the portrayals are stereotyped. Films can be used for teaching psychopathology as well as cultural understanding of the contemporary age.

Films, just like in literature, present action, images, and words replicating life. Literary works also have a stylistic and thematic basis in a realistic presentation of characters and incidents. Indian cinema tackled the problems of western culture clashing with Indian (Indira Ma, 1934); protested against arranged marriages and social barriers (Dev Das, 1935); protested against the caste barriers and religious bigotry (Achhut Kanya, 1936), Achhut (1940), promoted Hindu widow remarriage (Bal Yogini, 1936); fought against marriage of young girls with old persons, Duniya Na Mane (1937) and highlighted economic and social disparity (Adhikar, 1938). Contemporary Bollywood cinema has such examples like 'Pink' to oppose gender inequality, 'PK' to eradicate religious superstitions, '3 idiots' to question education system, 'Taare Jameen Par', 'Rajneeti', and many movies tackled social problems.

The paper attempts a thematic reading of the films, 'Gully Boy' and 'Super 30'. Both the movies deal with the struggle of dark horses of Indian society who dare to change the situation. Whether it is 'Apna Time Aayega', or 'Niyam Ho', one person alone, from lower class has guts to see the problem, fights with the odds, and comes up with all the possible solutions. Both the movies are based on real stories of such heroes from India, the Mumbai street rapper Divine and Naezy and the well-known IIT coach 'Anand Kumar' from Patna. These real heroes have brought change through their struggle which is beautifully picturized by director Zoya Akhtar and Vikas Behl.

Gully Boy's characters dream of a brave new world where they do not have to hide their true selves. They long for a society devoid of psychological clashes and conflicts. They dare to regenerate a new society that is devoid of any boundaries. The characters in the film build a very strong identity. They are born into a system which is incapable of accommodating the downtrodden in the main stream of any discourse. Both male and female protagonists are able to voice out their thoughts and have greatly contributed to enfranchise Indian youth in the modern times. The sufferings and knowledge of the self finally push them to question.

There is a fire that rages within all the central characters of these films. They will not be stopped from saying what they feel and experience. It reflects the class conflict as well as theme of existentialism throbbing in contemporary Indian society. The character of Murad, around whom the plot is spin, is played by Ranveer Singh. Art like hip hop is a distant dream for a poor son of a driver, Murad, from Mumbai's slum area. We see how different parts of him surface on different occasions. He is a student by day and a car-jacker by night. Murad pours his frustration and claustrophobia into the words he feverishly pens in his diary. Murad lives more within than outside. On the outside his body is stiff, alert to the weariness he carries. But inside, we can hear his commentary on stuff happening around him, accompanied by his rant about how it should be.

Zoya Akhtar, the director, said in an interview:

My narrative is about the class system.... It's about the economic disparity and how the characters are dealing with that.

But *Gully Boy* is not another angry young man's class struggle of the 80's. Zoya Akhtar, like an existentialist, has brought the problem of choice and liberty in her film and has shown us the struggle of characters like the struggle of individual beings, for their choice and liberty against social conditions. Murad and Safeena, though hailing from different socio-economic backgrounds, have a freedom song on their lips. For Murad, breaking free is about leaving his squalid surroundings behind (*"Iss basti mein saare palkein bheege kyun hain?/ Kyun lagta hai yeh basti andha kuaan hain?"* he jots down through his tears at one point); for her, it's as simple as being allowed to apply lipstick. Murad has his long term girlfriend Safeena, who is another strong character of the film played by Alia Bhatt. The film is not merely about Murad and his struggle cum success story. Apart from being Murad's girlfriend, Safeena is another fighter from the movie. Her focus on her career becomes visible in an incident when a woman comes to see her as a

better half of her son, and asks a typical question if Safeena knows cooking. Safeena vohemantly answers, '*Nahi, magar sab thik raha, to ek din mai aapka liver transplant kar sakti hu.*' She yearns to be an independent young woman who is ready to challenge the societal norms and fight her parents to live life on her own terms. When people like Murad and Safeena, with their dreams collide with real world's disorder, the result is absurdity. They try to create their wished order then, through their actions and interpretations of life. They want to give meaning to life themselves.

In constructing complex philosophical systems, no room is left for real people anymore. That is why existentialists focus primarily on matters such as choice, individuality, subjectivity, freedom, and the nature of existence itself.

Murad's father, played by Vijay Raaj, is a victim to his circumstances. He is a realistic portrayal of abusive, selfish self. He is a man who takes a hand to his wife or adult son because he believes he is 'entitled' to guide them this way. When he comes to know about Murad's pursuit of his dream, he asks Murad not to fight the natural course of life, but Murad is quite sure of his choice' '*Main nahi badalta apna sapna apne sachai se mel khane ke vaaste ... main apna sachai badlega joh mere sapne se mel khaye*'. He knows who he is and what he can do. He is full of rage and says, '*Abhi koi aur bataega main kaun hai ?*' His life is happening and he is involved wholeheartedly for achieving success.

*Ab hauslese jeene de, ab khauf nahi hai seene me,
Har raste ko cheereenge, hum kaamyabi chhinenge,
Sab kuch mila paseenese, matlab bana ab jeeneme,
Kyu? Kyunki Apna Time Aayega..*

Ranveer Singh, who has made Murad linger in our minds with, '*Main kuch hoon aur meri koi aukaat hai*', discloses how he uses his own experiences for playing such roles.

There are parts of an actor's own life experiences that you have to tap into and mould around your character. It's

already within you – you have to pluck it out, twist it around and use it. Whatever dark experiences I had in my life, I tapped into for Khilji. Whatever struggle I have had in my life, whether it comes to career or relationships, I used that for Gully Boy.

Another film ‘Super 30’ drives home the message that education is truly the privilege of those who have the access and economic resources. Unfortunately, for many it remains a distant dream, but if given the same opportunities they have it in them to shine equally bright. There are many moments in the movie that will prove the point. After starting his Super 30 classes, Anand has to literally scrape through – with often the students barely having anything to eat. But their real hunger is for better education and a better life. ‘Super 30’ has several heartfelt, inspiring moments that touch a chord. When Anand says at one point, “Aapatti se aavishkar ka janm hota hain”, you do believe him, especially after having seen how driven his batch of students are, leaving behind their impoverished lives and literally daring to dream big.

Based on mathematician Anand Kumar’s struggles in setting up Super 30, an institute for coaching underprivileged children for IIT entrance exams, the film puts on display, Kumar’s valiant attempts to alter grass root reality. Most certainly, it is the perfect India-shining story to spotlight and the makers put in a sincere effort. “*Raja ka beta raja nahi banega, Raja wahi banega jo haqdar hoga.*” The line from the film is the peg that Super 30 hangs on. Anand (Hrithik Roshan) is depicted as a modern-day Srinivasan Ramanujan who is on his way to Cambridge university, even if it means leaving behind his sweetheart Supriya (Mrunal Thakur). Anand’s proud postman father Eshwar (Virendra Saxena), cannot contain his glee. He plants a kiss on his wife’s cheek, draws down from his pension fund, and makes the sacrifices that working-class Indian parents must make to propel their talented progeny towards futures brighter than their own. When tragedy strikes the family, Anand chooses to become the star teacher at the Excellence coaching class chain backed by corrupt minister Shri Ram Singh

(Pankaj Tripathi) and run by the ambitious Lallan Singh (Aditya Srivastava). Excellence reels in wealthy and middle-class hopefuls and Anand's bank balance swells. But a chance encounter with a waiter who is trying to keep up with his mathematics lessons pricks Anand's conscience. The life journey of this fearless, selfless, educationist who walks an extra mile to improve his underprivileged students moves the spectators. We feel empathy for him. The story moves at an even pace, brings out hero's humanism and generosity. But the criticism done on certain aspects point out that the real effort to give these disempowered students a chance to edify their lives has been much dramatized. The latter half of the movie till climax has melodramatic leaps.

Hrithik Roshan has definitely gotten into the skin of his character of a Bihari Maths teacher by hitting the right chords with a soulful and emotional message in each moment of the movie. Actor Tiger Shroff who is a huge fan of him lauded his idol for super 30. Hrithik was overwhelmed when he got response from real Anand Kumar. Super 30 recently received appreciation from the Vice President of India, Venkayya Naidu. Super 30 addresses and acknowledges the importance of teachers in the building and strengthening of society and the pivotal role they play at the base level in shaping up an individual which in turn leads to the shaping up of a society. But few have criticized Hritik for accent and few for artificial skin color,

Can someone tell us why every poor person in *Super 30* is so very grimy? Did they engage in a spot of friendly mud wrestling before cracking the books open with Kumar? Bollywood's problems with brown face were evident in *Gully Boy*, too —

Jha feels that casting fair skinned actor and then changing skin color to show a particular class of society, actually goes in contradiction to the equality message the movies have. While Anna MM Vetticad feels that, '*Writer Sanjeev Dutta also confuses class with caste when he shows the snobbery of Anand's upper-caste*

girlfriend's father melt away as soon as the boy starts making big money.' But in modern India, one can relate class conflict to economic position as well as caste.

This film can be watched to understand the long-drawn struggle of Anand Kumar, one of the biggest agents of change of our times in the field of education. If you ask any student who has been a part of Super 30, he will tell you like Anup Raaj who has become a serial-entrepreneur, how 'Anand Sir turned studies into a fun activity. There is so much competition in the world outside, but at Super 30, we were taught to find our individual strengths, focus on our merits and build confidence. These simple but experiential learning have helped us look beyond our problems, develop ideas, lead teams and become successful.' The film showcased this quality in many scenes. At the same time the film throws up pertinent questions about India's ever-expanding coaching industry. Sreeparna Sengupta from *The Times of India* comments that 'Not all superheroes wear capes.' She writes about the film, "While the narrative does have its flaws, *Super 30* is a human drama and the story of a teacher who triumphs over the many challenges that life throws at him, to set an example for the world to see. Just for that it's worth a watch."

Actor Aditya Srivastav's attitude towards rich students is clear when he introduces Anand Kumar to them saying, '... *Inhone Padha Diya To Aap VIP Logo Ke VIP Entry Ho Jaige IIT Mein*'. The sentence signifies the various sections of students as per their economical strata. He is all set to convince Anand Kumar to leave his unpractical pursuit. 'Langday Ghode Ko Derby Ke Race Mein Nahe Utartay Anand Babu... Inko Station Ke Bahar Tattu Bana Ke Do Do Rupay Mein Sawari Karatay Hai.' But Anand could never forget that in spite of his genius, he couldn't go to Cambridge because of his poverty. He would not let these children face similar obstacles. He is obsessed with the determination to make a rule (niyam) which would support the child who would score high from whatever class he may be. He wants to uproot all differences saying,

Kya lena zaat se
Kya lena naam se
Pehchaane sabko unke kaam se
Boye dastoor ne jitne matbhed hain
Unko jad se mita sakein...

The analysis of the selected films shows that the postcolonial societies are now shaping in synch with a new global world and the boundaries of race, class, caste and culture are gradually blurring. Protagonists of both the films are anchors of belief. The assumed underdog or scapegoat makes all the difference. In such social system everybody who has a skill and talent gets equal opportunities of advancement. The individual possessing potential to change the situation can become successful. They long for a society devoid of psychological clashes and conflicts. They dare to regenerate a new society that is devoid of any boundaries. The characters in the films build a very strong identity. Taking up these examples, the attempt was made to understand how a film as a medium can communicate different social issues and their solutions.

Works Cited

- Cline, Austine. "Learn Religions." 4 february 2019. *What is existentialism?* 18 april 2019. <www.learnreligions.com/introduction-to-existentialism-249935>.
- Jha, Aditya Mani. "What's Super About Super 30?" *The Hindu business line* july 26 2019.
- Montgomery, M., A.Durant, S.Mills, N.Fabb & T.Furniss. *Ways of Reading: Advanced reading skills for students of English Literature*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Nair, Divya. "rediff.com get ahead." 11 july 2019. *rediff.com*. <<https://www.rediff.com/getahead/report/7-lessons-i-learned-from-super-30s-anand-kumar/20190711.htm>>.
- Panchal, Komal R.J. "Zoya Akhtar: Gully Boy is about the class

- system.” *The Indian Express* 14 february 2019.
- Patil, Sharad. “Dialectics of Caste and Class Conflicts.” *Economic and Political Weekly* July 1979.
- Reuters. “Ranveer Singh used his struggles for Gully Boy.” *Hindustan Times* 9 february 2019.
- Vetticad, Ann MM. *IST Super 30 film review: firstpost.com*. 12 july 12 2019
- <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4367349?seq=1> for sharad patil
- <https://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/zoya-akhtar-gully-boy-director-rappers-hip-hop-film-azadi-song-5581742/> for panchal
- <https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-existentialism-history-250577> for cline austin
- <https://www.hindustantimes.com/bollywood/ranveer-singh-says-he-used-his-struggles-in-career-relationships-for-gully-boy/story-paSjUdl79UbviHqLpRBEBJ.html> for reuters
- <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/blink/watch/whats-super-about-super-30/article28719421.ece> for jha aditya
- <https://www.firstpost.com/entertainment/super-30-movie-review-hrithiks-uneven-acting-patchy-storytelling-and-a-narrow-take-on-caste-dilute-a-gutsy-theme-6976391.html> for vetticad
- <https://www.rediff.com/getahead/report/7-lessons-i-learned-from-super-30s-anand-kumar/20190711.htm> for nair

Dr. Priya D. Wanjari
Principal & Head Dept of English
Santaji Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur

Poetry Section

How much Land does a man need?

Shyaonti Talwar

How much Land does a man need?
I don't know, do you?
Perhaps, how much suffices
To look out for his creed?
You *think* so, do you?
Well, *you* tell me then.
I will need a paper and a pen
for that. It's Land you see
It's nothing, if there's no deed.
hmmm.....So let's see
How *much* land does a man need?

Land to seed and land to sow
Land to rear so things can grow
Land to plot and lay claim to
Land to put aside and pass on to.
Land to control and drive out
Land to affirm and assert his clout
Land to wall in, land to wall out
Land to silence and bury the shout
Land to ravage and to plunder.
Land to tear bodies asunder
Land to fill and land to empty

How much Land does a man need?

Land to bill and land to....you know... kill.
Land to fight for, land to die for
Land to drop a bomb
Land to wage a war
Land to change a people
Land to shoot a star.

Land to abuse, land to bleed
Really, how much land does a man need!

Dr. Shyaonti Talwar
Assistant Professor of English
ELT Consultant and Trainer
RNC Arts, JDB Commerce and
NSC Science College Nashik.

Poetry In The Time Of Pandemic

Supantha Bhattacharyya

Is this the way the world ends,
Not with a bang, not even a whimper,
But staring as Death sniggers and simpers
Riding sun-rayed pathogens?

Ah love, let us be true
And not wash hands off each other in drops and drips,
Even if socially distanced, I and you,
Can at least celebrate the festival of apocalypse!

.....

Danse Macabre

The pied piper now wears the crown
And leads billions of dancing rats
To the brink of the precipice
Playing his merry tune.

Maybe, soon, along shall come a pup,
Born deaf to the lethal melody,
Find his spine, stand up and shout,
“Hey King! Where are your clothes?”

Dr. Supantha Bhattacharyya
Associate Professor, Dept. of English,
Hislop College, Nagpur.

The River Godavari

Ranjana Sharan Sinha

Godavari in the arms of evening,
The hush of descending hours;
A hazy surreal beauty in the making
Beyond the human powers!

The horizon sun: A big red zircon
Suspended with a chain of gold,
Like a pendent hangs on her bosom:
Reflections on the ripples' fold.

Cool and innocuous the river flows
Alive in an endless panoply
Of agony and ecstasy, joy and sorrow,
Thinning the line between real and fantasy.

Immortal mysteries of mortals:
Sometimes frozen, sometimes moving,
Ashes of the deceased, the devotee's flowers,
Abode of psyches dead and living.

Fossils of unanswered thought in depths unknown
Curiously appear on the surface terrain,
I look at Godavari to find the answers
And feel the waters in my vein!

Night Rain

Rimjhim rain
Falls like whispers
From the wet sky
Receding moonlight

Mists and clouds
The coolness of night
Fascinating and poetic
The soft susurrations

A toast of love
Cheers! Slainte! Kampai!
Clinking of goblets
Transparent and crystalline

The bronze and russet sunlight
Held within by water
The colour wraps itself
Around my fluttering heart

And seeps into my veins
The metaphor of rain
Hurts and heals
Quaint contradictions!

Dr. Ranjana Sharan Sinha

Poet and author,
Rtd. Professor, S.B. City College, Nagpur.

Whither Are We Going?

Priti Singh

The nightly raids of ghastly bloodbaths and gruesome killings,
Unbelievably the handiwork of so called humans, bestial and distasteful;

Demons of destruction, angels of wrath targeting innocent lives
with stone pelting,

Murderous assaults in neighbourhoods rife with mayhem , utterly disgraceful!

Prophets of protest where are you headed for, what is your demand?

Mercilessly roaming with pellet guns, attacking with acid, burning
your own motherland?

Shameless creatures, wayward youths do you think you are the new
age revolutionaries,

Robbing people of their livelihood, holding hostage your own
nation, bereft of all ties?

Horror, Hatred, Aversion, Acrimony, Disdain, Disgust, Grudge,
Resentment, where is the end?

Whither are we going? Towards illumination or towards
annihilation, wake up before it is too late, before we are doomed.

(Written in the aftermath of the North East Delhi Riots 23rd to 27th
February 2020).

Planet Earth In Despair

Priti Singh

The entire world is plunged in a state of despair,
It seems as if Mother earth has taken time off for repair.
Burdened she is, with loads of ambition, flocking power- mongers
with lustful greed;
Increasing appetites, ravenous desires, unlimited wants indicate
an urgent, unending need.
Destroying the ecosystem has become his latest craze,
Proud of his nuclear weapons with which he can in no time,
countries and boundaries erase.
Superimposing himself on other earthly creatures,
This human has forgotten that he alone was never in possession
of Nature.
Hidden under the garb of civilization, he savagely displays his
barbarism,
In the name of progress and development he has become devoid
of all moralism.
Uncivilised he was, when he first set foot on this planet earth,
But learnt to be friendly with her and was enthusiastic to please
her;
Learnt innumerable tricks from her to survive and sustain,
Exploited her nurturing care, trying to tame and to restrain
her cascading wilderness, her exuberant foliage, fauna and flora,
Disregarding, unheeding, and unmindful of his actions in
plethora.
Has invited divine wrath unto himself and is trying to hide his
face,

Annoyed with his gregariousness God is out to punish the human race.

You have to pay a heavy price for creating this grave threat,
O! Human, Don't take this planet for granted -- Respect or
Regret.....

Remember, Life is a Gift from above, a treasure to cherish;
So learn to appreciate all creatures of creation, Protect or be ready
to Perish.

(Composed in the wake of Pandemic COVID -19, which has forced
quarantine, isolation and social distancing).

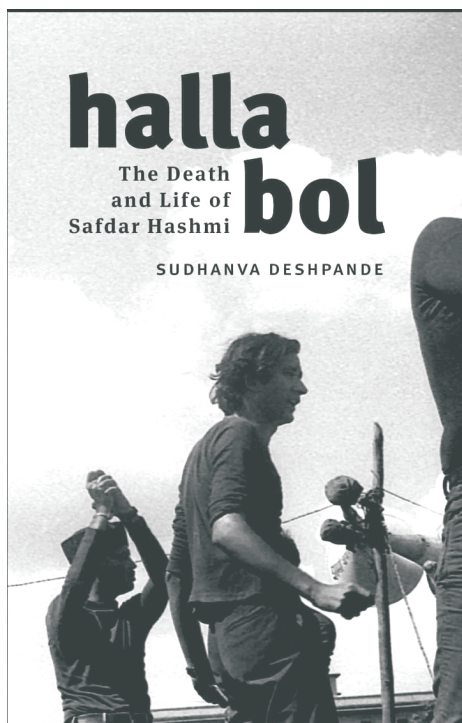
Mrs. Priti Singh

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Dr. Ambedkar College, Nagpur.

Book Reviews



HALLA BOL: The Murder of a Theatre Activist

Dr. Supantha Bhattacharyya

Safdar Hashmi! The name is now forgotten by millennials. At least it no longer evokes the complex sense of elation, sorrow, and anger that it did to those who lived in the 1990s. Street theatre in Delhi emerged as a legitimate art form in the wake of the Emergency and the Sikh genocide of 1984. Mainstream theatre was still focused chiefly on puerile entertainment with social concerns being rarely given a passing nod. Safdar and his group, Jan Natya Manch (JANAM) produced hard hitting street plays in solidarity with

workers reflecting their everyday concerns, projecting their oppression and raising awareness for their rights. He became a legend in his own lifetime, found an ideal soulmate in Moloyashree, and, with his uncanny understanding of the medium, raised the street play to the status of respectability. *Halla Bol* was the play Hashmi was performing with his group at a labour colony in Jhandapur in 1989 when he was brutally attacked by Congress cadre leading to his death. As Sudhanva Deshpande – who was a young student/theatreperson then – writes poignantly in the introduction, “Theatre is make-believe; theatre is life. It is ephemeral, momentary, fleeting, transient, a wisp of smoke; it is palpable, organic, aromatic, acidic, a bean of coffee. And it sometimes reeks of blood. The blood spilled on the brick-paved streets of a working-class neighbourhood on a perfect winter Sunday morning. This is not a story of death. It is a story of life. The luminous life of Safdar Hashmi, extraordinary in all its ordinariness.” Hashmi graduated from St. Stephen’s College, Delhi with a degree in English Literature, and went on to complete his M.A. in English from Delhi University. During this period, he became associated with the cultural unit of the Students’ Federation of India, the student wing of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and eventually with the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA). In the years before and after his graduation, he worked on several plays with IPTA, such as *Kimlesh*, and *Dekh Lena*. JANAM grew out of the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) and was associated with the Communist Party of India (Marxist), with which he was actively involved in the 1970s. When Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was accused of rigging the elections, he produced a street play, *Kursi, Kursi, Kursi* (Chair, Chair, Chair), as a reaction to the controversy. The play narrates the story of a king whose throne moves with him when he attempts to give it up in favour of an elected representative. The play was performed every day for a week, at the Boat Club Lawns in New Delhi, then a hub of political activity. It proved to be a turning point for JANAM. Until 1975, JANAM performed open-air proscenium

and street plays for mass audiences. When Indira Gandhi imposed a state of emergency and made political theatre difficult, Hashmi began to work as a lecturer in English literature in universities in Garhwal, Kashmir, and Delhi. When the Emergency ended in 1977, he returned to political activism, and in 1978, JANAM revived street theatre in a big way with *Machine*, which was performed for a trade union meeting of over 200,000 workers on 20 November 1978. This was followed by plays on the distress of small peasants (*Gaon Se Shahar Tak*), on violence against women (*Aurat*), on clerical fascism (*Hatyare & Apharan Bhaichare Ke*), on unemployment (*Teen Crore*) and on inflation (*DTC ki Dhandhli*). Hashmi also produced several documentaries and a TV serial for Doordarshan, including *Khilti Kaliyan* (Flowers in Bloom), which examined rural empowerment. He also wrote books for children and criticism of the Indian stage. Hashmi's output includes two proscenium plays – an adaptation of Maxim Gorky's *Enemies* (1983) and *Moteram ka Satyagraha* (with Habib Tanvir, 1988) – and documentary films. He was the de facto director of JANAM, and prior to his death, it gave about 4,000 performances of 24 street plays, mostly in working-class neighbourhoods, factories and workshops. On New Year's Day, 1989, the JANAM troupe began a performance of the street play *Halla Bol* (Raise Your Voice!), during the Ghaziabad municipal elections in Sahibabad's Jhandapur village (near Delhi). During the performance, the troupe was viciously attacked by political hoodlums of the ruling party. Hashmi was fatally injured and died the following day. On 4 January 1989, two days after his death, his wife Mala (Moloyshree) Hashmi defiantly revisited the same spot with the JANAM troupe, and completed the play. Hashmi has become a symbol of cultural resistance against authoritarianism for the Indian left. The writer Bhisham Sahni, along with a number of other artists, founded the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT) in February 1989, as an open platform for politically and socially conscious artists. Today, Hashmi's torch is carried ahead by the indefatigable Qamar Azad (Hashmi's mother) had written a book earlier on Hashmi's life, *The Fifth*

Flame (1997). Sudhanva Deshpande uses personal anecdotes, historical facts and theatrical lore to highlight the necessity of the lone crusader in a capitalist, consumerist society who becomes the strident voice of its conscience, and reminds us, like Dr. Stockman, “The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone.”

HALLA BOL: The Death and Life of Safdar Hashmi by Sudhanva Deshpande

LeftWord Books 2254/ 2A Shadi Khampur New Ranjit Nagar

New Delhi 110008 INDIA. January 2020

Rs. 444 [Hardcover], Rs. 236 [Kindle]

Dr. Supantha Bhattacharyya

Associate Professor, Dept. of English,
Hislop College, Nagpur.

Cenacle: A Peer reviewed Annual Journal of English

ISSN 2231-0592

Cosmos Impact Factor 5.450

Code of Ethics

This Code of Ethics has been evolved for the publications in the research journal titled “Cenacle”. It has been developed to articulate the importance of integrity and maintain high quality of research material that is being published.

- All the authors/poets/reviewers are expected to submit original work, which has not been published elsewhere.
- Plagiarism and passing of another's work as one's own is not permitted.
- Resorting to plagiarism and misrepresentation of involvement or authorship, amount to a failure to adhere to meet ethical standards and integral practices. Such actions mandates to re-do and directions for resubmission or deletion.
- There should be honesty in collection of data, data analysis and interpretation, methods and procedures, results writing, and publication status and other aspects of research where objectivity is expected or required which should not affect the research which is be open to criticism and new ideas.
- Proper acknowledgement, citation or credit should be given.
- The Editors will always be willing to publish corrections, clarifications, retractions and apologies when needed.
- Any violation of the Code of Ethics will result in immediate rejection of the manuscript/paper, without further consideration.

Call for Papers

(Vol. 11)

Cenacle is a peer reviewed, annual National Journal of English which endeavors to promote research in Literature and language. The next issue of Cenacle: Volume I. No, 11, which will be published in January 2021, will have as the focus area: **Pandemic fear and Literature.**

Apocalyptic and Post apocalyptic fiction in modern literature are examples of how humans have predicted and reacted to the various pandemics in human history. Events revolving around civilizations, related to nature, environment or technological failure have found expression in all genres of literature. By the time we publish the next issue hopefully the world would have surpassed the ravages created by the Covid 19. "Literature regards each individual with compassion and goes deeper than what statistics or historical records can tell us. Literature may not explain away or fight off things such as pandemics, even as modern science sometimes can't, but it does become a source of consolation, a way of sharing our common humanist concerns, and, in its own way, provides the deepest and most insightful records of the events" as rightly said by Harish Trivedi.

Contributors are requested to select areas which can become source for further research. Only original unpublished papers will be selected.

We also invite Book Reviews on recent publication (2020-21). The book reviews should be accompanied by the jpg format of the book reviewed. The write up should not exceed 2000 words.

Selected Poems are also published with a short bio-note of the poet.

All contributions must reach us by **last week of Feb. 2021.**

The research paper should not exceed 3000 words. Each paper should have an abstract of 150-200 words with 8-12 key words. This is the format of the journal. The writers should conform to MLA style sheet 8th edition. Only softcopies will be accepted. Peers have the right to reject/modify articles.

Contact:

Email <shubhamishra2007@gmail.com>

M: 09422802462

