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Connections/Disconnections:
Literary Traditions, Continuities & Disruptions

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Editorial Note

MEJO, or the MELOW Journal of World Literature, is a peer-refereed e-journal brought out biannually by MELOW, the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World. It is a reincarnation of the previous publications brought out in book or printed form by the Society right since its inception in 1998.

MELOW is an academic organization, one of the foremost of its kind in India. The members are college and university teachers, scholars and critics interested in literature, particularly in World Literatures. The Organization meets every year over an international conference. It seeks to maintain academic standards, encourages and grooms younger scholars, and provides a forum for senior scholars in literature.

The papers presented at MELOW conferences are screened, selected, edited and published by a Board of Editors especially appointed for the purpose. Whereas in the initial years the Society favoured a book publication, in subsequent years it was a journal that was published annually. With the changing times, MELOW decided to move on to online publication. The result is MEJO.

Dear readers, this is the fourth volume of MEJO, the MELOW Journal. This issue contains essays from the 2020 conference held at Chandigarh. The papers have been selected by a panel of reviewers from the presented and revised submissions.

We, at MELOW, wish you happy reading!

EDITORS

About MELOW

MELOW (The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World) was first set up in 1998 as MELUS-India. It is an academic organization, among the foremost of its kind in India. The members are college and university teachers, scholars and critics interested in literature, particularly in world literatures, and literature across borders of time and space. The organization meets every year over an international conference. It seeks to maintain academic standards, encourages younger scholars and provides a forum for senior scholars in literature.

The MELOW revamped journal has existed in hard print for about a decade. The present issue comprises a selection of papers presented at the 2020 MELOW Conference in Chandigarh.

Our website: www.melow.in
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ISAAC SEQUEIRA MEMORIAL FUND

Professor Isaac Sequeira
(5 January 1930--7 September 2006)

Professor Isaac Sequeira from Hyderabad, who worked at the Osmania University and was closely associated with the ASRC, Hyderabad, was a mentor and patron to several generations of academics in India. His sad demise in 2006 created a void hard to fill. We, at MELOW, wish to keep alive the memory of our Patron and guiding light who played a key role in all the activities of our organization.

We have set up an Isaac Sequeira Memorial Fund out of which a cash prize of Rs.5,000 is awarded for the **best paper presented at our conferences** (see details below).*

With effect from the 2010 conference, there is a **Special Invited Lecture** by a person of eminence funded by the Isaac Sequeira Memorial Fund.

Several individuals have come forward to offer contributions towards the corpus and donated generously to the ISM fund. Donations of Rs.1,000 or more may be sent in cash/by draft **payable to MELOW at Chandigarh**. Contributions may be mailed by registered post/courier to Prof Aneel Raina, Dept of English, Panjab University, Chandigarh-160014.

THE ISM AWARD

- In the memory of Prof Isaac Sequeira, MELOW annually awards a prize for the best paper presented at its conference. The award comprises a certificate and a cash prize of Rs.5,000.
- The competition is open to Indian citizens who are members of MELOW. The participant/delegate should be less than forty years of age at the time of the conference. The abstract and complete paper should be submitted by the stipulated deadlines before it is presented at the conference.
- A panel of Judges is appointed by the Office Bearers of MELOW.
- If required, these rules may be amended by a simple majority of members present and voting at the Conference.

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Keynote Address MELOW 2020

The Value of Endorsing Great Books

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To valorize specific texts, and present them as an embodiment of human culture, assumes a common standard of literary taste. When books move through an endorsement of their literary value, they become powerful representations of a canon. But great books have to be read and reread. There is no escape from the fact of reading.

Today in a post-canonical age we still need both a literary "aesthetic" and "cultural" value to understand authoritative or populist texts (Damrosch 135). The Enlightenment emphasis on universal aesthetics of literature and modern emphasis on the politics of literature are two perspectives of the ideology of canon making. Both cultural relativism and postmodernism have eroded Hume's universal boundary of taste. The formalists endorse free imagination and literary value. The communitarians see texts as culturally loaded repositories of cultural knowledge. The postmodernists find no value-free position outside the framework of culture. So today we emphasize political identity more than literary aesthetics in canon formation.

Literature has the power to free us from bondage, help us to enter the skin of civilizations, and create a parallel world of aesthetic pleasure and significance. Literature may arise from many social factors, but the literary text must interact with the reader in profound ways.

Reading is an individual enterprise. Great works of literature bring to us the distilled experience of humanity which rise as unbiased "delicacy of imagination" (Hume 16). But what we read also comes to us from prescribed anthologies and textbooks created by university professors or literary elites.

Books become classics and classics acquire the force of a canon. Canons are created by literary assumptions, consensus, representative values and taste forming groups that force canon makers to believe in their veracity. Canons determine university syllabi, define anthologies, create departments and give jobs. Ideological attacks on the canon or call for their expansion are often connected to an altered demography, connected to identity politics and a desire to create a tolerant and just world.

We saw in the 1980s and 1990s canon wars in America when some wanted to teach a specific text, others to expunge it, and yet others to teach the conflict itself. American canon wars had some reverberations in Europe and Asia but by the time they arrived in these regions, they were already over.

We saw the rise of pre-colonial canon in India in the early nineteenth century, colonial canons in the twentieth century and Indian English canon in the post-1980s. The Anglophonic debates on literary canons usually dealt with revision or expansion. The German debates on canonicity were more ontological investigating the nature, mechanism and maintenance of the canon (Hartling 4).

Expanding the canon may be good only if such expansion is based on excellence not privilege. Expanding the canon by expunging old texts may be a problem. The question that remains: should canonical revision be guided by social justice or aesthetic value? The Germans tried to escape the question by investigating the principles by which canons develop., sustain themselves and disappear. Goethe and Schiller created the German canon to promote national identity (Gorak 545). Today German scholars are talking about emerging digital canon. The first MLA session in Chicago on canon in the 1970s (1973) dealt with questions of individual identity. In 2020 we see an emergence of a Far-Right canon with William Pierce (*Turner Diaries*, 1978, founder of National Alliance) and Jean Raspail (*The Camp of the Saints*, 1973) writing dystopian and racist novels.

Origins

Most canonical writings begin in religious sanction. Dominant canons carry cultural and political authority. Canon implies not only rule and list but also norm, pattern, model and interaction. (Thomassen 9). In the west the religious canon centered upon the Bible. In the nineteenth century canon became both literary and nationalistic, often excluding ethnic texts. Being excluded from the canon meant oblivion. If you were not published, you were not read.

MELOW aspires to give significance to ethic literatures in the English language, the lingua franca of global liberal academia. So, to bring ethnic representation on world stage the translation-industry must work hard. Translating cultures and placing them in ethnic canons bring them into the classrooms. It is believed that ethnic texts improve multi-ethnic understanding and reduce misunderstanding.

In the last decade American Amazon and Internet have globalized discussions of literary canons and the texts they promote. Kindle tablets now bring to you the Greek canon, the Latin Canon, the Sanskrit canon, the Pali canon, the Chinese canon, the Buddhist canon, the Pali canon, the colonial British canon, the post 1980s Indian canon, the regional language canon. We do not have time to read all canonical works in one lifetime. This is a regret.

Prescribing a canon and making money from selling canonical texts was done by ancient libraries. Today digital libraries and universities do the same. Ptolemy's The Great Royal Library of Alexandria (during the second and third century BC) functioned as publisher, bookstore and library housing over 400,000 books. The Library recommended exemplary books to be read by students. It made money by selling canonical texts which they produced in-house. It had its first library catalogue and data warehouse procuring canonical texts from docking ships. Later Roman rhetorician Quintilian used the Alexandrian canon to provide a reading list of style, models for imitation and knowledge references.

Ancient canons selected religious and moral texts which had little scope for change. The Chinese canon or jing (tying together with silk books of great reverence) had six classics—Poetry, Documents, Rites, Music, Changes and The Spring and Autumn Annals. It was called the Confucian canon. It was burnt in China during 1973-74, accused of prompting elitism, exploitation, hierarchy and status quo. Only after the Cultural Revolution in 1989 Confucius canon was restored. The tripitakan Buddhist canon contained the recorded teachings of the Buddha in Pali. They continued to be schematized and debated later.

Moving away from a dominant canon and creating a minority canon can be helpful. It can boost publication of marginalized texts, increase readership and bring revenue. MELUS shares this history. But new canon running parallel to established canons must not compromise on aesthetic excellence, which they often do.

1960s to 1990s America

The American social movements in the 1960s criticized the sexist, racist and ethnic biases in the western literary canon and took it to the university classrooms. Expanding the canon meant attack on canonical "values" and "makeup." It meant making it more "inclusive" and "representative" by bringing in marginalized writers—female, minority, historically elided, and oppressed groups. The revised canon was not debated (Lautier, *Heath Anthology*). It is

somewhat debatable if the aesthetic quality of literature can be measured by its representativeness.

The exercise of expanding the canon raises a question: Is it possible to create a "democratically inclusive canon" by dismantling an existing one? To make a canon mirror nationalist sentiment is often a right-wing agenda (Guillory 46) and we do not like it.

The 1990s made America more multicultural. The neoconservatives and the postmodernists got mixed with multicultural groups and identity politics. American literary canon became "a wicked myth" that endorsed "oppression of minorities" (Kermode 15). Even "aesthetic pleasure" that qualifies a literary text to become canonical was considered "necessary" but not "an obvious requirement" (Kermode 20).

Reading literature means we still care about the world, we still feel the pleasure in honest reading without prescription and ideology. Often canons erase people like the Native Indians, Dalits or minorities. Macaulay took the Indian canon out of its context by undermining Sanskrit and Persian literatures and claiming the supremacy of English literature. He created a cultural amnesia where Sanskrit and Persian texts lost their popularity.

Abrams, Mirror and the Lamp

In the 1970s when I was studying literature in India it was an age of innocence. The School of Resentment—Marxist, Afro-American, New Historicist, Feminist, Post-Structuralist and Post-colonialists—looking for class, race, bias, gender, sexuality, language, history and empire in literature had not arrived. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) had not arrived either. Indian teachers had not tasted the joys of orientalist discourse on India. There was some inkling of the presence of the Empire in the critical theory of M. H. Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953). In the book Abrams argued that from the beginning of criticism to the Romantics, literature was seen as an intellectual reflection of the real world, a kind of mimesis (Abrams 32). But with the coming of the Romantics in the nineteenth century, literature began to be seen as a lamp, a light emanating from a writer's soul that illumines the world. The *Mirror* saw four literary paradigms through which to study literature: the mimetic which saw a work of art as imitating real world and human experience: the pragmatic which understood the effect of art work on the audience: the expressive which

explored the relationship of art work with its producers: and the objective which saw the relationship between different parts of the artwork (Abrams 6-29). In the 1970s Abrams got involved in debates about the "unsolvable contradictions" of deconstruction and humanistic criticism: he felt that poetic theories discredited theorizing itself (Abrams 29). But our world continued to be innocent.

Plato, Aristotle and Value of Poetry

Greek philosophical assumptions about literature continued to shape canonical discussions well into the twentieth century. In his ideal state Plato did not allow literary canon to exist as he privileged philosophy over poetry. Aristotle reversed the equation and made poetry superior in value to philosophy. Theology was considered divine poetry during the middles ages and its value increased. The sublimated self of the poet became important (Longinus).

Biblical Canon as Reflection and Reality

The Bible introduced the mirror reflection to prepare us to understand reality--"for now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, then we shall see face to face…" (1 Corinthians 13:12). The reflection prepares for direct observation, but the reflection alters observation. Literature does the same. The Italian poet Dante (1265–1321) used the mirror metaphor in Divine Comedy (1308-20) to capture the distilled experience of a vision almost forgotten:

> I am like one, who sees in dream, and when the dream is gone an impression, set there, remains, but nothing else comes to mind again, since my vision almost entirely fails me, but the sweetness, born from it, still distils, inside my heart. (Paradiso Canto XXXIII: 49-145).

The sweetness of good literature emerges from visual metaphors—the hellfire of Inferno and inner turmoil of Purgatorio.

Auerbach's Figural Representation

Erich Auerbach's *Dante: Poet of the Secular World* brings out the unique fate of each individual in poetry. In *Mimesis* he connects human representation and fulfillment to literary history. His genealogical model was based on literary representation. It helped us to understand the short story and epics from Homer to literary Moderns. Auerbach (1892-1957) helped us to see an organic and historical connection between works in different centuries.

Canons are deeply connected to language or philology. Language is used to both center and decenter cultural texts. Auerbach saw a close connection between philology and ideology in Nazi Germany. The introduction of new anti-humanistic and anti-Biblical legends like blood, volk, and soil created new origin of western civilization along racist, anti-Semitic and nationalist lines. Such conceptions eliminated the Old Testament from the Christian canon and implicitly elided European civilization. Both *Figura* (1938) and *Mimesis* (1946) were responses to the European crisis in Germany.

Arnold's Touchstones Method

The misuse of language and subjectivity in selecting vocabulary was understood by Mathew Arnold (1822-1888). Arnold found the historic or subjective value of literary work fallacious and introduced the touchstone method. He compared selected poetic passages from great writers like Homer, Sophocles, Dante, Milton and Goethe with passages from new writings.

Leavis 'The Great Tradition (1948)

Leavis (1895-1978) was a great force from the 1920 through the 1970s in creating the English canon. He changed our understanding of English literature. He gave the study of literature a professional tone tracing English poetry from the Metaphysical like John Donne and not from the Romantics like Wordsworth. Leavis believed that an ideal critic is an ideal reader who reads and rereads a text and then acquires full command of the literary text and ability to interpret from different angles. When we expand literary assumptions, we enter a world of belief and ideology. He imagined the great tradition of the English novel that could only include Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad in in it, but not Dickens. Dickens lacked the "mature standards and interest" of Conrad (except *Hard Times*). Leavis ' canon now seems conservative and moral, but it was a force to reckon with.

T.S. Eliot and Tradition

Leavis by emphasizing the Metaphysical poets, critical disinterestedness and poetic independence followed Eliot. For Eliot (1888-1965) canon functioned through the classics and embodied universal and orthodoxy values. Canon was tradition itself. He symptomized the fragile nature of human existence with hopeless metaphors of rebirth and resurrection. Homer, Dane and the troubadour poets of the Middle Ages were canonical for Eliot. Modern writer should write with literature in his bones and escape from personality (Tradition and the Individual Talent, 1919). But it is for the minor writers to persevere and keep the flame of orthodoxy alive.

Cultural Study of Literature, French Anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu (1913-2002)

Both Leavis and Eliot gave the text social acceptance and institutional endorsement. Bourdieu believes that a work does not become canonical by itself but through a power struggle where social agents fight for legal control of a text. Publishers, biographers, literary historians, translators and university professors all create canon by privileging art and literary texts. A canon is ideology, political interest and values of an elitist class.

Brooks 'Form and Content and Wimsatt's Intentional Fallacy

The ideology of the canon cannot take away the pleasure of reading and the structure of the text. It is not possible to summarize a poem and still retain its meaning. The meaning of a poem lies in its very form. There is no substitute to a good reading of a poem. But then is the language of poetry the "language of paradox," or the "language of the soul?" (Brooks, 1973 3).) We should not look for what the writers meant to say in a text but go to the text and measure our conclusion based on the literary devices used. The 'design 'or 'intention 'of the author is not available nor 'desirable 'as a standard to judge the success of literary art (Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1946 468-488). Archibald's McLeish (1892-1982) in "Ars Poetica," a 1926 spin on Horace's Art of poetry 1 AD, says:

> For all the history of grief
> An empty doorway and a maple leaf.
> The image and metaphor explain it all.

Harold Bloom (1930-2019) and Aesthetic Experience

Today we see ulterior motives in literature, exclusion in a text, discrimination in translation. We measure the value of literature by judging if it contributes to social justice. We do not want to overhear ourselves in reading aloud, in observing changes in ourselves, in traversing seamless paths between life and death, between reality and artifice. We do not see poetry as "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" or "emotions recollected in tranquility" (Wordsworth Preface to Lyrical Ballads, 1800). Today poetry is seen as imperialist view of the world (Said, Orientalism). In literature we look for a message, a motive, a misdemeanor. (Harold Bloom's Warning to the World Stanley Fish October 19, 2019). Are we "destroying all intellectual and aesthetic standards in the humanities and social sciences" (Bloom)?

German Debates

Debates about literary canon follow social, ideological and linguistic compulsions and often lack interaction amongst linguistic groups. There is a need for closer dialogues between Anglo-American, German and Indian canon formation to understand historical, social and archeological processes. American canon debates were more passionate based on reorganizing the canon while continental debates were detached, focused on the archeology and genealogy. The Indian debates followed the process of redefining the canon emphasizing nativist and nationalist sentiments and at others elitist and global. The German debate on canon was more detached and interrogative observing shifts from print to digital media and elites to. They were quick to see changes in society and technology and gave new directions to the process of canon making.

In Germany from the 1960s to 2000s deutschdidaktik or method of teaching language and contemporary literature, youth literature and functional literature were debated. Teaching world literature was ignored. American discourse on canon dealt with redefining the canon and including world literature. The different ways of dealing with the pedagogy of canonical literature between the Anglo-American and German require an intense dialogue between the two. The dialogue will enrich canonical debates in both America and the Continent.

Henry Derozio (1809-1831)—A New Aesthetics

Derozio felt that a literary canon must select aesthetically satisfying works which have a moral purpose. Texts should give hope and happiness. The despondency of the English Elizabethans and Romantics must give way to devotional mysticism of the Sufi and Bhakti. This could create a syncretistic culture and bridge the gap between adversarial communities. He felt literature should not be art for arts ʾsake but used in the service of the nation. The strong anti-status quo position of the Romantics, especially their criticism of the policies of the British government, the position of the Anglican Church and the exclusionary politics of the English elite, was used effectively by Bengali intellectuals to create their discourse against colonialism. His manifesto on new aesthetics asked the poet to elevate the moral and intellectual nature of men in society (*India Gazette*, January 22, 1830). He felt that much of English poetry written by Milton, Shakespeare, Dante, Burns, Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth and Campbell tended to be despondent when life itself was "invested" with "buoyancy and elasticity." He argued that most of English poetry up to now has flowed through "poisonous

channels." It was time that it opened new springs and engaged the mind in "voyages" of "discovery and "happiness." In 1828 Henry Derozio wrote a poem "The Harp of India" imagining a country which needs to be free:

> Where is that glory, where that reverence now?
> Thy eagle pinion is chained down at last,
> And groveling in the lowly dust art thou!

Derozio delved into the past to recreate the glory of a nation "groveling in the lowly dust" and implicitly wished the "beauteous halo" and godliness to return. He did not see literature as art for art's sake but in the service of the nation. He wanted a new aesthetics which could provide harmony and sweetness and create music uniting diverse religions and races.

In an essay in *India Gazettee* on January 22, 1830 called "On the Influence of Poetry" Derozio felt that poetry purified "the springs of life," and improved "man's moral and intellectual nature." His belief in the improvement of man's moral and intellectual nature was based more on the ideas of the Scottish philosopher David Hume.

Hume, Standard of Taste

David Hume (1711-1776) in his eighteenth-century essay, "Of the Standard of Taste" (1757) identified a standard of aesthetic taste and morality to recognize classics. Ethical issues function within the realm of action and responsibility. The "rules of composition" are based on "general observation" which are "universally" pleasing in "all countries and in all ages." Therefore, literary texts that transcend time and place and please readers to become great books. Homer's Iliad, Thucydides 'The History of the Peloponnesian War, (431-404 BC), Sophocles 'Oedipus Rex (429 BC), Virgil's Aeneid (29-19 BC) become classics of our times.

Hume goes on to add the five fundamental skills that a critic must possess to evaluate canonical works and they are 1. delicacy of imagination, 2. practice, 3. comparison, 4. lack of prejudice and 5. good sense. Of these five Hume singles out delicacy of imagination and lack of prejudice to be paramount. He gives the example of *Don Quixote*. Sancho Panza narrates a story of his two kinsmen who opined after drinking hogshead, or wine in a cask, that it was good. The first kinsman said it had a taste of leather and the second that it had a

taste of iron. They were both ridiculed for their judgement. But when the hogshead was emptied, they found "an old key with a leathern throng tied to it" (Hume 15). The ability to detect unexpected taste of ingredients, in this case in hogshead, only a few possess. Unlike hogshead, a work of art cannot be emptied to find evidence of literary taste. Hume adds that a delicacy of imagination is an elitist enterprise, a matter of perception, which few possess. The third skill of a critic is the ability to compare, and through comparison appreciate beauty, perfection and uniqueness of a tragedy with Oedipus Rex or King Lear. A critic can be prejudiced by his inclination and environment. He must see himself as a man in general and give up his individual being by destroying his imagination. Hume believes that prejudice perverts sentiments and therefore we must destroy ourselves to appreciate the best artistic works of mankind. A work of art becomes a classic by passing through political, cultural, technological and institutional changes. Great art liberates us from specificity. It provides us with true self-knowledge. It is our duty, our moral obligation, to appreciate, understand and discuss classical works and not allow them to disappear. Good taste of selecting a classic will help us to preserve civility and graciousness (Hume 15, 16).

Conclusions

1. Debates on traditional approaches to understanding and expanding canons in the Anglophonic world continue without providing new directions. But the pragmatic Germanic approach to the genealogy of canon formation takes into account new tendencies of the digital age.

2. New assumptions about art and aesthetics have created a post-modern critique of aesthetics. Benedetto Croce decentered the concept of beauty by prioritizing "expression," while Marshall McLuhan talked about the power of art to create a counter reality by exposing hidden facets of a society. Theodor Adorno felt that post-modern aesthetics must unravel the ways in which the culture industry appropriates and commodifies art and aesthetic experience. Since the 1980s Indian writing in English has matured and moved into different directions from the magic realism of Salman Rushdie to the deracinated prose of Stephanian writers, but still many of the Indian writers in English, canonized in *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing: 1947-1997*, do take up a moral position against their own elitist aesthetics and tradition. Much of Indian writing in English still endorses the didactic purpose tempered with love and reason as laid down by Derozio in the nineteenth century.

3. Literature creates the awareness to move from compulsiveness to consciousness. It identifies a throbbing beauty through its strangeness that repels us or absorbs us until we no longer find it strange. It creates an artifice of reality that after ages no longer seems contrived. It refurbishes the spirt and renews us. It invents the telos and agape of humanity and often confronts the regimental and regressive. Canons look for significance, some abiding human value, some literary merit that can stand the test of time. But oft- times canons are employed to create textbooks in the service of the nation, community or race prioritizing one group over the other.

4. A new interest in the canon has emerged through digital and computer technology. We call this the new media involving web, social networking, computer games and hypermedia. It is shifting authority from elites to the common users. (Manovich 176-83). The classics may still survive. Or the new digital media may become the touchstone to define literature and literary canon in the coming decades. It is hard to say.

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ISM Awarded Paper

Reimaginings: Hyphenated Identities and Canons

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Abstract

Lauren Elkins's essay in The White Review about the End of Francophonie in the *literature monde* movement mentions the Fnac test. I cannot help but link it with Toni Morrison's famous, technocratically overused, but exceedingly relevant statement from The Guardian's 1992 interview about hyphenated identities. Colonialism and literary discourses thereof have created a range of hyphenated identities for writers, readers (implied or otherwise), characters et al. The paper studies how the transition of canonical texts from Eurocentric authorial intent to postcolonial renditions from writers of colonised geographies helps reduce the gap elicited by the hyphen to the text in content and form. The paper makes a case for texts originating more from language than from the author's origin, thus creating an equaliser that does not have the shadowed halo of colonial history and prejudice. I will be studying Shakespeare's Othello and Tyeb Salih's Seasons of Migration to the North as an illustration of this transition. The paper examines the redundancy of categorization of literature into geographical identities, making a case for the assimilation of the hyphen (in African-French Literature, India English Literature, etc.) in a definitive understanding of 'World 'in World Literature and elevating the critical status of reimaginings for their ability to perpetuate political, social and cultural significance to the original texts beyond limitations of time and place.

Keywords: Reimaginings, Translation, World Literature, Post-Colonialism, Canons

Sandro Botticelli created the *Birth of Venus* in 1485 and elicited a model of classical beauty and aesthetics for the depiction of the female body for posterity to emulate. Venus emerges out of an oyster- gloriously naked and smooth like a pearl- with an eager Goddess of Spring waiting to cover her. In 1534, Titian created *Venus of Urbino,* evoking the Goddess in a human setting retaining the beauty and composition sanctioned by Botticelli. But the rest of posterity had other plans. In 1863, Manet created *Olympia* modeled on Titian's *Venus of Urbino* but substantially altered in form, figure, and content. The nude female looks into the viewer's eyes with a penetrating gaze as her hand covers her genitalia. A woman of African origin tends to Olympia, and a cat replaces Venus 'dog in the frame. Olympia, with her slender frame, replaced the voluptuous frame popularised in the practice

of nude art by the likes of Botticelli and Titian. A step ahead was Paul Cezanne's 1874 evocative piece, *A Modern Olympia,* where Olympia is rendered in an expressionist fashion where she is just a blur of colours. Olympia is disfigured to be recreated. Through four centuries Venus or her modern persona, Olympia, have been reimagined and recreated by prominent artists across social and economic demography. Venus transitioned into Olympia at a time when breaking away from tradition became the norm in creative realms and heralded modernism in the depiction of the female nude. Venus 'travel in the forms of reimaginings has made her relevant to discussions on society and perception through a study of feminism, racism, and agency. Suddenly a piece of work depicting the birth of a Goddess just adorned a political cloak, a lot more powerful than the one the Goddess of Spring wanted to wrap her in.

I wanted to begin the paper with the artistic journey of Venus as it holistically illustrates the point the paper is attempting to make- reimaginings have the ability to assist the process of continuity of canonical artwork through the extension of its relevance in contemporary political scenarios. This organic consequence should automatically accord a congruent status to the reimagined text as that of the original for the purposes of consistency in the evaluation of significance. However, here I want to introduce the idea that reclaiming literature seems like a more potent reason to execute reimaginings than a mere attempt at continuity- while continuity can be read as an incentive for the recreational reader, reclamation can be read as an incentive for a writer and a reader spurred on by the purposes of ownership and agency. Reimaginings exist in polarity as a means to return significance to the European masters while subverting their work through a contemporary narrative. It is this polarity that has found literary significance in hyphenated identities adorning book racks and computer screens. I was fortunate to have been introduced to Laurel Elkin's article in The White Review, where she talks about the Fnac test and how that informed her idea of the *literature monde* movement:

> You walk into a French bookshop–the Fnac, La Hune, your local bookseller, whatever–armed with a list of writers: Samuel Beckett, Albert Camus, Nancy Huston, Alain Mabanckou, Marie N'Diaye, Dany Laferrière. Pre-2007, you would find Beckett, Camus, and Huston in the 'littérature française 'section, and Mabanckou, N'Diaye, and Laferrière in the 'littérature francophone ' section. They all write in French. Camus was born in North Africa but is considered French, not francophone. Beckett was born in Ireland, Huston in Canada: English is their native language. Both appear in 'French literature '

> because at a certain moment in their lives they began to write in French. If a writer is white then he can produce 'French literature. 'If not–he's 'francophone'. (Elkins)

The idea of World Literature is to move away from redundant labels in a cosmopolitan tapestry of the new world and move towards a more inclusive definition of what constitutes literature in The first place. Reimaginings with their ability to relate the European canon with 'oriental 'reality is integral to this inevitable transition marked by the emergence of the discourse on World Literature.

When Alfred Nobel conceived the idea of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1895, a stage was accorded to non-continental literary creations that were marked by the canonical win of Rabindranath Tagore in 1913. Tagore's acceptance speech embodied the essence of a syncretic literary tradition. "I beg to convey to the Swedish Academy my grateful appreciation of the breadth of understanding which has brought the distant near, and has made a stranger a brother" (qtd. in Mani 138). It was Tagore's Shanti Niketan with its pervasive motto of Yatra Vishwam *Bhavatekyanidam-a place where the world becomes home in one nest*-that inspired Romain Rolland's idea of the House of Friendship as a place for intellectuals from across the world to share thoughts. Rolland further initiated the idea of a world library to create a place for literature from the East and the West. (Mani 139) Herman Hesse subverted the political influence on literary assimilation in the years leading up to the World War by suggesting that people indulge in private libraries, thus democratizing the space for literary appreciation. As elucidated in B Venkat Mani's *Recoding World Literatures*, the genesis of the movement is fraught with political unrest representative of the nature of the work and its reception in the world-a metanarrative to the explosive nature of fission that assimilates more than it disintegrates.

In Jefferson Humphries *'The Otherness Within*, he states that "art-whether language, words or of images-is the self-conscious experience of that differential otherness" that being an internal struggle of the self and the other (8). Humphries suggests that any act of creation is inherent indifference either as an investigation or as a mirror. A discussion on internal difference would be incomplete without the mention of language and translation in the attempt to universalise a literary text. Here I will offer an interlude to discuss the pivotal role played by translation in establishing the practical realm of the idea of accessible literature.

The Cochin Biennale 2017 hosted an immersive installation by Slovenian poet and translator Ales Steger, called *The Pyramid of Exiled Poets*. The pyramid made of mud, wood, matting, and dung is an immersive walk with the artist where the audience enters a pyramid to meet darkness and the vocal remains and testimonies of Ovid, Dante Alighieri, Bertolt Brecht, Czesław Miłosz, Mahmoud Darwish, Yang Lian, Joseph Brodsky, Ivan Blatný and César Vallejo- poets exiled from their homelands for saying things in their native tongue that did not suit those in power. Apart from the shock of darkness, the pyramid also disconcerted its audience with a concoction of languages (some or all) that they did not understand. Even if the audience did not understand the incomprehensible languages landing on their ears in a space lit only by exiled tongues, they understood the essence of the language- a hurried and desperate clenched fist hold of identity rested on the tongue of the speaker. The essence of World Literature is encapsulated in this pyramid, where the clarity of hyphens is replaced by the cacophony of chaos. I am aware of the dangers of a word like essence, but here, I am using it to comment upon the inclusivity that it is often accused of ignoring. In the Pyramid, translation is a step in the direction of making the voices clearer, a thought I have borrowed from Walter Benjamin's mention of the kinship of language in his essay, *The Task of the Translator* when he says, " as for the posited kinship of languages, it is marked by a peculiar convergence. This special kinship holds because languages are not strangers to one another, but are a priori and apart from all historical relationships, interrelated in what they want to express".(255)

As much as language can be an equaliser, it can also be a vessel to perpetrate or question epistemic power. The latter becomes a powerful statement in the works of Postcolonial writers or writers from British or American colonies. The acknowledgment of Tagore's "English words "(Mani 138) receiving the same stage as English writers is seen as a reclamation of language by B. Venkat Mani. Even Chinua Achebe in *The African Writer and the English Language* says, " I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings". (103)

The same idea is dismissed by Ngugi Wo Thiong'o, who asserts that reclaiming language is a process of translating canonical European texts into African languages (5). World literature exists in the hyphen elicited by a two-way translation. I have only had the fortune of engaging with Tayeb Salih's Seasons of Migration to the North because it was made available to me by Denys Johnson-Davies is a language that I can effectively use. But the politics of language exist even in the same language based on the power elicited by the writer's geography. The interest in reimagining Shakespeare's work is indicative of the strong political statement made by postcolonial writers in

the act of reclaiming a Eurocentric narrative making it more egalitarian and representative. As MK Booker notes, "Shakespeare functioned in the nineteenth century as the central icon of a British cultural heritage that itself served as one of the central justifications for British rule over the 'primitive 'culture encountered in places like Africa and India" (Booker 93). Therefore, Shakespeare becomes a motif of cultural oppression and supremacy that is prolifically used by writers of a Postcolonial disposition to subvert or control colonial oppression. Tayeb Salih's protagonist in Seasons of Migration to the North, Mustafa, has a copy of *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* by Octave Mannoni in his room in Wad Hamid (Salih's imaginary construction of an Arab city). The presence of Shakespeare is as literal in Tayeb Salih's writings as it is implied in the narrative as a specter. In the *Wedding of Zein,* published in 1965 by Tayeb Salih, Zein emerges as an "androgynous animal-like a fool" reminiscent of "Shakespeare's wise fools" (Rogers.) Shakespeare is thus a pervasive albeit obscure presence in Tayeb's work. The connection between Shakespeare and Salih exists beyond the mention of the former in the latter's narrative and intent. It rests in the difference traveled by a Sudanese rendition of a European tale of a Black and Muslim Captain of Venice. Shakespeare, an English playwright, chose to represent the tragedy of the Moor in 1604. Three hundred years later, Tayeb Salih, a Sudanese writer, reimagined the story through Mustafa, an academic in London of Sudanese origin (it is important to note that even Shakespeare's rendition is a retelling of *Un Capitano Moro* by Cinthio, first published in 1565).

A comparison between the texts brings forth the following questions-

Whose voice is more authentic?

Whose text is more original?

Whose text deserves more literary significance?

The questions assume that the space for significance is exclusive. Still, the one outcome of modernity is its celebration of plurality- a heterogenous celebration of homogenous constructs and therefore, the preoccupation with relative significance and the adjective 'more 'seems redundant. The paper is unperturbed by the questions above but is more concerned with establishing parallel significance for reimaginings as the original text. If *Othello* was representative of Shakespeare's world, then *Seasons of Migration to the North* (henceforth, *Seasons*) is representative of the contemporary political climate. As both stories are situated at the isthmus of the personal and the political, their individual significance cannot be relegated to an arbitrary concept like time. If *Othello* can be read from a postcolonial lens, *Seasons* can be read from the lens of the Nahda

movement "that sought, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, to rebuild Arab civilisation after centuries of decay under the Ottoman empire and to confront the threat of European imperialism" (Hassan).

Fredric Jameson remarked that all third-world narratives are "national allegories" (86) in the most basic form of their creation. As we move into a political climate where the personal is always political and cultural hybridity informs the social fabric, it is imperative to understand the monumental role of reimaginings in returning the epistemic power or, more appropriately, equality, earlier, lost to the colonised. *Othello* is a discourse on European hegemony, and *Seasons* can read as a response to the "Arab liberal discourse on Europe" (Hassan). In the intent and the content, the reminaging mirrors the original text. Shakespeare's *Othello* introduces himself to Desdemona as an honourable murderer and enchants the white-skinned female protagonist of Shakespeare's tragedy. Salih's Mustafa uses the 'exotic 'appeal of his origin to seduce women of English origin- a phenomenon Franz Fanon connected to the depriving influence of colonization on men as colonial subjects (Fanon). Sexual domination is a form of subversion practiced by Mustafa to claim his intellectual and cultural identity in London. Similarly, desire plays out in dangerous but passionate ways for Desdemona and Othello (an idea evoked viscerally in Nabi Kaslo's series of paintings called *Othello* that suffered censorship and condemnation for reflecting explicitly sexual images of an African man with a white woman). Othello is posited as a lone warrior who has suffered alienation and estrangement. At the same time, Mustafa is portrayed as a character who has imposed an exile unto himself for the purposes of intellectual growth and cultural upgradation. The distinct point of Mustafa's trajectory is how he transitions from a Sudanese in London to a Londoner in Wad Hamid. Both host a passion that results in fatality for their female partners. Othello's passion is one of ownership, whereas Mustafa's passion is that of reclamation and agency. Desdemona dies at the hands of the Moor for his false belief in her infidelity. Jean Morris dies for reasons beyond infidelity but for a tendency of Mustafa to reclaim the dignity lost to Sudan at the hands of the British. Even the titles of the text seem to be talking to each other while moving in opposite directions. While Shakespeare centralises Othello as the protagonist and encapsulates his entire story in the title through the use of the word 'tragedy 'and the byline through the word 'moor, 'Salih indicates a geographical displacement towards the land of the coloniser. Othello is revealed as a victim of his insecurity incumbent on his origin as fuelled by Iago. Mustafa is revealed as a victim of colonisation and consequent education- a phenomenon that deterred him from reconciling the

two worlds he represented. His trial for the murder of his wife, Jean Morris, substantiates this point. He evokes Othello by saying, "I am no Othello. Othello was a lie" (Salih 95).

Through this statement, Salih comments upon the appropriation of the African Moors in Shakespeare's depiction. Here, it is important to understand the role of Oriental exoticisation by the Occidental and how the Postcolonial writer interacts with this exoticisation. Shakespeare's Moor is a 'valiant 'and 'honourable killer 'with a past that has seen pain and brutality venerating him to s space of exotic appeal within the protected walls of Desdemona's existence. Salih uses the same exoticisation to mock essentialism while accepting the importance of its performance to the colonised in an attempt to hold onto an idea of self. Fanon is as recurrent a motif in *Seasons* as Shakespeare, and here it is befitting to evoke Fanon's romantic hold on negritude in *The Fact of Blackness* wherein he says, "And when I tried on the level of ideas and intellectual activity, to reclaim my negritude, it was snatched away from me" (101).

Here, a question comes to the fore- How does the Oriental interact with the exotic? Are they different or the same? It could be argued that they are similar in their pervasive depiction of the characters of the colonised world. However, the difference lies in the purposes of their use. Here, the Oriental and the exotic exist at the fine line between representation and appropriation or, more accurately, misappropriation. Reimaginings at the hands of Postcolonial writers can help reconcile the limitations elicited by the colonizer's eye in the depiction of the experience of the colonised with a rendering informed by closeness to origin and experience. Essentialism, revisiting a contentious word explored earlier on in the paper, in the writings of the postcolonial is at the helm of survival of culture as against a representation of a collective as conceived by the Occidental imagination. When Mustafa claims Othello to be a lie, he is reclaiming his right to differ from a European canon because of his closeness in origin and experience to a character conceived by a European literary genius. Globalisation has introduced a plurality in literary discourses that eluded texts in times of limited connectivity. Therefore, reimaginings like these are potent ways to revisit texts that have informed literary practices and blanket them in egalitarian and inclusive experiences.

World literature is an attempt to create an inclusive space for literary creation where pedestalised language and authorship are compromised in the quest for representative expression. Reimaginings can also be understood as a modern phenomenon where the preoccupation with the canon is dismissed for authorial and societal integrity. Mona Lisa's transition from Da Vinci's woman with an elusive smile to Duchamps's LHOOQ, From Warhol's quotidian diptychs to Dali's moustache

embedded self-portrait, allows the canon to be challenged to become more accommodating of sexualities, ethnicities, and other cultural expressions on social fringes, gentrified from the mainstream artistic discourse. Modernity celebrates the plurality that the hyphen has reduced to a duality.

A conversation on hyphenated identities is initiated only with the technocratically overused but culturally significant statement by Toni Morrison where she says that in America "American means white. Everybody else has to hyphenate*"* (qt. in Jacolbe). Toni Morrison's discomfort with dual identities, as revealed in a 1992 interview for The Guardian was acknowledged by the Associated Press in the initial months of 2019 with the sole purpose of uniting identities as against creating polarities within a nation by foregoing the use of the hyphen. Using the United States of America as an example to talk of multiplicity is appropriate in light of the present political climate and the multiple ethnicities that have informed its origin. Ramanujam questions if there is an Indian way of thinking in his 'informal 'essay published in 1989 and I have wondered if a question like this holds relevance today, 30 years later. In the literary world, the advent of World Literature has extended the idea of lexical density to national identity of the writers by containing it in the word 'world'. The homogenising of literary identity that was heralded by Nobel, perpetuated by the likes of Rolland and Tagore, supported by postcolonial writers like Mabanckou, Coetzee, Salih, Manto, Achebe, Maryse Conde, and their translators have been realised in the relinquishing of the hyphen to bring identities closer to their origin. A relinquishing envisioned by the likes of Toni Morrison.

A canon is a symbol of privilege and elitism. The inclusion of minority languages into the canon reduces the social power and accompanying inequality elicited by language. Colonised nations were known to exhibit an oral and performative tradition of literature dominated by print in the Western world. Economic advantage born out of colonisation is an inadequate premise to establish literary significance- a baseless endeavour to quantify the abstraction acknowledged even by Western consciousness. When I was 16, I found Neruda. At 21, I lost him again because I learned that all that I had read from him was in the form of translations. I felt an inexplicable distance from the work I had almost memorised from obsessive reading. I could not understand if Neruda's English work would inform the canon or his work in Spanish. It was only through an academic interaction with reimaginings that binary questions seemed redundant to a discourse that consumes the world, whether that is through dropping the hyphen by AP or libraries hosting a Maryse Conde right text to Mallarme. World literature is an attempt to use universal ideas of categorisation against

segregationist ideas, and that is why it embraces the modern disposition of plurality that has perpetuated its way into contemporary consciousness.

Returning to Herman Hesse's idea of private libraries, I will conclude with a reading of a personal library. Anne Fadiman, in her collection of autobiographical essays *Ex Libris,* remembers the process of assimilating her library with her husband's:

> His books commingled democratically, united under the all-inclusive flag of Literature. Some were vertical, some horizontal and some actually placed behind others. Mine were balkanized by nationality and subject matter...My books, therefore, have always been rigidly regimented…It was unclear, however, how we were to find a meeting point between his English garden approach and my French garden...We agreed to sort by topic (Fadiman 11).

We agreed to sort by topic. I can see Shakespeare's *Othello* right next to Tayeb Salih's *Seasons of Migration to the North* in their book rack reconciling reimaginings with the canon, national literatures to World Literature, singular to plural, individual to collective, beyond elitism, privilege of language and access- an assimilation that believes in and makes space for the heterogeneity of universally experienced thoughts and emotions.

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Literary Classics in the Age of 280 Characters: A Shift from the Age of Typography to TV and Twitter

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Abstract

From the orally transmitted folktales to the typographical world made possible by the invention of printing press, to the emergence of modern technocratic world dominated by the social media giants like Twitter, there have been some major paradigm shifts that have redirected the course of human thinking. The advent of writing receded the orality to the background, the advent of typography diminished the writing culture, the arrival of T.V, Telegraph, Internet, social media has rendered the centuries old print culture irrelevant by creating a new epistemology. By using the theoretical framework of 'media ecology theory', this paper argues that the latest medium of production of knowledge, dominated by social media, is accompanied by an unprecedented superficiality, 'information glut 'and attention-deficit which has significantly affected the physical and psychological wellbeing of people. It seeks to analyse and reinforce the significance of literary classics as an alternative source/medium, repository of age-old wisdom which inculcates the habit of thinking among people in an otherwise consumer-oriented capitalist world deprived of freedom to think.

Key Words: Literary Classics, Typography, Twitter, Social Media, Canon Formation

"We are in a great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas, but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate… We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the old world some weeks nearer to the new: but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad flapping American ear will be that princess Adelaide has the whooping cough" (Thoreau 50).

In his book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Marshal McLuhan while stressing over the importance of medium in which a message is incorporated, coined the phrase: "Medium is the message", which implies that a medium does not simply transmit a message, but rather creates an epistemology, clothes it, shapes it (McLuhan 7). Therefore, the modes of

human understanding of the world, were, are, will always be shaped by the character/medium that enables the human perception, which is another way of saying that an unbiased view of the world is very unlikely. Before arriving at the present stage of multimodal, technocratic culture wherein man simultaneously dwells in parallel spaces of (mostly) virtual and real, there have been great changes in the mediums of perception of the world, from orality to writing to printing to Television to Internet/social media: around which cultures were/are shaped from time to time. The advent of writing receded orality to the background, the advent of typography diminished the writing culture, the advent of Television, Telegraph, Internet, social media has rendered centuries old dominant print culture irrelevant to a good extent. Albeit, there is more printed matter available today than ever, but the image-dominated, hypertextual internet-world has colonized people's time so that they spend little offline reading something of value, and on reflection. Therefore, this shift from offline written/printed word to the online world of context-free image and endless hypertext has momentously impacted the readership of literary classics that were once celebrated as the cornerstones of intellectualism. The present research does not contend the assertions made by different theoretical movements which Harold Bloom called together as the "School of resentment", against literary canons as the 'state ideological apparatuses 'perpetuating the colonial agendas, rather it engages with the role and impact of social media giants like Twitter on literary classics and their importance in our time. Moreover, it argues about the unconditional reliance of people on social media, the rise of Nanofiction, Twitterature, and its accompanying disadvantages of fragmentation, attention-deficit, irrelevance, 'information glut', which have affected human memory, and heralded into the period of 'post-truth'.

In his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman argues about the dangers of the changing epistemology due to a paradigm shift taking place from Typography to Television, which may help in explaining the premise of present research that the literary classics retain a higher place among the intellectual, artistic exercises of Man. He unequivocally calls for an immediate attention towards the displacement taking place of rationality, formed by the print culture, by the superficiality surrounding the Television—which he believes not only stints the intellect of Man, but also invents the truth, and the ways of processing it. While believing an image to be inferior to a written word, he writes that "In a print culture we are apt to say of people who are not intelligent that we must 'draw them pictures 'so that they may understand. Intelligence implies that one can dwell comfortably without pictures in a field of concepts and generalizations (Postman 26)." Which implies that language enriches imagination and

encourages one to think in abstractions, unlike images which limit ones understanding to ‘here and now ’only.

The shift in focus from literary classics, which were once considered to be the culmination of maturity of civilizations by great thinkers, towards the ‘world of endless scroll ’has a great impact on their readership. It is not that they have stopped to exist but the user-friendly social media has offered people fiction they exactly want, between the cracks of their otherwise busy days, in a new format, at a new place, unlike literary classics which offer people what they need, thereby having a monopoly on both their attention and intellect (Postman 121).

Literary Classics & the Canon Formation

The word ‘classic ’has several meanings in several contexts, therefore it is not bound to any one particular definition. But to come closer to its intended meaning here, T.S Eliot’s words in his essay “What is a Classic?” can serve as an explanation. Eliot writes, “If there be one word on which we can fix, which will suggest the maximum of what I mean by the term ‘a classic’, it is the word *maturity”* (Eliot 54). What Eliot proposes is that literary classics reflect the culmination of a civilization and its values, they subsume what has preceded them, and fashion what follows them, thereby withstanding the onslaughts of time. However, there is a difference between a literary classic and a literary canon. Unlike literary classics, literary canon often refers to the western canon, which in the words of M. H Abrams, “ designates[…] those authors, who by a cumulative consensus of critics, scholars, and teachers, have come to be widely recognized as ‘major’[…] and most likely to be included in anthologies, and in the syllabi of college courses[…] . (Abrams 43).”

From the 1970s there has been an intense debate going on about the canon formation. The standard western canon is charged of being ideologically driven and preserving only the “values of a dominant class that was white, male, and European (Abramas 44,45).” The opponents of western canon, including Post-colonialists, Feminists, Marxists, New Historicists, Cultural Materialists etc. call for the ‘opening up of canon’, and its replacement with multicultural, diverse, and marginalized literatures. However, its defenders believe that “whatever the western canon is, it is not the programme for social salvation” the artistic criteria for its selection is based on “a strong originality” and an “aesthetic dignity, which is not to be hired (Bloom 29-37).”

However, the ongoing dispute around the canon formation is debatable but the present study deals with the role played by the social media in the displacement of once ‘timeless ’literary classics catching dust in libraries today, and its impact on or pollution of the present social discourse. Because, in an age driven by giant 300 million plus active user social networking sites like Twitter, people can barely manage the time to read the fat old classics in their extremely busy lives. And the reason may be well as pointed out by Alexander Aciman and Emmet Rensin in an introduction to their book *Twitterature: The World's Greatest Books in Twenty Tweets or Less* that "[…] these great texts- timeless as they may be- are, in their present form outdated." Outdated, apparently because they demand a lot of time, a complete attention, and an incisive reflection, which quite unfortunately modern man, who is conscious of 280-character count (including spaces), cannot manage. And above all, these classics are thought to be outdated because they lack a multimedia format, therefore, they may have the potential of provoking ones thinking, but they lack an emotive appeal to the modern man who believes in seeing, rather than reading.

Twitter and its Impact

Twitter is an American social networking site with 321 million active users worldwide as of Feb 2019. Launched in July 2006, its users interact with one another in 280-character messages called "tweets". Earlier the "tweet" character limit was 140, it was doubled in 2017. In order to share, re-tweet, or like tweets, post links, or videos on Twitter, with others, a Twitter user has to either follow other users or be followed by them. Within a span of fourteen years Twitter has risen to a level where it has dangerously impacted almost every socio-political, cultural, religious aspect of human lives, by its partnership with other medias, especially press. It has created a social discourse, an international irrelevant conversation among strangers, wherein everything has become everybody's business. A research conducted by Pew Research Centre has found that the 80% of tweets are posted by the top 10% of its users, while as the 20% of tweets are posted by the bottom 90% of users, which shows its inbuilt elitism and hierarchy. (FT)

Although in literature, the emergence of Twitter/social media has given rise to Twitterature, Nanofiction, Crowd-sourced narratives, and Infographics, but it has seriously impacted "book[s] and novel[s]—the written word itself—[which] fight to maintain a foothold against the sexier mediums swirling all around them (Rudin)." As a result, not only has this emergence of new media rendered literary classics impotent by creating a trivial social discourse, but it is found that social media in general, and Twitter in particular, has seriously affected the physical

and psychological wellbeing of people, which in the words of Francesca Baker is: "reducing of attention spans, obesity, causing violence, disintegrating family connections [etc] (Baker)." A reputed novelist Mark Haddon wrote in a newspaper article about the negative effects of Twitter on him:

> I'm reasonably certain that my ability to focus on one task for a sustained period has deteriorated since I became addicted to that repeated swipe from one vaguely interesting thing to what promises to be, but rarely is, a slightly more interesting thing […]. What persuaded me to retreat from the Twitter, however, was something less distinct, and more sinisterly pervasive, a growing sense that it was detrimentally the way I both looked at and thought about the world about me, even when I was away from screen. (FT)

Besides determining human choices, and curbing freedom, the other grave threats that accompany Twitter include: information diffusion through ceaseless retweeting which results in the ambiguous authorship and decontextualization of information (Boyd, Golder & Lotan 5-6). Topics which are most retweeted around hashtags feature on Twitter's trending list, thereby giving rise to easy 'connective politics', which can spread violence in and around both virtual and real spaces. (Philip & Lewis 213-231)

Karsten Muller and Carlo Schwarz in their case study research on Donald J. Trump's anti-Muslim tweets found a direct correlation between his tweets and the spike in hate-crimes committed against Muslims in counties with most Twitter users in America. The study found that "Trump's negative tweets about Muslims are not only widely shared by his followers over the next days, but also systematically followed by a spike in new content about Muslims. […] They are also followed by 58 percent increase in use of the hashtags #BanIslam (Muler & Schwarz 29)." The study mentions that according to some estimates up to a quarter of Twitter users may be working with different media outlets therefore affecting people offline by disseminating the potential violent content through print and other medias (29-30).The partnership between social networking sites, mass media, and print, has formed a giant corporate information grid, which works like a modern panopticon controlling people's freedom, determining their behaviour, their choices, stealing their privacy and selling it in the form of data to firms, conducting surveys, knowing human sentiments: everything.

Of course it would be naïve to argue that reading literary classics alone can counter so many complex challenges and rescue the modern societies from violence, insecurity and other threats

posed by social media as mentioned above, but their invocation against the vast sea of superficiality intrinsic to the social media can provide a space for reflection among people who are implicitly enslaved by the impositions of imperial culture via social networking.

Literary Classics and the Age of Superficiality

As time passes, the modern mind is turning shallow, by constantly being fed with superficial information through new medias dominated by image which only titillates the amygdala at the cost of perspicacity cultivated by the print culture from centuries. As is immanent in an image, it inhibits ones thinking to what it shows thereby obstructing an imagination possible in an offline world of typography. Besides, the silicon memory has adversely affected the efficacy of human memory as modern people often tend to rely heavily on search engines like Google and social media to fetch them memories of past dates and events related to their lives, effortlessly. Researchers have called this "Google effect." A study conducted by Tamir et al. found that externalizing of private moments via social media impairs user memory (Tamir et al. 161-168). Although, all this change in media and format has lost literary classics the traction and appeal they once held among their audiences, but it simultaneously summons their acute necessity at this moment to restore the peace and coherence of fragmented modern mind. Spencer Baum, in an article, gives three reasons for why people should read more literary classics at present: First, reading them enables "deep thinking and concentration": second, they help people "turn away from toxic stew of rage, indulgence, and amusement that is mass media": third, "the hive mind makes it too easy to share only the most superficial parts of ourselves with each other (Baum)." It is not only about the way social media moves information decontextualized, at an unprecedented speed, or the resultant violence of disinformation, but the way this new medium is controlled in few hands, its consumer-oriented information manufacturing process, the way it is used to drug the modern man by ceaseless amusement: all this monopoly of the medium necessitates a redirection from superficiality to the age-old wisdom contained in the literary classics. Although, this new medium has introduced millions of people, with mobile libraries, to reading at unprecedented scale, but it has simultaneously deprived them of their sense of past, their history, their memory by rendering it irrelevant. Quoting Henry Ford, Neil Postman writes, "History is bunk.", "'History', the typographic plug replies, 'does not exist '(Postman 137)." Same holds true of the social media: 'History', Twitter replies, 'does not exist'. But unlike social media, the literary classics endow people with a sense of proper historical and social context by following a literary tradition, and the footsteps of its antecedents.

One of the challenges faced by all literature is the test of time. Like human 'psychological fear of mortality', all great literature has this "literary anxiety" to strive for immortality. And according to Harold Bloom, the successful literary works that pass this test are the "achieved anxieties" (Bloom 38). Therefore, literary classics are time-tested, unlike social media which believes in the contrary. As Neil Postman speaks of the Telegraph, the content of social media is no different, which "is suited only to the flashing of messages, each to be quickly replaced by a more up-to-date message. Facts push other facts into and then out of consciousness at speeds that neither permit nor require evaluation (Postman 70)." As a result of this continuous flashing and flooding of information by social media on mobile and computer screens, the gravity of the matter loses its way to triviality. Its fundamental principle is to develop among people this sense of laughing everything out. Besides, it limits the expression of emotions to a few emojis and the like and share buttons thereby reducing a complex human being to a caricature only. In order to protest this absurd and dangerous epistemology created by social media, and its deprivation of freedom to think, it emerges that refuge in literary classics is a tenable option to relax down from this pointless pursuit. Which, besides testifying to this assumption that literary classics are time-tested, also proves the inferiority of social media to them.

The "peek-a-boo world" of social media falsely promises the modern man that it will give him *everything* that he needs to know about the world. As a result, modern man drowns in the sea of irrelevances, such as 'princess Adelaide's whooping cough', which are dignified as important. Aciman and Rensin, in the introduction to their book *Twitterature,* promise their readers something similar regarding the great literatures, when they say, "We take these Great works and present their most essential elements, distilled into the voice of Twitter - […] and give you *everything you need to master the literature* of the civilized world [emphasis added]." And their book does nothing except successfully dismembers the great literature with violence, cleanses its wisdom, its psychological complexities and social realities under the pretext of providing *everything to master the literature*, and its authors like bootleggers sell it as a searing product of amusement to its consumers, the end-result of which is a bout of amusement and money-making.

Conclusion

As follows from the above argument, the image-centric electronic/social media has created a different epistemology which is inferior to the epistemology that was created by the print word through literary classics. It has enabled an absolute control of state-run corporates over people's

lives, affected their ways of perception of the outer reality, violated their privacy by putting their sensitive data at the mercy of big companies, above all affected their physical and psychological wellbeing. Contrary to all these disadvantages of social media, reading literary classics, which are a repository of centuries-old wisdom, can save people from this technological intrusion. Besides being a fruitful exercise of cultivating comprehension skills, it can also work as an alternative space and direct people towards the shore from drowning into the sea of irrelevances, inhabited by strangers, and provide them time to think.

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Literature of a War-Zone: Tracing the Evolution of Literary Traditions in Kashmiri Literature

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Abstract

The literature of Kashmir, the most militarised zone on the earth, has a long history. Every aspect of Kashmiri literature, from language to the theme of the texts, has seen an evolution with time. While the oldest works were composed in Sanskrit, Kashmiri literature has been written in various other languages such as Koshur, Persian, Urdu, and Hindi: the contemporary writers use English as the mode of expression. Kashmiris have been suppressed and subjugated by various arbitrary rulers since the beginning of history, and it has impacted the literature of the region as well. Kashmiri literature in itself is very complex: there are accounts of oppression and forceful conversions into Islam, the impact of subjugation on the psyche of a Kashmiri, there also exist sagas that celebrate the beauty of the landscape and the eternal love that blossoms in such an atmosphere. The literature created after the onset of insurgency in Kashmir has a common theme: the impact of the tussle between the militants and the Armed Forces of India on a native Kashmiri. One cannot also ignore the Kashmiri Pundits who were forced to take exodus from the valley: their literature sings of the pain of separation from their beloved homeland. The paper attempts to portray the way in which Kashmiri literature has evolved timelessly while studying the temporality of the themes that the writers picked up at different points of time:

> *Jis khaak ke zamir mein ho aatish-e-chinar*
>
> *Mumkin nahin ke sard ho woh khaak-e-arjuma*
>
> (The dust that has in its conscience the fire of chinar trees
>
> That dust, celestial dust, will never become cold)
>
> — Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah *(Flames of the Chinar*)

Kashmiri language is the outcome of an over-laying of a Dardic base with Indo-Aryan elements. Suniti Kumar Chatterji in his extensive book *Languages and Literatures of Modern India* traces the origin of Kashmiri language in “Dardic section of Aryan or Indo-Iranian” and writes that Brahmanical Aryans during the Vedic Age and Buddhists during the Mauryan empire, made Kashmir “in spite of a Dardic substratum in its people and in its speech, became

a part of the Sanskritic culture world of India" (256). Very fine literature has been composed in the Kashmiri language, which contains traces of both Brahmanical and Islamic cultures.

Initially, Kashmiri literature began to be composed in the Sanskrit language: names like Damodara, Abhinavgupta, Kalhana, Bilhana and others find eminence in the Kashmiri Sanskrit literature. One can divide the history of Kashmiri language as well as Kashmiri literature into three periods, which are:

a.Old Kashmiri (from 1200 to 1500 A.D.)

b.Middle Kashmiri (from 1500 to 1800 A.D.)

c.New or Modern Kashmiri (after 1800 A.D.)

Old Kashmiri Period

Chatterji contends that the old Kashmiri was a language with a phonetic character, but from the times middle Kashmiri came into being, there were some extensive changes in the vowels, "through *Umlaut* and other sound-laws being operative", and this was responsible for changing the nature of Old Kashmiri and making it almost a different language (257).

Belonging to the period and religion of Abhinavgupta, Chatterji recognises the earliest compositions that are available in Kashmiri language as the 94 four-line stanzas found in a highly abstruse Sanskrit work called *Mahanyaprakasa* (trans. "Illumination of the Highest Attainment or Discipline") by Sitikantha Acarya, dealing with Shaiva-tantric philosophy. Another work supposed to be dating back to the age of *Mahanyaprakasa* is *Chumma-Sampradaya,* a verse collection of 74 verses.

The biggest name in the 14th century in Kashmiri literature is of the great woman-saint Lal Ded, famous both among Hindus and Muslims. About 110 of her poems, passed mostly by word of mouth, have been "edited and translated by Sir George Abraham Grierson (Royal Asiatic Society of London, 1923), and some more have been collected by others" (Chatterji 259). Lal Ded born in 1335 A.D., lead an unhappy married life: became a *sanyasini* singing poems about the mystic perception of the supreme Shiva. The Muslims believe that she had converted to Islam after her meeting with the Sufi saint and preacher Shah Hamdani, as both mutually appreciated the mystic qualities of each other. The amalgamation of Shaivism and Sufism is evident in her poetry, for instance:

I was passionate,

filled with longing,

I searched

far and wide.

But the day

that the Truthful One

found me,

I was at home. (Translated by Jane Hirshfield, *poetryfoundation*)

During the second phase of the old Kashmiri period, there existed another great Muslim saint named Shah Nuruddin (Hindus call him Nand Ryosh or Nanda Rishi). Born in 1377, Nuruddin became a patron saint for the Kashmiri Muslims, but was held in high respect both by the Hindus and the Muslims. His verses, mostly didactic in nature have been collected in a book form. Named *Rishi-namah* or *Nur-namah,* his verses show his extreme love and dedication to God. The following short poem of Shah Nuruddin is an apt trailer of his writing style:

He's beside me and
I'm beside Him,
Blissful I feel with Him,
In vain, I went a—seeking Him
In strange lands, for
My Friend Himself graced me
in my own House! (*poemhunter.com*)

The Golden age of the Kashmiri literature can be acknowledged during the reign of Zainul Abidin, the ruler of Kashmir for most of the 15th century (1420 to 1470), who was a great patron of arts and literature. Himself a learned man, he encouraged Hindu rituals and philosophy and developed the artistic crafts of Kashmir. Chatterji enlists a few of Kashmiri poets who decorated the court of Zainul Abidin:

> Uttha-soma, who composed a series of lyrics in Kashmiri, besides a biography of Zainul Abidin, and a treatise on music called the *Manaka* : an unknown poet who wrote the *Banasura-vadha*, the first narrative poem so far known in Kashmiri: *Yodha-bhatta*, who wrote a biography of his patron, the *Jaina-carita*, and a drama also on his patron, the *Jaina-prakasa*: and there was also Bhatta-avatara who was a distinguished Persian scholar and who composed another work on this royal patron of letters in Kashmiri, the *Jaina-vilasa*. (*Languages and Literatures of Modern India* 260)

A large number of literary works were translated from Sanskrit into Persian and from Persian into Sanskrit, for the first time under the patronage of Zainul Abidin, for example, the *Rajatarangini* by Kalhana and Jami's romantic poem *Yusuf-Zulaikha*, respectively. One can even say that the fifteenth century in Kashmir saw the transformation of the Kashmir, and the Kashmiri literature in turn, into a predominantly Muslim culture. The overall atmosphere that permitted this transformation was the Sufi version of Islam, which was non-iconoclastic in nature and appreciative of the ongoing Brahmanical Shaiva mysticism of Kashmir at the same time. During this phase, the Kashmiri language also underwent a lot of changes and took the form of what we see today as the modern Kashmiri.

Middle Kashmiri Period

The Middle Kashmiri Period can be divided roughly into three stages: up to 1586 A.D., Kashmiri Sultans ruled in Kashmir, who gave way to the Moghuls: during the first half of the sixteenth century, the family of Zainul Abidin stayed in power. After the rule of the four Muslim rulers of the Chak dynasty and the Moghuls in the medieval era, the Afghans had conquered Kashmir till 1820. The evolution of Kashmiri literature saw a substantial development in the Middle period, and Persian was the language that emerged as the most prominent language to be employed for literary purposes. Islam had fully established itself, and the place of Sanskrit as the language of the masses was taken by Persian. Under the influence of Sufism, efforts to create a harmonious relationship between the Hindus and Muslims were made, which can be easily noticed in the literary works of the era. One of the major names in Kashmiri poetry in the sixteenth century is Habba Khatun. Habba, a simple village girl of great beauty and with a very refined poetic sensibility, was married to an uneducated villager. Her singing and poetic talents were never appreciated by her in-laws, and she was caught in an unhappy marriage. Captivated by her beauty and her talents, King Yusuf Shah Chak married her after getting her divorced from her husband and she lived the next six years of her life as the queen of Kashmir, until the emperor Akbar imprisoned her husband by deceit. Consequently, the songs of Habba Khatun are laden with the yearning for the thus parted husband, for instance:

> The one who dazzles - have you seen that one?
> Upon him look!
> A sleepless stream in search of him I run,
> A restless brook.
> In far off woods, a lonely pine I stood

Till he appeared,
My woodcutter, and came to cut the wood.
His fire I feared,
Yet though he burn my logs, behold I shine,
My ashes wine! (Translated by Nilla Cram Cook, *poemhunter.com*)

King Yusuf neither saw the light of the day again nor was he able to meet his beloved again. Habba Khatun spent the rest of her life reciting songs for her beloved husband which are famous even to this day in the Valley. Chatterji names the following important literary people of the Kashmir during the Moghul and Afghan periods:

> Khwajah Habibullah Naushahri, who died in 1617, wrote a series of beautiful lyric poems in Kashmiri: the Hindu poet Sahib Kaul, who lived during the time of Jahangir, wrote the *Krsna-avatara* and the *Janam-Carita*, both on Hindu Puranic themes: the poetess Rupa-bhavani (1624-1720) wrote a number of religious poems : her language, as that of a Hindu religious writer, was highly sanskritized: Mulla Fakhir, who died about the close of the 18th century, composed songs and odes. (*Languages and Literatures of Modern India* 262)

During the second half of the eighteenth century, lived the third (the other two being Lal-Ded and Habba Khatun) great Kashmiri poetess named Arani-mal, whose name literally means a garland of yellow roses. Wife of a Kashmiri Brahmin and a learned Persian scholar, her married life was unhappy like that of Lal Ded and Habba Khatun. Deserted by her husband because of his love for other women, Arani-mal pours forth her frustration and yearning for the estranged husband in beautiful love lyrics:

Wreaths of flowers I wove for my husband
Would that he were to accept it
Cups of wine I filled for him
Would that he were to come
I yearn to clasp him in my arms. (*Kashmiri Pandit Network*)

In yet another poem written in Kashmiri, she sings out the agony of her tormented heart:

Shamosondran Paaman Laegis
Aamataavae Kotah Gaejis
Naama Paegam tas Kusniye
Kar yiyey darshun diyej (wikiupdates)

The above lines reflect the pain of Arani-mal who says that now she has become an object for the people who taunt her all the time. It has made her feel lifeless, weak and ill. She is afraid that there is now nobody who will come and take her message to her beloved, so that he may come and show her the blessed shine of his presence. The eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century saw an increase in the number of poets who composed their poems in the way of the Persian narratives: not only that, they had also started writing adaptations of the Persian classics in the Kashmiri language, therefore naturalising Persian as the language of the Kashmiri literature.

Modern Kashmiri Period

The period of the Afghan rule in Kashmir beginning in 1748 was extremely unpleasant for the Kashmiris, which ended with the intervention of Ranjit Singh of Lahore, Panjab. The modern period of the Kashmiri literature began with the onset of the rule of the Sikhs in Kashmir, where Urdu and English started gradually influencing the language and literature in terms of ideas and thoughts. Persian was the language of the court, therefore, literary works continued to be composed in Persian. After 1848, the formation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir took place under the Dogra-Rajput dynasty from Jammu: with this, the condition of the Kashmiri Hindus improved greatly. Meanwhile, Chatterji writes about the evolution of the language, which:

> [. . .] had developed a quantitative meter in the Persian style, side by side with the native Kashmiri meter of strong stresses which still characterizes popular poetry. In vocabulary, in the common epithets and in phrases and imageries, the Kashmiri language, like Urdu in India, came entirely under the spell of Persian: but Kashmiri nevertheless preserved a good deal of its native character. (*Languages and Literatures of Modern India* 264)

The Muslim poet Mahmud Gami (died 1855) with works like *Yusuf-wa-Zulaikha, Laila-Majnun,* and *Khusrau-Shirin,* and the Hindu poet Parmanand (died 1879) with works like *Radha-svayamvara, Sudama-carita* and *Siva-lagan,* composed works of high literary merit in Persian and Sanskrit, and therefore, dominated the stage at the onset of the Modern period of Kashmiri literature. After 1880, English and Urdu languages came into foray. But in the whole process, Chatterji claims that the native Kashmiri language is lost somewhere, as it does not possess a suitable alphabet:

> It is now generally written in the Perso-Arabic script which is very unsuitable for the genius of the language, and the old sharada alphabet, which is confined to the

> Kashmiri Brahmans, represents an archaic tradition in its orthography. (*Languages and Literatures of Modern India* 265)

There have been efforts made to revive the Sharada script in contemporary times, but it is quite difficult to be adapted in the modern times in spite of the scientific endeavours. Anagha Raviprasad writes about a group of Kashmiri Pandit youth (born post-exodus) have formed an organisation named Kashmiri Youth Movement, which is making tremendous efforts to revive the Sharada script: the group on its Instagram account @sharadascriptkashmir encourages people to send their names to the account in order to participate in the movement. In turn, the name written in Sharada script is sent back to the participant, who is asked to put it as his display picture to generate curiosity among people and awaken the masses about the lost glory and heritage of Kashmir. (*Kashmiri Youth Movement)* Apart from it, various rallies and programmes are also held at various places in the country to spread awareness about the script and a hope to revive it.

Another important name in the history of the Kashmiri literature is Abdul Wahhab Pare, who translated the historical work *Akbarnama* into Persian, also he wrote an adaptation of Firdausi's *Shah-namah* in Kashmiri from Persian. Suniti Kummar Chatterji contends that with Pare's death in 1913, the older period of the Kashmiri literature can be said to come to an end, but some other poets of the older tradition whose names should be mentioned here are:

> Rasul Mir, the author of a number of beautiful songs and ghazals: Azizullah Haqqani, a poet: and besides a number of Sufi mystic poets like Qalandar Shah, Abdul Ahad Nazim, Mohiuddin Miskin, Khwajah Akram Rahman Dar, and Maulavi Siddiqullah (died 1930) who translated the *Sikandar-namah* of the great Persian poet of the 12th century, Nizami. (*Languages and Literatures of Modern India* 267)

The poet Pirzadah Ghulam Ahmad Mahjur (born 1885), can be hailed as the forerunner of the most recent period of Kashmiri literature. His poetry is an amalgamation of multiple themes, and he writes on passionate love for the beloved, beauty of the natural landscape, and on political and national issues as well. The Hindu poet Zinda Kaul is an important name: a social reformer and a mystic, he is an awardee of the prestigious Sahitya Academy Prize for literature, 1956. Other people who deserve a mention are Nandalal Kaul, Mana-Ju Attar, Dayaram Ganju, and Pandit Narayan Khar. Chatterji enlists the most noteworthy modern Kashmiri poets: Abdul Ahmad Azad, Dinanth Nadim, Rahman Rahi, Mir Kamal, Chala Rasul Nazki, Abdul Haqq Barq, and Nur Muhammad Roshan. (*Languages and Literatures of Modern India* 269)

Nowadays, writers from Kashmir are also trying their hands at different forms of prose: also they are experimenting with English, Hindi and Urdu languages. One can notice a number of novelists that have come into the domain. But one thing that is common among the contemporary novelists is that the common theme that binds them all together is the struggle of Kashmiri people to get *azadi* (freedom) from the Indian occupation. The Kashmiri native always sees the Indian occupation as something which is forceful, humiliating, exploitative, and what binds all the Kashmiris together into one brotherhood. An in-depth analysis of the various fictional work written post-1990 shows the transition of the political struggle of the Kashmiri native for self-determination into a kind of a religious battle, which, in turn, is misunderstood by the outsiders as jihad. Also, some of the reasons of the renaming of the political struggle as Kashmiri jihad are the entry of the religious scholars in the foray, and the deliberate use of the term by the political leaders, etcetera.

Contemporary novelists who write on Kashmir weave the plot around the religio-political conflict of Kashmir, the tussle with the Indian Army and its impact on the daily lives of the Kashmiri natives. The famous names in Kashmiri fiction and non-fiction prose literature are those of Basharat Peer (*Curfewed Night),* Mirza Waheed (*The Collaborator* and *The Book of Gold Leaves),* Shahnaz Bashir (*The Half Mother),* and Shafi Ahmad (*The Half Widow).* Feroz Rather has published a series of interconnected short stories titled *The Night of Broken Glass.* The common theme that runs in all these fictional or non-fictional narratives is the brutality of the Indian Occupation, the role of Pakistan in exacerbation of the conflict, and the Kashmiri reaction to it.

The earliest ripples in the communal situation of Kashmir had already formed around the 1960s, and around 1990, the situation had totally worsened. Kashmiri Pandits were forced to leave their homes by the Islamic militants, and the men killed and women and children raped and abducted. Writers like Siddharth Gigoo (*The Garden of Solitude)* and Rahul Pandita (*Our Moon has Blood Clots)* write about the feeling of up-rootedness and exile from their own motherland in their narratives, which are marked with a peculiar autobiographical tone. The beginning of Pandita's *Our Moon has Blood Clots* provides a stark reality which strikes like almost a shock to the reader:

> They found the old man dead in his torn tent, with a pack of chilled milk pressed against his right cheek. It was our first June in exile, and the heat felt like a blow in the back of the head. His neighbor, who discovered his lifeless body in the refugee camp, recalled later that he had found his Stewart Warner radio on playing an old

Hindi song: *Aadmi musafir hai, Aata hai, jaata hai* [Man is a wanderer, he goes, and he comes: *my trans.*] (googlebooks).

Such accounts and narratives of the Kashmiri Pandits are chilling: they are the actual accounts of the castaway lives that they were forced to live. One can even say that it was not the loss of the Kashmiri Pandits, but the loss of the Valley in the exodus of the Pandits, who were the soul of the Valley. They faced oppression from both sides, they were exiled from their homeland by the Islamic militants, and at the same time, they were not offered any help from the Indian government, apart from humiliating resettlement in refugee camps, the living-conditions of which are known to all through the multiple narratives of the Kashmiri Pandits themselves. Till now, no efforts have been made by the Government to relocate the Pandits back to their homes.

Conclusion

Kashmir, the "Paradise on Earth" has been converted into a war-zone in the contemporary times, and as the literature of any place is reflective of the conditions prevailing at that time, the literature is also bound to evolve. The literature which once described the beauty of the natural landscape in Kashmir is now employed as a tool for the writers to express their opinion so that the message of the Kashmiris could reach a wider platform. The transition of the choice of issues that the literati of Kashmir from romantic to ideal/realistic can also be seen as a sign that the youth of Kashmir is now choosing pen over the gun to solve the decades-old Kashmir dispute.

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Adaptations, Revisions, and Reworking of Landmark Texts: Japanese Adaptations of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

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Abstract

The paper will be highlighting the impact of the age in changing and bowdlerizing the original text of Lewis Carroll's fantasy story Alice's Adventures in Wonderland through its translation into Japanese. The story of Alice is quite popular in Japan for its two elements, escape from actuality and reimagining of reality, are quite liked by Japanese readers. From the late Meiji period to the present there have been many translations and adaptations into Japanese each with its own spin and bias. Alice possesses a strong personality which in pre-war Japan was not conducive to the idea of the creation of a strong national character. In order to tone down individuality and bring in conformity, the character of a grandmother was introduced. She acted as moral police advising Alice on how to follow social norms. Both the Japanese adaptations and translations changed their character depending on the social needs. With the rise of digital technology, manga adaptations of Alice created a new character called User Alice who becomes strong through readership power and utility challenges the fictional Alice. Both the translation and adaptation of Alice story has been shaped by the changing reality in Japan.

Keywords: translation, change the text, women, individuality, conformity, national consciousness, digital technology, anime

Translation into Japanese language

Over the last century, many Japanese novelists have been challenging themselves to create better translations and adaptations. It is quite interesting that just one particular story, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, has had more than 150 translations and adaptations into the Japanese language.

Translations are described and understood as ‘transformation ’by Jacques Derrida (Derrida). Translating language reconstructs the story itself. Faithful translation requires not only broad and deep knowledge of the culture and language but also the fine understanding of socio-cultural and political background behind the story. Warren Weaver critically comments on the translation of Alice in Wonderland saying, that the Japanese version both puzzles and intrigues him. He observes, “the three retranslations I have, all being made from the exactly the same Japanese passage, differ so much, one from another, that it seems clear that translation back and forth between English and Japanese must be rather loose and vague business” (Weaver 107).

Changing and Bowdlerizing the Text

Alice has been translated into Japanese many times, but it was not easy to introduce the British literature in Japanese society, because of the vast differences in the political and social situations of the two countries. In addition, the translators confronted a language wall between English and Japanese, but they managed to represent the story of Alice. According to Kusumoto, Japanese translators for the tale of Alice replaced a part of original contents which was difficult for Japanese with several expressions which were familiar to Japanese readers. Therefore, in the process of translating English into Japanese, a part of episodes and poems in the story were changed and bowdlerized because translators tried to create works which were easy for Japanese to understand the British literature (Kusumoto 2001).

Firstly, sections of the original story were altered by the translators because of their unfamiliarity to Japanese readers. In general, there are 2 types of translated works: translations and adaptations. Translation is defined as to replace expressions of one language into other languages. On the other hand, adaptations is defined as to adapt works with the original concept but not faithful to the language expression. For example, *Alice Monogatari* (“*Alice ’Story”* [translated from Japanese]) written by Nagayo in 1909 consisted of translations from chapter 1 to chapter 3 and adaptations of the contents in other chapters. In this case, in the process of translating English into Japanese, Nagayo generated a new tale with Alice’s story that only covers a curious girl’s travels in the Wonderland. This shows the change of a part of episode. Another example is Niwa’s work, *Kodomo no Yume* (“*A dream of Child”* [translated from Japanese]). Unlike Nagayo’s work, Niwa faithfully translated the story into Japanese and managed to retain the fundamental essence of the original story via culturally valid appropriations as we will see. In fact, he altered the long talk of a mouse to a Japanese old tale, Peach Boy, *Momotaro*. He also modified the expression of Alice who become big size in the court, and he used a metaphor of a great image of Buddha. He thought these were more familiar to Japanese

children and easy to understand for them, conveying the spirit of the text. In any case, translators changed some episodes in the story of *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland*.

Next, several poems of Alice's story were bowdlerized because they seemed to be unnecessary for Japanese people to understand whole of Alice's tale. There are 11 poems in the tale of Alice. Most of them are parodies of teachings and popular songs which were familiar among people who speak English. However, these parodies had difficulties to translate into Japanese because the original teachings and popular songs did not exist in Japan. Also, most Japanese people did not know the English teachings and popular songs. These facts show that Japanese could not capture humor of parodies. In this situation, some translators choose to delete several poems. Suzuki, a translator of *Chichu no Sekai* (*"Underground World"* [translated from Japanese]), omitted the poem, "*How doth the little crocodile*…" This is a parody of Isaac Watts's teaching. Without understanding the original teaching, readers will not be interested therefore Suzuki decided to delete the poem from his translated work. In addition, in other works, some poems were also deleted, such as "*Fury said to a mouse, that …"* and "*You are old, Father William…"*. Several poems of the story of Alice were bowdlerized because translator assumed these were not essential or interesting for Japanese people.

Escape from Reality and Reimagination

In Japan, there are a lot of fantasy stories created for children called *douwa*. However, those stories depicted the real world and imaginary world as different things. Thus, there is no relationship between reality and fantasy world because they were depicted separately in books. Alice in Wonderland allows the reader to escape from reality and return to the reality again without a break. This seamless escape and return through fantasy help interact between fantasy and real world and this interaction keeps the interest of readers alive. This concept also appeals to Japanese readers who is not used to this new style of storytelling. What is escape? There are two types of the escaping from reality. The one is finding a safe place. People want to escape from the world they are in because the world is too much for them and could be full of stress, anxiety and harsh reality. On the other hand, another concept is exploring new world. People want to escape from reality because they just want to explore and find another new world. As we can see, Alice in Wonderland has both aspects of escaping. Escaping from stressful world and exploring new world. Fantasy novels like Alice loved by Japanese have one obvious feature. That is the seamless escape-and-return through fantasy.

In the 1909, Meiji period, when Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was translated into Japanese and in 1912 to 1926, there was a larger trend where narrative storytelling for young generation's books were popularized and the casual mode of fairy tale storytelling transformed to a literary mode. This

era observed a strong tendency of the "fairy tale" story telling in children's books in Japan. This type of storytelling called *setsuwa* in Japanese is a form in which a story such as fantasy is depicted only within a certain clear framework. For examples, in the book called "The Spider's Thread"(1989), a short story by Ryunosuke Akutagawa he depicted a whole story as a past event. Other authors used those words "once upon a time", "Now, it is a long time ago" at the beginning of the stories. As we can evidence, there was a clear distinction between the world created in the story and the reality where the readers are in.

However, British fantasy literature represented by Alice have a characteristic of the seamless escape-and-return through Fantasy. After Alice's translation, in Japan, those literature in the form of that characters going from their real world to a Fantasy or Parallel world, and then return to a reality, those stories such as "Secret Garden" by Frances Hodgson Burnett or "The Chronicles of Narnia" by C.S. Lewis have been translated and accepted by Japanese. They described those events, such as falling in rabbit hole, going through the inside of cabinet as a real thing and can occur in real world, even if it is not possible.

This writing technique has been very popular. As one of examples, Studio Ghibli animation films are strongly loved by Japanese. They have inherited this technique. For example, in "Spirited Away" in 2001, the main character named Chihiro goes through a long and narrow tunnel and goes to another world, In " My Neighbor Totoro" (1988), Totoro which can only be seen by Children, comes into the real world but Totoro usually lives inside tree. Thus, there is no clear boundary between reality and fantasy in the movie. In Ghibli movies, tunnels or other things are depicted as a symbol that connects the reality with different world, just as Alice's rabbit hole plays a role as a symbol.

As I mentioned. Alice was translated into Japanese from around the era called Meiji period (1868-1912) when people trying to break out of the old framework of storytelling created before and trying to form a new world of children's literatures and the seamless escape-and-return through fantasy have been accepted in Japan because it enriches the ordinary day-to-day existence and allows the readers to escape the real world into a fantasy world and then again return to the real world.

Transformation from the original text to the moral tale in the Late Meiji Period

Since Alice had been introduced into Japanese society in 1909, many readers had accepted and enjoyed the books through adaptations as a moral tale and projection of a good behavior of women because they were strongly affected by socio-political situation in the Meiji period. In the Meiji

period, Japan was particularly concerned with the expansion of education and aiming modernization to catch up the west. According to Chimori who examined translation works in the Meiji period, the translated works were pretty much directly influenced by socio- cultural situation at that time (Chimori 241). She pointed out 4 elements. Firstly, juvenile literature and other publications had been under the national authority which restricted any criticism or comment against emperor and capitalism. Secondly heroines and heroes in juvenile literature rarely had a contact with outer world of family. Around 1902, comic magazines for children were published but they mostly focused on depicting an ideal female figure rather than attracting interest and pleasure of children. Thirdly Japanese literature did not have a genre of non-sense literature therefore many novelists were not able to understand non-sense jokes of Lewis Carroll. Lastly, since all translations and adaptations were created by men until after the world war II, there is lack of sympathy towards Alice. Lewis Carroll depicted Alice as powerful and full of curiosity even though under the Victorian period which was under the stern morality. However, translations in Meiji period seems not have such compassion towards heroines. They rather emphasized moral judgement through the story.

Arisu Monogatari (Alice's Story) in 1909

Amongst many translations and adaptations in the Meiji Period, Arisu Monogatari was most distinctive. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was introduced by Nagayo (1886-1944) for the first time in 1909 with the title of Arisu Monogtari (*Alice's story* [Translated from Japanese]) as a serial novel in the comic magazine for children. Alice was depicted as brave, strong and fearless in the original text, but those characteristics were not welcomed in Japanese society. Those were not translated faithfully to the original story because her strong personality was challenged the creation of national identity for Japanese people in the late Meiji period.

Nagayo created new adaptation of Alice in 1909. He translated first three chapters and added new 11 chapters by his own. He recreated new Alice who was a subject of reflection of morality. Nagayo's work seems most distinctive in that moral judgement. Alice was depicted strong as she finally challenged Queen of Hearts in the trial in the original story but on the other hand, Alice in Nagayo's adaptation was depicted polite and obedient girl as she paid her respect to the Queen of Hearts and the King of Pearl who appeared in the latter half of the story. And she finally became crown princess by getting married the son of the King of Pearl.

In the story which, one day she reached Kingdom of Pearl and she was staying in a palace in peace. She kindly opened the box and release a mouse inside, but that mouse was an enemy of the King. She

was cursed and became a seagull. She went to the island where the grandmother stayed. Grandmother was introduced as a character to guide Alice what she should do to return human being from seagull. Alice asked, *"how can I atone for the sin? How can I return human being?"* (Chimori 2009 147: translated by author) Then grandmother replied that Alice should get something for returning human being. Later in the story Alice realized what she had to get were sincerity, chastity, love and patience.

Personality of Alice

Many translations and revised editions were aimed at suppressing and changing the rebellious nature of Alice to be accepted as a sensitive girl who can adapt to social norms at that time. In Japan, many translations and revised editions of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland were published during the period between the end of World War I and the outbreak of World War II. Many of these early Japanese translations deviated significantly from the original Alice. In the original text, she has love, kindness, politeness and curiosity. She is willing to show off what she has learned like a clever student. Also, she is peculiar who plays double role, scolding or reminding herself. On the other hand, she is self-centered and has strong spirit that does not move with the absurd behavior of strange characters in wonder world. However, Alice in the early translations lacked curiosity, intellect, and personality, omitting the most obvious parts of her opinion and thoughts.

As Japanese social norm at the time, parents did not expect their daughters to have higher education than their sons. Women were expected to well-behaved and should not assert themselves than men. For those reason, in Japan, the nature of Alice was an inappropriate to the creation of Japanese nationality because she appeared as a symbol of rebellion at that time. As a result, in the process of translation, from English to Japanese, the personality of Alice had been changed from rebellious and fiery to sweet and frail girl. As you can see, Alice's personality is a strong reflection of Japanese men's predominance over women and feudal view of woman of the time. However, with the passage of time, as women's rights were established and evolved, Japanese translators were able to translate almost faithfully to the character of the original Alice. As mentioned above, Alice's personality in translating into Japanese society changed over the years, influenced by the social and cultural background of Japan.

Character of Grandmother, Individuality and Conformity

In the story, grandmother appeared as a guide who leads Alice to the right path. Grandmother continued:

"As I said, becoming a human being is not easy, you have to gain something for becoming a human being. You should get something as big as possible, for that, you should do for others but not

for yourself. Get something which especially current women lacks. Of course, men also should do have but women must do have." Then Alice replied, "Is it scholarship?" Grandmother had a bitter face and said, "scholarship? It doesn't matter if you have or not…." Alice responded "I was wrong. A treasure of women must be a tender heart." Grandmother fixed the mood and said, "Almost! But that's not enough. Women must preserve chastity." (Trans. 149-150)

The reason behind that Alice was depicted was clear that the thoughts and ideas of the period had reflected. It is obvious that Arisu Monogatari is a moral story that tells an ideal female figure at that time, which is *Ryosai Kenbo*, good wives and wise mothers. In the Meiji period, the aim of girl's education was to raise *Ryosai Kenbo* for the nation. The status of women was very low especially after getting married, her position was minor under the head of the household. Masae Kato notes that the only important and expected role for women was to give birth to children, especially male children. Otherwise they were not acknowledged as completed women (Masae Kato 37).

Nagayo emphasized that action should be for others not for herself. *Alice summoned up her courage hearing that her action would be for the sake of human and women* (152). She was depicted obedient, shy, loyal, less distinctive and self-sacrifice girl. It reflects Japanese female figure in the Meiji period. In addition, in the story, she did not fight with anyone unlikely the original one. She is kind of trying to avoid fighting and crashing. When she replied, "*Is it scholarship?*" she noticed that grandmother was making a bitter face and immediately her face turned red and said she was wrong. She does not protest, discuss or against. In prewar time, Japan there was a regulation of speech in order to monitor anyone would be against emperor or capitalism, juvenile literature was also not an exception of the subject of restriction. Society and political ideology casted a shadow over the literature. Therefore, Nagayo intentionally changed the original text and story into a moral story which brings conformity and lessens individuality. She was leading Alice to achieve sincerity, chastity, love and patience.

User Alice

With the rise of digital technology and popularity of manga culture, adaptation of Alice has become a trend amongst non-professional authors. Comic Market is widely known as called "Comiket" amongst Japanese who love manga, animation and literature. Comiket is the largest fan convention in the world and it makes Japan one of the most unique culture in my opinion. In this market, fans share merchandises such as books and comics that they made and published by themselves based on the original literary text or manga. They also make many kinds of goods and fan arts such as stickers,

postcards and video games. In this way, Japan is a country where fantasy and “second creation” or adaptation prosper.

As one of such examples of “fan culture”, British Alice in Wonderland has been very often recreated in Japan. A Japanese fan of Alice in Wonderland tried to write their own story and named Key Princess Story: Eternal Alice Rondo. This animation tells the story of Aruto and his adventures with Alice Users. These kinds of adaptation and translation of a work have developed with the digital technology.

Aruto, who is the main character of the Japanese animation, Key Princess Story: Eternal Alice Rondo’. Aruto is a student and has interested in original Alice in Wonderland. This Alice story inspired Aruto when he was in childhood, so he starts creating his own story based on original one. One day, Aruto finds a rabbit-eared girl and thinks she is a real Alice, but her name is Arisugawa Arisu, which is written in Hiragana. All of names are written in Katakana, but it’s not Katakana. It means that she is a Japanese-style character and a member of Alice Users. Aruto loves Alice story and always thinks about Alice, so it makes him access to the library. In fact, library implies the imaginary world where only Alice Users can be accessible. Alice User who is created by a Japanese fan keeps fighting each other to finish final Alice story and read it. This is not completed and when all Alice Users stories are collected by taking away another person's secret, the final story will be completed. To do this, they try to collect another person's secret story by winning in the battle because those who win can read all the secrets of another Alice Users. The secret story means personal trauma that each Alice User has. The final Alice story can be finished by taking away another person’s secret. Aruto is not an ordinary boy. He has the strong power of imagination, and it turns out Lewis Carrol called Alice master tries to use the creative powers that Aruto has. In the end, Alice Users are created by Aruto and these girls are not real people but exists in Aruto's imagination.

Finally, the development of technology has a large impact on Japanese manga. In the digital technology society, original works are easily transformed from comics to anime and games. From the printed words to animations, the Japanese artist have adapted the original Alice story and transformed it into the new versions like unique Alice character.

In conclusion, Japanese readers of the iconic Alice fantasy has created an interactive genre where readers not only vicariously participate in the adventures of Alice but also get into her life bringing

social and individual conflict in it. Retelling the story through shifting genres—comic, anime—and introducing new characters in the story gives a new dimension to an elitist canon.

Conclusion

Translation is a dynamic attempt to transform the text and story itself, even changing its intention and value. Japanese authors have been trying to publish better and creative translations through making expressions familiar to Japanese readers. Especially in the Meiji Period, with the rapid modernization and the rise of national consciousness, literature was used for the purpose of creating ideal women. Literature is a micrograph of socio-political situation. Just like the social norms create literary canon, literature has a power to change people's attitude and behavior. Alice as an iconic character had been loved by people and taken advantage of as a part of creation to strong nationalism. Secondary creations and adaptations through manga and anime are reflecting current phenomena representing certain desire for escapism.

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From Madman to Total Artist: Witkacy's Way to Fame

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Abstract

Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885-1939) was an avant-garde Polish artist, as a painter inspired by cubism and expressionism, while as a writer and playwright he created art corresponding to surrealism and ahead of the theatre of the absurd. The reception of Witkiewicz's business (pseudonym: Witkacy) in Poland before World War II was significant, but critical. After 1945, political conditions in Poland and socialist realism in art did not favour Witkacy, who was treated as a socially harmful and decadent writer. Positive commentaries about his work began to be written in the seventies, noticing the value of his painting and literature in reference to European avant-garde art. Today, Witkacy is considered one of the most important Polish authors, present in the canon of Polish literature and contemporary culture contexts, while research on his works has achieved the rank of a sub-discipline: witkacology.

Keywords: Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, Polish literature, European avant-garde in art

In the current cultural context, we can characterize Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885-1939) as one of the most prominent representatives of Polish artistic avant-garde movements of the beginning of the 20th century. Based on the history of the European painting, his works can be tied to cubist and expressionist painting-although Witkacy himself created a style he referred to as "Formism" (coined from the word "form"). While analyzing Witkacy's playwriting, it is noticeable that his type of artistic creation corresponds with phenomena related to the great theatre reform of the turn of the 19th and 20th century-works of Pirandello or Craig, as well as the visions of the surrealistic theatre and the theatre of the absurd. Finally, looking at his prose, it would be quite justified to view it according to categories of the literature of exhaustion in the vein of John Barth or postmodern art with such phenomena as grotesque, intertextuality or catastrophism. Apart from all those activities, we should also mention the works he completed within his Portrait Company (which he deemed very important), a type of art which strived to be functional (not unlike the pop-art works of later years)-mostly without giving up highest aspirations of the Pure Form: values of colouring, artistic technique, directional tensions, artistic anti-psychology and anti-society gestures. On top of all that, Witkacy-from the second decade of the 20th century-additionally considered himself a philosopher and published a number of works in that field-building a system which might be referred to as "biological monadism."

All of the above constitutes the way in which Witkacy is currently perceived: however, it should be emphasized that it took several decades of his reception in Poland and all over the world before all those aspects of his artistic personality came to be recognized. Let us focus upon a few most significant moments of the whole process in order to fully realize the stages of Witkacy's image transformation from a negative one - an eccentric madman - into a positive one: a total multimedia artist.

Aura of a Drug Addict and a Womanizer (1918-1939)

Witkacy and his art (painting, drama, prose, art criticism and philosophy) were not well received during their first stage of reception (from 1918 to 1939). Particularly misunderstood was the most prominent (for the artist himself) theory of the Pure Form which presumed the existence of painting and drama which inspire metaphysical feelings, but accomplish that aim not with means based on realism but on deformity-chaos and not order. According to Witkacy, art should not, therefore, refer in its expression to truths of society, psychology or even logic-instead, it should inspire the feeling of the uncanny, a deep wonder and a moment of experiencing a divine Absolute. Art works and plays by Witkacy following his pure form-based style, despite the fact they were presented in art galleries and experimental theatres, were met with skepticism. Painting critics were not sure whether to classify works of this artist within the current of dadaism or surrealism - and the theatre critics were hesitant whether to characterize his plays as examples of sophisticated psychologies or grotesque and pure nonsense. His novels (*Farewell to Autumn*, *Insatiability*) were also misunderstood and their readers only seemed to perceive them as autobiographical works with a specific way to interpret them-as they appeared to present the fates of fallen artists. Those readers were seemingly unable to see in those novels 'elements of literary game, civilizational pessimism or catastrophism.

Witkiewicz himself complicated all those attempts of his creative output's assessment with a blatantly eccentric lifestyle. Raised to follow the patterns of modernism, he used the lifestyle of an artistic genius to criticize the Polish society of the first decades of the 20th century-in addition, negatively evaluating the processes of massification and mechanization of the whole civilization of western Europe. Witkacy's social and public activities showed a distinct factor of a dandy lifestyle in them-an aesthete who assesses the social life with a studied contempt. In his private life, Witkacy tended to behave in a very provocative fashion (e.g., already married, he forced upon

his wife her consent regarding him being surrounded by lovers), he engaged in heated discussions on aesthetics or philosophy during public performances and in magazine publications. He was also known to experiment with stimulants (such as tobacco, alcohol, cocaine, ether or peyote), even publishing the first guide in Polish literature which explained their effects (*Narcotics).* Witkacy also famously applied Freud's psychoanalytic theory to evaluate Polish public life (*Unwashed souls*). In Polish reception between the First and Second World War, this eccentric aspect of Witkacy's personality overshadowed the philosophy he practiced with utmost seriousness. It is worth remembering that he read-in original versions-all of the most significant works in the field of philosophy as well as commented on accomplishments of German, English and French philosophy, even befriending Hans Cornelius. In a similar fashion, audience did not treat seriously his cultural prophetism when Witkacy warned European intellectual elites against authoritarianism of the fascist Germany or communist Russia. He was particularly afraid of communism, having had a short but direct contact with this movement when, during the First World War, Witkacy was an officer of the tsarist army and he saw the outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution.

Witkacy and the times of socialism (1945-1957)

After the end of the Second World War, Poland got under military, political and civilizational control of the Soviet Union in which - in the dimension of art-the ruling trend was socialist realism. Although in Poland this current never achieved prominence equal to the one in the Soviet Union, the fact remained that at least until the 60's of the 20th century all avant-garde art-including Witkacy's plays, novels and philosophical works-could hardly be presented or interpreted in a free fashion. The reason behind it was that his works were thought to be an example of creation which was decadent, empty and one which had very little in common with class struggle or civilizational transformation. As a result, socialist critics hardly attempted to interpret Witkacy's creative output, having assumed there was no need to analyze the author's eccentric life style as his plays or painting were just a form of aesthetic manifestation of an artist who was as bored with life as unproductive (for socialist society). What is more, the socialist art criticism presumed that grotesque-filled paintings of great social revolutions, deformed portraits of authority figures or descriptions of the hopeless daily life are harmful for the recipient of the socialist culture who, after all, is in need of positive moral patterns. In view of all that, the works of Witkiewicz published in the years of 1945-1957 were limited to merely two plays: *The Little manor* and *The Shoemakers,* both supplemented with a negative commentary concerning their content and language. If it comes to scientific reception, it was limited to just one article which, in addition, was published outside

of Poland (Regamey) and several mentions in synthetic works on philosophy (Tatarkiewicz). Finally, in the area of artistic reception, it was only Stanisław Lem in his novel titled *Hospital of the Transfiguration* who-in the character of a poet named *S*ekułowicz depicted Witkacy's beliefs and lifestyle.

This style of realistic or sociological interpretation of Witkacy's creative output-one resulting from the Marxist approach-was also present in later years and the legend of the artist-madman continued to be more significant than actually studying his works. Apart from that, what proved to be an immensely important reason for the absence of Witkacy's art in Polish public life was the context of his suicide which he committed on 17 September of 1939 as a gesture of protest and despair against the Soviet Union's military attack directed at Poland. Polish art critics-choosing to ignore Witkacy's works-at the same time conveniently avoided the controversial issue of pre-war Polish-Russian relations: one which was definitely inconvenient for socialist authorities.

Witkacy goes out into Poland and the World (1957-1985)

From the moment of political and cultural "thaw" in central Europe-inspired by Josef Stalin's death in 1953-and the moment aesthetic pressure was somewhat loosened in countries which remained under the influence of Soviet dominance: Witkacy's reception in Poland started to spread in a noticeable fashion. The fact was clearly illustrated by the publishing-in 1957-of a multi-author book titled *Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz. The man and the creator*. It compiled writings of philosophers (Tadeusz Kotarbiński), art historians (Mieczysław Wallis), theatre specialists (Stefan Szuman) and literature experts (Marian Piechal) who could finally write about Witkacy in a more uncensored and braver manner. In the following years, the author's works- which quickly became an important part of Polish literary world-started to be re-published: *Insatiability* (1957), writings on aesthetics titled *New forms in painting* (1959), plays (1962), novels (*The only way out* in 1968 and *622 Downfalls of Bungo* in 1972), writings on philosophy (1974-1975), journalistic commentaries (1975) and drawings (1977). The most significant rehabilitation of Witkacy's creative output was the act of publishing his plays in a publication collection of National Library, first edited by Marian Kwaśny (1974) and then by Jan Błoński (1983). This fact signified that he became a classic and an integral part of Polish cultural assets. Of course, he was still subject to various assessments but it was no longer possible to remove him from the circle of the most prominent Polish artists.

The most crucial factor, however, which led to this acceptance of Witkacy's creative output in Poland was the fact that circles in Western Europe (French, Italian, German, English and Slavic) developed an interest in the creator. Witkiewicz, translated into those languages, started to be recognized as a Polish avant-garde artist-together with Witold Gombrowicz and Brunon Schulz. Particularly, Witkacy's plays became a success on numerous European stages which, in turn, increased his reception in Poland, too. The first foreign translation of Witkacy's writings was a fragment of *Introduction to Pure Form in theatre* by a French Slavist named Eric Veaux (1963) who published it in "Pour L'art" magazine. In 1963, an almost identical fragment from the writings of the Polish artist appeared in Italian in "Sipario" magazine. In 1964, Yugoslavian anthology titled *Avangardna drama* published Witkacy's play called *Madman and Nun* (translation by Peter Vujićić). In 1965, Shurkamp publishing house published the first German collection of Witkacy's plays translated by Heinrich Kunstmann. As far as worldwide reception is concerned, Witkacy was lucky in that he was translated into English by Daniel Gerould and into Russian by Andrej Bazilewski-famous and respected translators. So far Witkiewicz has been translated into 24 languages including oriental ones such as Arabic and Japanese.

Despite all those positive circumstances regarding Witkacy's reception abroad-in Poland, the popularity of his writings was still slim at best. In the literary reception, the artist's figure appeared in a novel by Władysław Terlecki, *Wormwood star* (1968), which described the final few weeks of Witkacy's life. This situation was slowly changing with the publishing of more and more studies which valued his avant-garde solutions in the area of theatre, literature and painting. Particularly important for the Polish tradition were collective publications or thematic issues of magazines in which numerous authors using diverse methodologies of art analysis indicated how multi-dimensional Witkacy's creative output was (for example, "Pamiętnik Teatralny" 1969, *Studies on Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz*, 1972).

Witkacy as the Leader of the Polish Modern Art (1985 until now)

The celebration of the 100th anniversary of Witkacy's birth-coinciding with the twilight of the socialist government in Poland-allowed the scientific community to analyze his work practically without any interference in linguistic, theatre and literature studies as well as those in the field of art history (e.g., monographic issue of "Pamiętnik Teatralny", 1985, vol. 1-4: a thematic issue of "Sztuka" 1985, vol. 2-3). This expanse of freedom of interpretation was further reinforced by

Witkacy's good reception outside Poland-no longer just in France, England, USA or Germany), but also in many more corners of the world. It became more and more apparent that a call voiced as early as in 1975 by Mieczysław Porębski about the necessity to create an interdisciplinary humanistic discipline called witkacology started to be implemented in practice.

The Polish critic of art wrote: "The full critical analysis of the creative output of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, who preferred to call himself Witkacy, would require creating a separate discipline and research method. It would be rather risky as it would have to combine the theory and history of visual arts, the theory and history of theatre and novel as well as cultural sociology and futurology up to logics, ontology and historiography. Such a discipline might be called witkacology." (Porębski 193)

From the 80's of the 20th century, Witkacy's works are already commonly available on the Polish market. His popularity was increased by the publishing of a five-volume edition of *Selected works* (1985) in which appeared all of his already available novels, plays and the majority of journalism. In the 90's, the artist's Collected works (1992-2019) were published which currently encompass 23 volumes and present in a philology-oriented edition not only his literature and plays, but also philosophy, aesthetics, correspondence and Witkacy's *varia*. It is also in the 90's of the 20th century that Witkacy's works were included in curricula of Polish languages classes of the secondary school level. This is why there are so many editions of *The little manor* and *Shoemakers* which are presented in school interpretations as play-writing of the highest quality. Academic reception is very diverse and it illustrates all the modern methods of working with cultural heritage. Within the current of witkacology we can find research in the following fields: biography (Degler, Micińska), art (Żakiewicz), literature (Symotiuk, Skwara), philosophy (Polit, Dombrowski), ethics (Kałowska), theatre (Rudzki) as well as many others. In 2016, a periodical called "Witkacy!" was created-one with academic ambitions operated by Witkacy's Institute (with Janusz Degler playing the most prominent role) and devoted to the creative output of this eminent artist.

During the last decades of reception in Poland, Witkacy's works became a distinguishing mark of an attractive art which competed with other phenomena of European and worldwide art. His plays are not only performed in avant-garde theatres, but also on every larger Polish stage. His paintings and drawings are not only present on pages of prestige art history albums but also among visual signs of pop culture. And this phenomenon is not limited to Poland, either. A very good example illustrating attractiveness of Witkacy's personality is a novel by a Swedish writer, Agneta Pleijel,

Lord Nevermore (2000), who described a real-life friendship of the famous anthropologist, Bronisław Malinowski, with Witkiewicz-while adding certain fictional facts. The novel was translated into French, German, English, Italian and Spanish and turned out to be a bestseller.

Another medium which played a significant role in promoting Witkacy's creative output was film. The first one was made as early as in 1966 in a convention of a short biographical and educational movie (directed by Stanisław Kokesz). The following years brought television versions of Witkacy's plays as well as documentaries concerning his creative activity. Feature movies constitute yet another group of artistic reception - suggestively presenting the universe of Witkacy's art. In 1984, a feature movie was shot titled *In an old manor house, or, the independence of triangles* (directed by Andrzej Kotkowski), and in 1989 another one was created - *Farewell to autumn*, based on a novel of the same title (directed by Mariusz Treliński). In 2003, a Polish-Lithuanian feature movie titled *Insatiability*-also based on a novel of the same title - was directed by Wiktor Grodecki, and -in 2007-a Polish-American animated film titled *Madame Tutli-Putli* was produced (directed by Chris Lavis and Maciej Szczerbowski-and nominated for an Oscar award). Then, in 2010, a movie was shot titled *Mystification* (directed by Jacek Koprowicz) which told a story of Witkacy's fake suicide and his further adventures after the Second World War. In 2013, an American short movie titled *There is Nothing Bad Which Could Not Turn into Something Worse* was produced-directed by Orli Nativ and based on Witkacy's play-*Madman and Nun*.

It is perhaps somewhat surprising that Witkacy also became popular among musicians. It could already be seen in 1977 when a musical spectacle called *Belzebub's Sonata* was created-on the basis of which a double-record album was published in 1987. Jerzy Chruściński, a composer of S. I. Witkiewicz's theatre in Zakopane, recorded six albums of classically composed and performed music for Witkacy's plays. An experimental classical music convention was used by a Scottish musician, Lindsay Davidson, who composed two mini-operas based on Witkacy's plays (2005). If it comes to other music genres, Bogdan Mizerski, a jazz musician, is consistent in finding his inspiration in Witkacy. He released music inspired by writings and paintings of the artist in his albums titled *Puć tu do mnie* (1985), *Witkac Song* (1996), *Assymetry/Dream* (2003) and *IP/Mystery of Being* (2011). As far as other jazzmen are concerned, one would have to mention Tomasz Stańko, a trumpeter, who-on the basis of *Narcotics*-prepared in 1986 a two-album record titled *Witkacy–Peyote*, which found its follow-up in a TV programme in 1994 with the participation of the jazzman himself and Polish actors: Marek Walczewski and Wojciech Pszoniak. Rhymed pieces

as well as fragments of Witkacy's prose and plays also appeared in repertoires of rock and alternative music bands. Examples can be found in the case of the following bands: Genezyp Kapen (mixture of hard rock, ska and reggae-1985), Los Loveros (alternative music-1991), Armia (post-punk-2003), Voo (rock-1998) and Michał Hnatiuk (noise- and trip-music-2013). Witkacy's works are also performed by singers engaged in commenting social reality (Jacek Kaczmarski-1980, Zbigniew Raj–1993), singing actors (Maria Peszek, Tomasz Karolak-2007) as well as stage singers (Maryla Rodowicz–2006).

All of the factors mentioned above indicate that during the last decades Witkacy's reception is simply impetuous. There are cyclical conferences focusing on his creative output and organized for the academic community (the Museum of the Middle Pomerania in Słupsk) as well as contests consisting in interpreting his works (Youth Culture House in Żnin and the Słupsk Culture Centre). In addition, many schools are created which choose Witkacy as their patron and monuments as well as memorial plaques devoted to the artist are constructed all over Poland.

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The Dark Rock of Indian History: Neglected EX-Untouchables

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Abstract

The present paper analyses the neglected parts of the Indian untouchables that have made a major contribution to Indian literature. There are certain books written by Dalit writers themselves, and they are designed to be debated so as to carve out a new identity for a new genre of Dalit literature. The question of pertinence is to what extent these books have succeeded in transmitting their messages to those who are unfamiliar with the language of modern social discourse or social fabric into the mainstream. It was commonly assumed that devoid of literacy and publication, Dalits were essentially a part of just the oral tradition. Their representation was considered to be confined to orality alone, and the memories contained in it were expected to become fossilized and static when confronted with an ever-flowing cultural stream. Untouchable's literatures have continuously been knocking at the door but have always been refused entry even into the amphitheater of the established and recognized arena of articulation. The paper analyses the legendary figure of Angulimal, Shambook, Valmiki, and Ambedkar to trace the conflict between the past tradition and the contemporary movement. It also shows how Sant Ravidas and Kabir found to have greater influence over Dalits and mainstream writers thought processes as compared to Buddha or Marx and their writings deserve to be included among the literary greats. Earlier it was literature for the Dalits, by the Dalits, and of the Dalits, but now these are alternative writing with a new epistemological purview.

Keywords neglected, untouchables, pertinence, discourse, mainstream, epistemological

History can be and has been an important epistemological tool to evaluate and confirm the civilizations of the past that depict not merely the material achievements of that civilization but also its institutional arrangements that defined its trajectories and offered them the required momentum for surviving. Delving into the ancient period of the Indian past, one finds that a major segment of the Indian population known as Sudras (untouchables and backward) were both coercively and persuasively pushed to a corner of society wherein they were denied all the rights that accrue to a being by virtue of his birth as a man. Such a phenomenon was the consequence of the rigid caste-stratified social system in which the privileged position of few depended upon the deprivation of others. How did it happen? What is its aetiology? This is a perplexing question

before humanity. Theories of an economic, sociological, anthropological, and cosmological nature have been advanced to explain its development, but none of these have succeeded in satisfying the curious mind, to the extent that they are forgotten as sociological arrangements of the past: always propelled by the ethos and scarcity of resources during the primitive phase of social progress, or accepted as an inevitable ingredient of social equilibrium governed by the rigorous laws of history.

Modern education in India was initiated by the Christian missionaries in the eighteenth-century AD by opening schools in various parts of the country and inviting children of all the sections of society to attend them. It has a subterranean design of the creation of a culture based upon reason and experience, a reason that is skeptical of the given truth, individual or collective. Further, it aimed at the Anglicization of Indian culture and proselytizing of people into the fold of Christianity, adding to it the lessons of individual freedom and liberty, equality, as well as the role of the individual in moulding the given phenomena and ascertaining social ontology through cause and effect methodology, and developing solutions to rectify the inconsistencies therein. It was for the first time in the history of India that a platform was erected where children from all cases could sit together and acquire the same knowledge. Badri Narayan says: William Adam in his report prepared around 1835-8 has shown that in the villages of Bihar and Bengal, students belonging to the higher castes as well as untouchable and backward sections of the society could be observed sitting together in the schools run by the missionaries (Narayan 15).

However, it was not smooth sailing. Violence protests against such an iconoclastic educational system erupted. Some schools even failed to register or enroll the Sudra students in their schools, as is evident from the observation of some critics that the public schools are virtually closed to the Chamars. Both teachers and pupils in the schools make it most difficult for low caste born to sit in the classrooms. The result is that boys of the lower castes are not found in any numbers in the school ’that boys of the lower castes are not found in any numbers in the school.

However, with all the stiff opposition and social constraints disfavouring the educational acquirements of the untouchables and the backwards, the number of untouchables successful in obtaining education in the United Provinces alone was 46,000 in the year 1917. Consequently, the section of Sudras that were now educated attempted to re-read history and analyze it from a different perspective. The coming of the print media further effectuated the articulation of their voices of dissent and popularization of a different framework of history with new analytical tools. Dalits challenged the Brahminical hegemonic order by utilizing the print medium: they further used it to counter the value framework erected by the dominant power group. In other words, the

print medium was being utilized by the Dalits to subvert the ideological and cultural structural persisting since ancient times. It was commonly assumed that devoid of literacy and publication, dalits were essentially a part of just the oral tradition. Their representation was considered to be confined to orality alone and the memories contained in it were expected to become fossilized and static when confronted with an ever-flowing cultural stream. Therefore, for injecting new confidence and enthusiasm with greater mobilization power, the print medium was found to be highly effective by the dalits. Moreover, the writings of the ruling class are always full of spaces that could be exploited by the dalits to counterpoise their own ideologies. The double standards of the ruling class are always evident in their own ideologies. The written content of the oppressor when confronted by a similar content of the oppressed produces scope for dialogue which demolishes the grossness of the oppressed. Moreover, written materials using printed mediums are successful in providing a homogeneous ideology to those divided by scattered thoughts. Further, the print medium gives cultural self-expression to such groups through the efforts of the organic intellectuals of the community. This was understood by a visionary like Achhutanand in North India, and the dalits in the future followed rigorously the tradition laid down by him.

The question of pertinence is, to what extent these writings have succeeded in transmitting their messages to those who are unfamiliar with the language of modern social discourse or whether they contain significant messages for the common man who yearns to see rays of hope in real social transformation of his image. Had it been so, these books would have been available in the rural areas, *melas* (fairs) that are held there or in the bookshops designed to popularize Dalit identity by selling cheap booklets written in the most common language narrating their reality in most uncommon way. The book on Kabir by Dharamveer exhibits an unconditional epiphenomenalist methodology of putting every interpretation of Kabir under the banner of Brahminical interpretation, oblivious of the fact that no personality in medieval India has advocated so vehemently the existence of plurality of understanding as Kabir, and none has challenged so vociferously the monistic dominance of a specific faith or ideology. Moreover, how exposition of the Brahminical mode of interpreting Kabir is going to help a community that is yet to liberate itself from the complexes of outsideness in his psyche is left unexplained.

These booklets have come to form an alternative source of knowledge, as their sale is not governed by the economies of the library, review of academic critics, the beauty of language, coherence of logic, the status of the publisher, and quality of the production. Being nearer to folk language and folk mode of epistemological transmission, the scope of receptivity stands enhanced. Folk literatures popularity among the untouchables cannot be denied by any stretch of the imagination.

Such literature is in abundance among Ravidasis, Kabir panthis, and Satnamis and has also ecumenic popularity. Similarly, the poems of certain Sufis are equally acceptable and popular to the extent of transcending the boundaries of caste and creed. But what is special about the Dalit popular literature is that it is acceptable among dalits only. It is a literature for the dalits, by the dalits and of the dalits. This literature is not meant for the solace of the mind weary of the present but an immediate and axiomatic device for identity formulation and formation. No doubt, these are also meta-narratives which communicate a meta-narrative that is a negation of the meta-narratives of the Brahminical order. Hence, it would not be an exaggeration to call these alternative writings, as these are an alternative writing with a new epistemological purview.

Delving into the past, and old religious scriptures, they discovered anti-heroes, i.e., the actors, who, according to them had been pushed into the villainous realm by authors of the Brahminical order. They picked them up and glorified them within a selected thematic parameter conducive for an early Dalit awakening and mental fructification. They also searched the peripheral actors in history and placed them at par with the nodal personalities. Manu was discovered as the real enemy of the Dalit cause because it was, he who had promulgated social laws governing society, laws that were favourable to the upper castes and antithetical to the emancipation of the Sudras. Manu's philosophy dominates all the meta-histories in the form of epics, *Purana*s and *itihas*. Therefore, they counterpoised Shambook against Ram, Eklavya against Dronacharya, Jhalkaribai against Jhansi Kee Rani, Ambedkar against Gandhi, and Buddhism against Hinduism. Their discovery and invention of history proceeded in a parallel way and, thus, many booklets written on cheap paper, costing a minimum amount, were published and sold to the members of the Sudra community, with results that are too obvious to escape the attention of members of the Dalit community, desirous to locate themselves in the social structure and pave the way to ascend to the citadel of political power. The paper analyses the legendary figure of Angulimal, who is a ferocious robber converted by Buddha. Daya Pawar sees Angulimal as the symbol of the fierce society around him:

O Siddhartha! (Name of the Buddha)
You made a tyrant like Angulimal
Tremble
We are your humble followers.
How should we confront
The ferocious Angulimal?
O Siddhartha (zelliot 294).

Angulimal stories show the achievements and challenges as well as the scope for the liberation of dalits from the clutches of Brahminical orthodoxy with the coming of Buddhism.

In the other drama, *Shambook Vadh* Shambook is shown to belong to the local inhabitants of the land, and his erudition and organizing skill reveals that the spiritual wealth of India was not a gift of the Aryans alone. Aryans were exterminators of knowledge and knowledgeable persons belonging to the non-Aryan community. Thus, Aryan supremacy was not a product of a natural competitive process of the power struggle in the realm of knowledge and military skills but a consequence of conspiratorial and manipulative crusade against the indigenous population. *Shambook Vadh*, nothing concrete is visible fort those opposing the system. (Periyar Lalayee and Ram Auttar pal 34).

Ambedkar has wielded a tremendous influence in developing a search for identity among the Dalit masses. He has remained a driving spirit behind the literary works of many Dali writers. They owe their critical imagination and struggles for identity assertion to the teachings of Ambedkar and his zest for Dalit liberation. Namdev Dhasal, in his poem 'From Dr. Ambedkar, 'expresses his feelings thus:

> You are the one …
> You are the only one, charioteer of our chariot
> Who comes amongst us through fields and crowds?
> And protest marches and struggles.
> Never leaves our company
> And delivers us from exploitation
> You are the one
> The only one (shah 223).

Thus, in marginal literature, there is recognition of the fact that Ambedkar, Angluimal and Shambook helped untouchables in raising their consciousness, to instill in them a sense of self-pride and self-dignity. They were instrumental in making them aware of the indignities and dehumanization arising out of untouchability.

Raidas was one of the greatest figures of the saint movement in the medieval period. He, along with Kabir, Namdev, Chokhamela, and Dadu formed the backbone of the medieval anti-caste movement. But unlike Kabir, who comes across as a radical and revolutionary saint, Raidas is more often than not projected as a devout Ram worshipping saint. This creates some reservations

in the minds of progressive Dalits in accepting him as one of their icons. This image, projected by Brahminical writers, is an illusion, as we shall see. Raidas belonged to the Chamar community, which, like all Dali communities, is Buddhist in origin. Contrary to popular belief, the term Chamar is not derived from *charm* (leather) but from the Pali word *chivar*, which means a *bhikkhu's* robes. He calls himself a Chamar, states that his trade is low, his labour is degrading, his caste not honoured. More than any other saint, he sings about his traditional work: 'My trade is dressing and cutting leather and daily removing dead cattle round about Banarasa '(Punekar 37).In his poetry, Ravidas, like Chokhamela, challenges the very concept of purity and pollution, but in a different idiom. As Anne Murphy has given us in a new translation, Ravidas questions it in this way: In another song form the *Adi Granth*, Ravidas shows that anyone who is devout and pure rises above caste:

> In whatever family a good Vaishnav is found,
> Whether they be high caste or outcaste, lord or pauper,
> the world will know the one by its flawless fragrance (Punekar 39).

Another character Valmiki places his and his Dalit friends 'encounters with upper caste teachers in the context of the Brahmin teacher Dronacharya tricking his low caste disciple Eklavya into cutting his thumb and presenting it to him as part of his gurudakshina or teacher's tribute. This is a famous incident in the *Mahabharata*. By doing this, Dronacharya ensured that Eklavya, the better student of archery, could never compete with Arjun, the Kshatriya disciple. Indeed, having lost his thumb, Eklavya could no longer perform archery. In high caste telling, the popular story presents a casteless Eklavya as the exemplar of an obedient disciple rather than the Brahmin Dronacharya as a perfidious and biased teacher.

While condemning the caste system and other forms of discrimination, Kabir apparently accepts caste as a secular phenomenon. Thus, he names a large number of castes- many of them based on professions- such as, washerman, barber, carpenter, potter, cobbler, oilman, kshatriya, Vaishya, etc., without questioning their duties and privilege. Kabir preached the equality of man and denounced vehemently caste distinctions:

> God to whose power all are subject
> First created light.
> From one light the whole mankind issued,

Who are high and who low?
Do not be misled by error, brother men!
The creation issued from the Creator
And the Creator pervades the creation everywhere (Singh 45).

Many of the ideas of Kabir's, voicing dissent against the existing institutions and values are echoed by his successors. Raidas (born c. 1415), a cobbler by profession, does not explicitly denounce the caste system, but subscribes to the idea that differences of caste or status do not matter where saints, and their devotees are concerned.

So, our heroes who desire to awaken from the slumber of the past necessitated Dalit intellectuals to capture their present by exposing the 'misdeeds 'of the elites and construct a 'new consciousness 'that paves the way for them to assert their demand for social respect from which they had remained deprived since centuries. The heroes of the oral culture were transferred to the written page, and networks of qualities were woven around them. Also, the important personalities of the past, present and medieval period in history were highlighted in these booklets in a manner so as to eclipse all other heroes belonging to the non-Dalit communities. Some important and popular booklets are Ambedkar ka Jeevan Darshan, Mool Vansa Katha, Bheem Pacheesa, Buddh Ke Baad, Achut Virangana, etc.

The new emerging consciousness, so anxious to form its identity and counterpoise its own heroes against the heroes of the Brahminical order, accepted these interpretations enormously. The writers of these texts belong to the Dalit community and are political activists. They were new intellectuals who were organically linked with the people at the grass-root level of society. Unlike the books written by elite dalit writers, these booklets are published from small publication units, often located in small and medium towns or in the periphery of the big cities but hardly in cosmopolitan cities like Mumbai, Delhi, or Kolkata. To these writers, power was the exclusive parameter of status or identity. Their concept of power has hardly any resemblance to the Marxist, Webrian or Russell's notion of power. Power is not an instrument but an end that fulfills all other ends. Power, identity, status are clubbed together. Its basic purpose is to be recorded in society and history. When accomplished, it shall, through its own intrinsic nature, create a respectable place for those ignored in the past by civilization. Das analyses: Indian literature discovered a new potentiality in the life of the low and the lowliest, the deprived and the humiliated. Atahe hero-centric world finally vanished, yielding place to the anti-hero. The adalit literature however, was yet to emerge,

but the signs had already appeared (Das 178). What we have seen that untouchables were never provided a proper status in Indian historiography. Also, the authors believe that till now Indian history is mostly written by Brahmin historians so they have not attained the status which is due to them. Thus, history by dalits can be called as 'Dalit popular history'. The present social position of untouchables which is marked by will to capture power and use it for identity assertion, makes them to think architects of an alternative culture in which they can regain what has been snatched from them in the past.

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Imagined Reality*: The Lord of the Rings* as Travel Literature

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Abstract

Lord of the Rings (LOTR), the sequel to a story for the children of the travails of a ʻHobbit, ʼBilbo, becomes a narrative of sin and reprisal, crime, and punishment, darkness, and light. Largely in principle, it embraces the realm of human affairs and lends it a transcendental meaning through its treatment of the narrative technique.

LOTR, from the time of its publication, has created ripples for its language, theme, and technique. The problem of nomenclature is endemic to these books. Having the leitmotif of travels, it surpasses any restrictive canonical structure. The narrative is delineated through umpteen travels taken up by humans and non-humans. The theme of solidarity and interdependence pervades the action and provides the structural framework within which heroic individualism and love for all things function.

The story revolves around the primeval creation of Eru. He creates the Ainurs but bestows one, Melkor, with maximum power and knowledge. Creative, powerful, and jealous, Melkor tries to subvert Eruʼs creation. Two ʻHobbits ʼundertake an arduous, "Christian" kind of journey to destroy the evil spread by Melkor. Though the books are read as romances, fairy tales, linguistic marvels, I would like to study the narrative as travel literature that upholds the quintessential truth- a victory of good over evil.

Keywords: Travel, Imagined Reality, Identity Formation, Narrative Strategy, *duree,* Fertility, Purgatory

In *The Lord of the Rings* (LOTR), Tolkien has presented the readers with the "elemental nature" (P-3, Bloom) of existence and engagingly describes a plethora of living things on Earth of the Third-Age. In Book III, the Ent–Treebeard- recounts the song of life on Earth teeming with varied creatures:

> ...First name the four, the free peoples: Elder of all, the elf –children:

Dwarf the delver, dark are his houses:
Ent the earthborn, old as mountains:
Man the mortal, master of horses:
Hm,hm,hm.

Beaver, the builder, buck the leaper,
Bear bee-hunter, boar the fighter:The houndd is hungry, hare is fearful...
hm, hm.

Eagle in eyrie, ox in pasture,
Hart horn-crowned: hawk is swiftest,
Swan the whitest, serpent coldest... (453)

In LOTR, each of these species has a role to play, a fight to fight, a journey to undertake that would change the fate of the Earth of the Third Age. Though the novel is read as romance, fairy tale, linguistic marvel, I would like to study the narrative as a travelogue that foregrounds the quintessential truth: the victory of good over evil.

I

Travel as Solution

Bikash Chakravarty talks about the Romantic and the Age of Enlightenment's travel writers:

> While "... the voice of the Enlightenment writer was disinterested, sober, analytical and philosophical.... the voice of his Romantic successor would be committed, impassioned, evocative and lyrical.... the adventurous ethos of the Romantics of the nineteenth century Europe led them to privilege creative vision..." (42).

He further quotes Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay about the Romantic project

> "...the fertility of unprogrammed and nonchalant itineraries, the suggestive magic of distance and wilderness ... the equation of strangeness with authenticity" (42).

Besides these, the writers were also concerned with the mode of transportation to alien territories. Transportation was neither in plenty nor covered all the space. So the traveler was compelled to undertake the journey by foot or on horseback. This necessitated a more detailed physical description of the territory.

Travel has been a mode of assessment of territory and of putting a discursive system in place. It brings forth a range of hidden discourses that constitute and explore the issues central to the cultural and literary representation of society and expose politicking.

Travel writing valorises physical and psychic upheaval. From Dante's *Divina Comedia,* Kalidasa's *Meghadootam* to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* the literature of the world is dotted with umpteen numbers of factual and fictional travels. But what is common to them all is a description of virtual and actual, spatial and temporal. The vivid geographical descriptions (even incorporating longitude and latitude) served the purpose of espionage as well as establishing inter-cultural reciprocity.

One additional aspect of travel writing is the time of narration. Like memory writing (autobiography), it is retrospective narration: hence the writer gets time to polish his style. But it is also likely that he may leave some gap due to the passage of time. With the upsurge of critical cannon, critics can bridge the gap or construe a method of addressing these issues.

Comparatively a neglected genre, travel literature is woven into the bloodstream of western literature. Following Britain's naval superiority, the Britons made forays into unchartered geographical landscapes, the mariners brought back tales of fabulous riches that ignited the imagination of the writers. Stories and legends from various countries found their ways into the writings of the more fanciful.

By the 18th century, the United Kingdom saw a proliferation of travel writing. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Stevenson's *Treasure Island* whetted the appetite for more of the same. Around the mid-19th century, J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and then *The Lord of the Rings* (LOTR) has garnered critical acclaim. Critics extol its language, theme and technique. Problem of nomenclature is endemic to these books. As Amitav Ghosh says in the opening of *The Imam and the Indian*:

> To those of a taxonomic bent of mind, it may appear that the contents of this collection are heterogeneous enough to require classification under several headings. I have resisted the temptation to do this in the belief that in the circuitry of the imagination, connections are of greater importance than disjunctions. (I&I, vii)

Albeit having the leitmotif of travels, LOTR undermines any restrictive canonical structure. The narrative is delineated through multiple travels of humans and non-humans. The engrossing story gives the appearance of imagined reality and lends credulity to the reading experience.

The Lord of the Rings (LOTR), a novel consisting of six books, is a sequel to *The Hobbit.* From a travel literature for the children, it is about the travails of Bilbo, a Hobbit, it goes on to become a narrative of sin and reprisal, of crime and punishment, of darkness and light. LOTR is peopled by numerous creatures: Trolls and Orcs, Dwarves and Hobbits, Ents and Willows, humans and Numenoreans imagined or culled from legends. Critics opine that the story is inspired by *Beowulf* and Gallic legends. However, the narration exhibits a photo tactic style, which is completely Tolkien's own. Abstract contrasts like life and death, good and evil represented by Ents and Orcs, Frodo and Saruman, Aragorn and Sauron make the reading an engrossing process.

The specifics of the story encapsulate the primeval creation of Eru. He creates the Ainurs, but bestows one, Melkor, with greater power and knowledge. Creative, powerful and jealous, Melkor tries to subvert Eru's creation. Eru's finest creation in the First Age of Earth, the elves, fought furiously and reduced Melkor to ignominy. But his servant Sauron, well trained and powerful, rakes havoc in the Third Age. Sauron, the Dark Lord, spreads darkness and fear. This Age is peopled by multifarious creatures like hobbits, men, trees, eagles etc. of weaker power besides the evil creatures like the Orks and goblins. Sauron had taught the Elves the creation of the rings of power. But evil, brought on by *the* One Ring secretly forged by Sauron spreads. Sauron had invested a large portion of his power into this ring to control all other rings of power. So Gandalf, Saruman, Radagast, and two other Istaries are sent to Earth to destroy Sauron. Helped by Gandalf, two Hobbits, Frodo and Sam, undertake an arduous, "Christian" kind of journey to destroy evil. "The Third Age was my age. I was the Enemy of Sauron, and my work is finished." (950) Gandalf says after fulfilling his task.

LOTR stands at crossroads of social upheaval. Gandalf is sent to Earth to alleviate the troubles of Earth, Aragorn, the king, designate, the Hobbits no way related to the business of the big people, the Dwarves seeking their lost relatives, and the Elves whose allotted time on Earth has lapsed but linger on with their memory, create the Fellowship of Ring to destroy Sauron. Gandalf's crusade against Sauron goads him to circumnavigate the Earth, sacrificing his pleasure. He admires Aragorn and tries to help him, which would ultimately serve his cause of liberation of all characters from the spell of the Dark Lord.

The Hobbits, small in size and shunning lands beyond their borders, were generally ignored or unknown to the world. Short like human children, they love parties and food. Thus they stand for life in a world dying of cowardice and sloth. Their physical limitation is well made up by their courage and determination. As Gandalf had exclaimed before the fellowship was formed: "My dear Frodo! Hobbits really are amazing creatures..." (61). Frodo, the central character, far outweighs the stronger lot by his tenacity and courage. He is no classical or even an Elizabethan hero. But he is kind in his dealings with his subordinates, selfless towards his companions, even compassionate towards Gollum or the vile Saruman in his fall. He is a hobbit, full of life and fun. But the inheritance of the ring from Bilbo changes his life. None the less he is heroic enough for his appointed task. Frodo and Sam, the two hobbits, undertake an arduous, "Christian" kind of journey to destroy evil. Christian is the central character in the allegory by John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress.* In a dream narrative, he undertakes a journey to heaven. Christian's quest for salvation is hindered by obstacles in the shape of hardship, temptation, and evil.

Frodo, helped by Gandalf and Aragorn undertakes a similar arduous journey to Mount Doom to destroy the ring that is the centre of Sauron's power. But here Frodo's journey is for the world and its release from Sauron's clutch. As he marches deep into the unknown he loses his exuberance and vivacity. Beset by evil in the forms of Shelob-the fierce, wicked spider, orcs, Gollum, and then lack of food, water, and sleep, having to walk through fire and rocks tests his endurance. But after completing the quest, the Hobbits return to the Shire, their home, to resume life. Thus their quest takes a full circle, thereby asserting life over death. Characters are primarily imagined or, as Kenon says, are constructs that stand for real social order or disorder. In the social order of LOTR, the story of Aragorn, a Numenorian, occupies centrality. Numenoreans in LOTR mimic heroes who are many above men in size, stature, and life-span. In the site of identity formation, the story of Aragorn demands centrality. The greed of his forefathers had shorn him of his kingship and

Aragorn is in a mode of resistance and fixated with his past. Aragorn, bereft of his rightful claim to the throne, suppresses his love and needs. And his restrictive life condition is compounded by his association with the underdogs like the hobbits, dwarves, and men. As in the Sanskrit epic *Ramayana*, Ramachandra, the banished king designate of Ayodhya, had taken the help of the Vanaras (monkeys) to reclaim his right (wife), Aragorn seeks the help of the underdogs and marches ahead to destroy Sauron and win the love of his life (Arwen, the Elf princes).

The Willows and the Ents are alive to the vibes around them. While the willows (trees) move, they are feral and constricting. The Ents, on the other hand, are the shepherds of the forest and try to contain the wild and the unruly. There are many legends about the ents. But they are severely crippled by the absence of the Ent-wives. Each one had their preferences. The Entwives, drawn after human females, loved to decorate, garden, to build a home. They are ever in search of new pastures. They walk and walk away from the Ents limiting the process of Enting. While the movements of the Entwives were aimless, the Ents play a major role in the fight for good. Their stagnation propels them to violent action and destruction of evil when called into action. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Louis, Tolkien's contemporary, creates a world of talking and moving animals and trees which help in the more significant cause during war and peace. Likewise, Tolkien's plant kingdom teems with walking, talking, acting trees which create an impressive and believing world. They had isolated themselves from the rest of the world.

But at last, they travel beyond their comfort zone to accost the villainous Istari, Saruman. Their travel ends Saruman's treachery and ensues the fall of the Twin Towers, his abode, and the source of his power. Thus their sterile life that had alienated the male-female is thawed, and there is the possibility of fertility.

The Dwarves 'journey is of a different kind. They move mostly for riches, though Gimly is of a different disposition. He is able to rise above his limiting self to love the Elf Legolas, which helps the war of good against evil. Orcs, trolls, and goblins are creatures who are always moving towards destruction. Evil and destructive, they are the conduits of the Dark Lord. Interesting to note that Treebeard doesn't have the names of these creatures in his song of life. They were the creation of the Dark Lord, who had mutilated and maimed the dark elves to create these hideous creatures. Sauron is the Dark Lord, his home is the Dark Tower, his messengers are dark riders, his land is dark and barren. He is the Miltonic Satan: more attractive and persuasive than god, twisting and

maiming all that is good. But hounded by the Free peoples even he has to travel and run from place to place.Thus travel occupies the focal point of the narrative.

Travel writing is currently a dynamic, prolific, and socially important genre. Profoundly shaped by the legacies of the Colonial era, travel writing played a pivotal role in ideating world order. In LOTR, travel is not for espionage purposes rather. It valorises victory of good over evil. Frodo, at the penultimate moment, goes completely under the power of *the* Ring and fails to consign it to the flames of Mount Doom. It's the devious Gollum who divests him of the ring. He loses a finger to complete his quest. This similarity with Sauron, who had lost the finger with *the* ring to Aragorn's predecessor, bears testimony to the power of evil.

In travel writing narrated *duree* is as important as the narrator. This narrative is supposedly written by Frodo after he reaches the Shire. In the quiet confine of his home he recapitulates the incidences and pens it for posterity. So the style is smooth and noteworthy. It is said of Tolkien that he

> ...used languages to delineate cultural attitudes, to expose racial personalities, and to lead the reader to an understanding of or a feeling for the quality of consciousness of the various groups. (Bloom 170)

As of language the mode of transport needs a mention. Here one finds oneself amongst great hindrances. Except during war the characters walk through uncharted, unfriendly terrain. During the last lap of his quest, Frodo snails up his way, even without food or drink, through fog, fire, and Orks. Thus, one can assert that travel narrative mode provides a solution to the problems LOTR is based on.

II

Imagined Reality

Imagined Community, a 1983 publication of Benedict Anderson, depicts a nation as a socially constructed community. Plato's Republic and Thomas Moore's Utopia had created an imagined land of plenty and perfection. Barth explains that post-modern writer makes use of the older work in an important way- he employs the same old themes. Still, he gets rid of the technique..., much as we engage ourselves every moment in "throwing out the bathwater without for a moment losing

the baby" (70). It is as much for Tolkien's narrative: of subordination of realism to fantasy, of Aragorn's ethical configuration of identity.

Tolkien's fictional world explores the issue of social dynamics, resistant culture, and power politics that underscores the note of magic realism. Photo tactic presentation of landscape and society, the ordeal of the living world blurs the fact, fiction binary. This section addresses the interchangeability of fact and fiction that inhere an imagined identity.

LOTR is a travel narrative in a double bind. Every individual nourishes an agenda covertly or overtly: The Orc, Ugluk, while following his master's order, wants to steal *the* Ring, whose covert aspiration for power reinscribes the happenings of the mortal world. His fight with other Orks starts a stampede that paved Frodo's path. The Ents, while shepherding trees, become instrumental in the victory of the Free peoples. Felling of trees propels them to action that removes one Impediment-Saruman, the devious Istari- from the Free peoples 'path. Likewise, Frodo or Aragorn's passage through metaphoric purgatorial fire, which is at the epicentre of the travel, also romanticises their ordeal and subsumes it to narrative strategy.

Tolkien's portrayal of the Elves-Hobbit-Satan story with the dying Numenorian clan as the nucleus is a masterstroke of the narrative that travels from one species of this imagined Community to the other even as the world in flux gravitates towards annihilation. The seeming old but ageless Gandalf working furiously to subvert Sauron's plan, Sauron's engagement in a mind game, Aragorn's endeavour for identity formation and peacekeeping while all the time he tries to reclaim his hereditary right of kingship to win his love: and all other species are either pawns or instrument of change. All these lend credibility to the imagined identity of *the* Tolkien world.

But identity is not just socially constructed but has real episteme and political consequences. They examine how theory, politics, and action clash with or complement each other, providing an alternative to the widely influential understanding of identity. The reality about his identity is briefly summarised at the end by Aragorn himself when he and Sam talk after the fall of Barad-Dur:

'Well, if this isn't the crown of all! 'he said. 'Strider or I'm still asleep! '

> 'Yes, Sam, Strider, 'said Aragorn. 'It is a long way, is it not, from Bree, where you did not like the look of me?'(932-33)

The postmodernists while trying to reclaim identity do not think it to be fixed or stable. As Himansu S. Mohapatra says:

> The significance of identity depends partly on the fact that goods and resources are all distributed according to identity categories. Who we are...will significantly affect our life chances: where we can live, whom we will marry...(Ravenshaw Journal 71)

Thus the identity of the construct named Aragorn gets upwardly mobile, and this momentum is achieved through cause-effect chainsaw. Aragorn's identity was dependent on his knowledge of his forefather's greed and his love for Arwen, the Elf Lord Elrond's daughter. Arwen, as Elrond says "is too far above you" (1034). But that becomes the catalyst for his metamorphosis from Strider to Elfstone. His normative cultural identity takes root through the Fellowship of the Ring. He outgrows his inertia, rejects temptation, even accosts Souron in his ground, thereby positing a positive transformation. Thus it is no surprise that Aragorn is considered by some critics to be the main protagonist. Because there is nothing arbitrary, nothing accidental, in the organic growth of the narrative that is based on cause-effect rapprochement.

III

Identity Formation

At the root of the narration lies the epistemological crisis that haunts the free peoples as Sauron claims their territory portents a nightmarish future. The narrator presents the story as a travelogue wherein the narrative, subordinates realism to the operation of fantasy. The narrative thus has a double focus: the individual and the larger entity, identity formation shaped by politics. The narrative represents the arduous journeys undertaken by different travellers towards different ends: some to remove fear politics of Sauron to construct the identity of the Free Peoples, others to be the conduit of Sauron to create a niche for themselves. This significantly foregrounds man's place

on Earth. Superior to many, man is an integral part of his environment. His holistic involvement is also essential for survival and identity formation. Bilbo's song stands testimony to this:

> ...The Road goes ever on and on
> Down from the door where it began.
> Now far ahead the road has gone,
> And I must follow if I can,
> Pursuing it with eager feet,
> Until it joins some larger way
> Where many paths and errands meet.
> And whither then? I cannot say. (35)

But we know that the journey that started from the Shire ended in the Shire. Bilbo's journey from the Shire ends in Mount Doom where Frodo consigns the destructive Ring to fire. Thus he rises far above even the kings of yore by sacrificing temptation while all the time being aware of the risk to his life. At times one needs to sacrifice to be the harbinger of peace. Frodo's conversation with Sam at the penultimate moment of the narrative bears a testimony to this:

> 'I am glad that you are here with me, 'said Frodo. 'Here at the end of all things, Sam.'
>
> 'Yes, I am with you, Master, 'said Sam. But after coming all that way I don't want to give up yet'...
>
> 'Maybe not, Sam, 'said Frodo: 'but it's like things are in the world. Hopes fail. An end comes... We are lost in ruin and downfall, and there is no escape.'(929)

Each construct goes through some sort of purgatory to realise its identity. Thus this travel valorises the sacrifice of every individual, but especially of Frodo, that would remove evil and establish peace and harmony on Earth. Since physical dangers enmesh spiritual life, each traveler is accosted by his angst while on this quest.

It is claimed by many critics that LOTR doesn't have any religious orientation. But in the ways, it mirrors Christian's toil is a mark of the religious orientation of the story. Moreover, Gandalf's death in Moria and later his resurrection: the suffering of Frodo, the manner of his climbing to

Mount Doom carrying the weight of the Ring heavy as a Cross, aware all the time of the need for sacrifice, avers the toil of Jesus of Nazareth for his people. Moreover, after the war, the great Eagle brings the news of victory to the city of Gondor:

> Sing now, ye people of the Tower of Anor,
> for the realm of Sauron is ended forever,
> and the Dark Tower is thrown down.... (942)

> The reverberations of form and content here are biblical, with particular reference to the psalms. The image of a saviour-king who will return to rule the faithful and the promise of a return to life ... have Christian reverberations that again reinforce the sense of elevation, the high importance of the song, as does the identity of the messenger, for in medieval Christian iconography, the eagle was the symbol of St, John the Evangelist, who is noted for his contemplation of the divine nature of Christ. (Bloom 169)

Tolkien in LOTR critiques the complicity between knowledge and power that jeopardises life and Earth. And he has adopted an appropriate narrative mode - the travel narrative – to exhibit the space-time continuum. It asserts the fact that whenever the world is in crisis, there is a "Second Coming" to redeem His followers:

> Yada yada hi dharmasya
> Glanirbhavati Bharata
> Avhudhanam adharmasya
> Tadatmanam shrijamyaham
> Paritranaya sadhunam
> Vinashaya chatuskrutam
> Dharmasansthapanarthaya
> Sambhvani yuge yuge (Shrimadvagawadrita, Ch-4, stanza 7,8)

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Valmiki's *Ramayana*

Finding the Parasite between the Quote and the Text: A Critical Analysis of Indu Sunderasan's *The Twentieth Wife*

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Abstract

Indu Sundaresan's novel *The Twentieth Wife* (2002) narrates the history of the Mughal Era. Before each chapter of the novel, the writer has quoted some lines from the various famous works written on Mughal History. These works include the famous translations of *Tuzuk-i- Jahangiri, The History of Jahangir,* and *Ain-i-Akbar* etc. The novel represents the captivating love story of Nur Jahan (1577-1645) and Jahangir (1569-1627) but with a changed feminist perspective. Among these historical texts, *Ain-i- Akabri* is the third volume of Akbar-Nama, which was originally written in Persian by Abul Fazl. In the same, Emperor Abu'l-Fath Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar (1542-1605) is the central figure, whereas *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* is the autobiography of Nur-ud-din Muhammad Jahangir. Both the texts were written during the Mughal period, but Indu Sundaresan, in her historical fiction *The Twentieth Wife,* has adapted both. The author has not only reworked these texts but has also established a feminist perspective out of them. The paper will explore how the above-mentioned landmark texts related to Mughal Era have been adapted and reworked on by Indu Sundaresan in her debut novel, *The Twentieth Wife.*

Keywords: Landmark texts, Mughal History, Historical Fiction, Ain-i- Akbari, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri.

The culture of writing the history of Mughal kings and empire in India was commenced by Ẓahīr-ud-Dīn Muhammad Bābur (1483–1530) who was the founder of the Mughal Empire in India. His memoirs in the form of *Baburnama* were recorded in Persian and Chagatai languages. Later, *Akbarnama,* also known as the *Book of Akbar,* was recorded in Persian by Shaikh Abu al-Fazal ibn Mubarak, courtier and biographer of Abu'l-Fath Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar. Later, King Jahangir alias Prince Salim wrote his autobiography known as *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri.*

Although many writers at different points of time have interpreted Mughal history according to their perspective and on the information based upon the above-mentioned texts yet this paper will explore only the perspective of Indu Sundaresan. While writing her debut novel, *The Twentieth Wife,* Indu Sundaresan has quoted some specific lines extracted from famous works already written

on Mughal History. As the novel consists of twenty chapters, the writer has cited twenty quotes from the below-mentioned works. Some of these works are repetitions, but quotes are not alike. The works cited are *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* translated and edited by A.Rogers and H. Beveridge, *A Dutch Chronicle of Mughal India* translated and edited by B. Narain and S. Sharma, *Munktakhab-ut-Tawarikh* translated by W.H. Lowe, *The History of Hindostan* authored by Alexander Dow, *History of Jahangir* authored by Beni Prasad, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India* edited by William Foster, *Ain-i-Akbari* translated by H. Blochmann and H.S. Jarrett, *Storia do Mogor* by Niccolo Manucci translated by William Irvine and *The Travels of Pietro Delia Valle in India* edited by Edward Grey.

Due to the citation of extractions of the texts mentioned above, referring to the concept of Hillis Miller's 'Critic As Host,' a relevant question is posed that – when a text contains a citation from another text, is it like a parasite in the main text or is it the main text that surrounds and strangles the citation? (8-10). Therefore, this paper would attempt to find out that who acts as a parasite in the novel? The quotes Indu Sundaresan has cited or her own text that defies the set boundaries of cited quotes. For the said purpose, the researcher would assay to analyse each chapter briefly.

Chapter one of *The Twentieth Wife* commences with the quote from *The Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* where Jahangir recalls that when he was born, he was given the name of Sultan Salim, but his father Akbar never used the said name. He always used to address Jahangir as 'Shaikhu Baba.' Indu Sundaresan, while narrating the said chapter, didn't mention any incident how Jahangir obtained this name: rather, she gave specific reference to the wedding date of Prince Salim that took place on February 13, 1585. It is also worth referring here that Indu Sundaresan didn't emphasize much on the wedding ceremony of Prince Salim but the incident when young Mehrunnissa got an opportunity to get a glimpse of Prince Salim first time. Furthermore, she also emphasized over introducing another strong character Ruqayya Sultan who owned the most important title in the Mughal Zenana or Harem i.e. Padshah Begum, whom she describes as having a calm demeanour and arrogance, and self-assurance (30). Moreover, Indu Sundaresan also highlights the conversation between child Mehrunnisa and Padshah Begum and also ascertains that child Mehrunnisa feels attracted to the handsome prince. When Padshah Begum asks child Mehrunnisa whether she likes Prince Salim, the latter replies, ’Yes, Your Majesty.' He is...he is more beautiful than my brothers (30).

The first chapter introduces a strong position of Ruqayya in the Zenana and the life of Emperor Akbar, the wedding ceremony of Prince Salim with his first wife, the attraction of child

Mehrunnisa towards Prince Salim a meeting of Ruqayya with Mehrunnisa, and summoning the latter at the royal Zenana. In this chapter, the emphasis is given more on the fabrication of the fiction than narrating any historical event other than the wedding ceremony of Prince Salim. Through this chapter, Indu Sundaresan sows the seeds of feminism in the Mughal era. Moreover, the first chapter is not woven around the quote but has laid the foundation of the commencement of the love story of Jahangir and Mehrunissa.

The quote before chapter two expresses Begum's great affection for Mehr-un-nasa alias Mehrunissa, and the text also justifies the quote. Here, the writer exhibits how the empress always used to keep Mehrunnisa in her company (32). Through this chapter, Indu Sundaresan also introduces Zenana as a symbol of power. The women at the imperial Zenana used to visit temples, gardens, and sightsee. They owned lands in the empire and talked with their stewards without any commotion (48). Here, Ruqayya has been portrayed as a powerful woman who advises Akbar on all political and personal matters. These matters include grants of gifts or mansabs or his campaigns as well. Though she was behind the purdah, she was still the strongest voice in the harem. A mere nobleman's wife could never hope for such liberty. The sheath of royalty gave the women of the imperial harem and emancipation a commoner could never achieve (48). The few historical events in this chapter are briefly described by Indu Sundaresan, i.e., the marriages that took place between Prince Salim and princess Jagat Gosain and later between Prince Salim and princess Sahib Jamal.

Chapter three demonstrates the restlessness Prince Salim goes through, which forces him to hatch a conspiracy of killing against his own father Akbar with the assistance of Hakim Humam. This chapter again describes the strength of Ruqayya who is as powerful in Harem as King Akbar in his court. The writer has cited a number of episodes to establish the power of this Ruqayya. First, although she was infertile yet she managed to get the custody of Salim and Jagat Gosini's son Khurram upon his birth. The reason for choosing this child was the hostile nature of Princess Jagat Gosini towards Ruqayya. The iron princess, Princess Jagat Gosini, always defied Ruqayya's authority. Therefore, Ruqayya took away her child. Thus, Ruqayya selected this child not out of affection and love but out of revenge. Here, Indu Sundaresan describes Ruqayya as cruel, merciless and dangerous (63). Second, it was Ruqayya only on whose recommendation emperor Akbar chose Ali Quli Khan as the future husband for Mehrunnisa. Third, she was not only ruling inside the harem or Zenana but also owned lands in the empire also. Her perspective towards life and love was neither idealistic nor romantic but pragmatic. 'Listen and learn, Mehrunnisa,' she said. 'A woman must not be completely reliant on a man, either for money or for love' (63). Thus, it is

relevant to mention that Indu Sundaresan created the character of Ruqayya more powerful than the character of Mehrunnisa.

The quotes before chapters four and five are from *The History of Hindostan* and demonstrate Mehrunnisa's adroitness in music, dancing, painting and education. Besides, her beauty and charm have also been spoken of. Still, Indu Sundaresan develops the love-story of Jahangir and Mehrunnisa through their meetings at Royal Palace and later at Meena Bazaar in chapter four. The love feelings between the two lovers grow and shatter soon with the marriage of Mehrunnisa to Ali Quli in chapter five. Thus through these two chapters, Indu Sundaresan has artistically-recreated the melancholic story of meeting and separation of two lovers. Therefore, here the text has drifted away from the cited quotes.

Chapter six begins with the quote of Beni Prasad from *History of Jahangir* and refers to Mehrunnisa that she aspired to the conquest of Prince Salim and succeeded by a dexterous use of her charms and accomplishments at entertainment in casting a spell over him. But she was married to Sher Afghan, a Persian noble of highest courage and valour (106). Like chapters four and five, this chapter also fails to revolve around the above-mentioned cited quote: rather, in this chapter, Indu Sundaresan retells the story of Mehrunnisa's miscarriages and her unhappy marital life. Besides, she has also incorporated an important historical event in this chapter i.e., the death of Akbar's son Murad that took place in May 1599. Here, Indu Sundaresan briefly mentioned his death and avoids narrating this sad episode in detail. Thus, again this chapter fails to revolve around the cited quote.

Chapter seven begins with the auto-biographical quote from *The Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* that at the time he (Akbar) went in prosperity to the provinces of the Deccan, and I (Jahangir) was ordered against the Rana, he came and became a servant to me (126). The said chapter has been woven around the same quote. Indu Sundaresan has successfully recreated the above-mentioned quote as a situation. The quote before chapter eight is from the *Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India* and describes the rebellion of Prince Salim against his own father Akbar. Indu Sundaresan has recreated the rebellion in the said chapter along with the elements of feminine writings where Mehrunnisa helps to deliver the child of her estranged husband Ali Quli from a slave girl Yasmin.

Mehrunnisa touched a rounded curve and dew back, her fingers coated in blood. The baby was already half out, but she had not been able to see it in the semi-darkness of the hen shed.----- the child was coming out bottom first (146).

The quote before chapter nine describes the evil fortune of a father caused by the rebelliousness of a son without any reason or cause. It has been extracted from *The Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, but like other chapters, Indu Sundaresan has not mentioned the same in the text: rather, she has rewritten other important historical events. One of them is related to the birth of Prince Salim alias Jahangir on August 31, 1569, followed by the construction of the mosque and imperial palace at Fatehpur Sikri after the birth of Salim. Other historical events include the building of a city at Fatehpur Sikri post-conquest of Gujarat, plans of Akbar to make Sikri as the capital of the empire, shortage of water at Sikri, digging up a vast lake, failing of rains, and abandoning of Fatehpur Sikri by Akbar finally. Besides, Indu Sundaresan also recreated the murder of Abul Fazl in this chapter on the secret commands of Prince Salim, reconciliation between Akbar and Salim, death of Prince Daniyal, and final return of Prince Salim to Agra.

The quote mentioned before chapter ten is from *Ain-i-Akbari* and refers to the growing differences between Jahangir and his son Khusrau witnessed by Akbar. As mentioned in the quote, Indu Sundaresan has represented a fight between the war elephants of Prince Salim i.e. Giranbar, and Khusrau's elephant Apurva. Further, she has also given a reference to the attacks on Salim by the archers of Khusrau. This chapter also recreates the death of Akbar, the becoming of Salim, and the next Mughal Emperor, titled as Nuruddin Muhammad Jahangir Padshah Ghazi alias Emperor Jahangir.

The quote before chapter eleven is from *The Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* and refers to the date when Jahangir ascended the throne in the 38th year of his life on October 24, 1605. In this chapter, Indu Sundaresan has recreated the events after Prince Salim became Emperor Jahangir. It also includes the revolt of Khusrau against his own father, Jahangir, and his imprisonment and delivery of a baby girl, namely Ladli by Mehrunnisa. Thus, all the events mentioned in chapter thirteen revolve around the referred citation. Chapter twelve recreates the true story of escaping of Khussrau from royal imprisonment that has been written in support of the cited quote extracted from *The History of Hindostan.*

Chapter thirteen refers to the army raised by Khusrau against his father, Jahangir and capturing of the former by the latter. As the quote before the chapter refers to the horrible account of the hanging of corpses of the soldiers of Khusrau against the trees, Indu Sundaresan has also meticulously recreated the same horror. The quote before chapter fourteen is from *The History of Hindostan* and

refers to the absolute power Jahangir had as being the Emperor of India. But in this chapter also, Indu Sundaresan has written about the betrothal ceremony between Prince Khurram alias Shahjahan and Arjumand alias Mumtaz Mahal with a fabricated squabble between Mehrunnisa and Jagat Gosini.

Jagat Gosini's eyes glittered as she looked over Ladli's head at Mehrunnisa. 'Only a girl child for your husband, my dear?' And such an arrogant one. You must teach her humility. Commoners must never refuse a gift from royalty.' 'But our family is going to be associated with yours, Your Majesty.' Mehrunnisa said. 'Surely we are no longer common?' (259). Thus, the text and the citation are different.

Through chapter fourteen, Indu Sundaresan narrates the omnipotent power of the beauty of Mehrunnisa. In the said chapter, Jahangir asks Ghias Beg, the father of Mehrunnisa, to invoke the Tura-i-Changezi, the law of the Timurs, to get his daughter a divorce from Ali Quli. It also reflects the hatred and jealousy of Jagat Gosini towards Mehrunnisa and considering her as a real threat to her position and power in the royal Zenana. For her, Mehrunnisa was Ruqayya's protégée. No matter what logic dictated, Jagat Gosini swore to herself that neither of those women would gain ascendance over her (273).

Chapter fifteen refers to the extract from *The Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* where Jahangir grieved the death of his friend Qutbu-d-din Khan Koka. In this chapter, Indu Sundaresan fabricated the circumstances of refusal of Ali Quli for divorce, sending Qutubuddin Khan Koka to summon Ali Quli at Bengal and killing of the former by the latter and then killing of Ali Quli by the army of Koka and escape of Mehrunnisa and Ladli from the house. Hence, it won't be wrong to suggest that the text indirectly revolves around the citation because Mehrunnisa is separated from Ali Quli, although not through the divorce yet through his death.

The quote before chapter sixteen narrates the circumstances of the Mughal Court and is based on *A Dutch Chronicle of Mughal India,* and the same has been elaborated in this chapter. Moreover, this chapter also recreates the actual historical event when Khusrau on the instructions of Jahangir, was blinded.

In chapter seventeen, Indu Sundaresan had fabricated the circumstances when Mehrunnisa returned safely from Bengal to Agra, the presence of Portuguese Jesuit Catholic fathers at the court

of Jahangir, whereas the citation extracted from *The History of Hindostan* refers to the dexterity of Mehrunnisa in tapestry, embroidery, painting skills along with her other charms.

The quote before chapter eighteen has been extracted from *Storia do Mogor by Niccolao Manucci*, where Jahangir sent an order for the killing of Mehunnisa's husband, but the chapter exhibits the supremacy of Mehrunnisa's charm, love, and beauty over Jahangir and seeing Mehrunnisa as a potential threat by Jagat Gosini and the indirect influence of another powerful character Ruqayya Sultan Begum to decide the fate of Jagat Gosini. The conversation between Hoshiyar Khan, the eunuch slave, and the Jagat Gosini clearly exhibits the power of Mehrunnisa in collusion with Ruqayya Sultan.

Hoshiyar shrugged. 'Her Majesty, Ruqayya Sultan Begum, sent Mehrunnisa to the Emperor,'

'Why?'

'So that he would notice her, Your Majesty.'

'Find some pretext to call the Emperor away. I want Mehrunnisa out of the zenana by nightfall. The Emperor is not to see her again (332).

Chapter nineteen has been woven around the quote from *The Travels of Pietro Delia Valle in India*, where Jahangir tried to bring Mehrunnisa into his harem. Still, she refused to enter as a concubine. In this chapter, Indu Sundaresan fabricated the circumstances of how Jahangir tried to convince Mehrunnisa and how the latter refused.

'Come back to the zenana, Mehrunnisa. I want you there. I want to look after you, to take care of you. Come to me, my darling. Please say you will come.' He smiled and went on, 'All this country is tiring me. I am not young anymore. I need you with me' (347).

Choosing her words carefully, she said, 'Your Majesty, it is best you leave now. I cannot-----I will not----be your concubine' (348). Thus, the chapter revolves around the citation. The quote before chapter twenty has been extracted from *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India* and provides a brief summary of Mehrunnisa and Jahangir's love story. Therefore, the chapter twenty also narrates the same where both of them finally got married. Hindu Sundanese has created twenty chapters in this novel because Maharanis alias Nurjahan became the twentieth and last wife of Emperor Jahangir.

Considering the quotes before the chapters, one can easily make out that some of the chapters revolve around the citations, but some have completely been drifted away from them. But one thing is to ascertain that all the citations have been explained in detail either previous or next chapters. Although Indu Sundaresan has detailed these quotes' descriptions yet with a magical touch of her imaginative dexterity and feminine writing. Thus, it would be incorrect to state that the text has completely become a parasite on the quotes or vice-versa. The writer has done justice to both the text and the quotes. She has artistically-recreated women-centered Mughal history, whereas all the quotes are taking from the texts where Mughal kings have been put at the centre. Thus, it won't be wrong to say that *The Twentieth Wife* is an artistic blend of history and fiction where the writer has maintained a fine balance between the citations and the text.

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The Verses that Breathed: Emily Dickinson, an Existentialist in an Era of Transcendentalism

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Abstract

Emily Dickinson was odd, reticent and private, in Amherst she was considered a mythological being. Loneliness, if ever she considered it to be -- was her choice. Yet her poems exult to a realm that is beyond space and time. Her mode of revelation was too difficult to decipher by people gifted with an average sense of understanding. Her Canvas was the entire universe and her technique indisputably her own, she strove to capture the telegraphic thoughts in her half-rhymes and in her irregularities of speech and rhythm. In her spasmodic quality, she mirrored the incongruities and frustrations of human experience the awkwardness in her poetry became a metaphor of life itself.

For nearly thirty years Emily Dickinson projected her consciousness into a world devastatingly hostile to the self. Her more private America was no less chaotic than the one Whitman or Emerson confronted, and her personal cosmos was ruled by terror and alienation. She eschewed the conventional supports of home, society, and religion to fight alone of life's hardest battleground – within the human soul. Unflinchingly she faced inner challenges and struggled to wrest spiritual victory from emotional defeat. Like many poets, she perceived man as a beleaguered, isolated creature, desperately seeking truth in a relativistic world. This paper aims at deconstructing her existential sensibilities that encounter the great moral universals: love, loss, doubt, death, life, pleasure, and pain elevating them to a space which is beyond the century she existed in.

The controversy between form and substance in Dickinson's poetry was a consistent one during the last decade of the nineteenth century, with critics somewhat divided in their attitudes. Many of them, accustomed to the conventional poetic patterns of the day, found Dickinson's departure from accepted forms highly distasteful, while others applauded her rare ability to achieve a sense of rhythm while disregarding the form of it. And, surprisingly, quite a number of critics combined these attitudes, acknowledging that their blending demonstrated Dickinson's capacity to achieve poetic thought in her own, quite original way.

Her achievement as prosodies now gives her first rank, where at first it was overlooked or excused in deference to the mysterious "Power" of her thought. Her thought too still attracts high praise, though now as in the words of her editor Thomas writes, "an existentialist In a period of transcendentalism" she merits rank not only for her skill with meters but also for her tragic vision.”

Mabel Loomis Todd, in her comments on public reaction to Dickinson's poetry, claimed that the critics hardly knew where to place Emily Dickinson's "strangely compelling poems" when they were first published.

Love, desire for recognition, religious beliefs, and loneliness are the basic realities of human life. Failure to realize those leads to frustration, and frustration ultimately, leads to the formation of a tragically grievous attitude towards life. Emily Dickinson was no exception to these circumstances: caught in a situation that challenged all she had been made of, she reacted by becoming a complete recluse. Endowed with a keen poetic sensibility, she resolved to accept the Universe on her own terms. To Emily Dickinson, poetry was "a safety valve which released all the pent-up sorrow and created a world of beautiful images." Her work was her secular salvation."

Mainly her thwarted love, unfulfilled poetic ambition, and dissatisfaction with Calvinism furnished the crude clay from which she moulded her finished poems: From her limited, pain-filled experience, she wrung in intense exhilaration with the processes of life. In her poetry, she expressed these feelings so originally that the private and the provincial were often translated into enduring universal art.

Verse That Breathed

"I Smile when you suggest I delay' to publish' – that being foreign to my thought, as Firmament to Fin – If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her- and if she did not, the longest day would pass me on the chase ". wrote Emily Dickinson to her preceptor Col. Higginson when he cautioned her against publishing her poems.

Samuel Bowles, the editor of the 'Springfield Republican' maintained a polite indifference. That Emily Dickinson craved fame and recognition is beyond doubt. She wrote to Higginson asking if her 'verses breathed'. She put her faith into the great literary masters who were too timid to proclaim her to the great literary world. If at all they relented to introduce her to the public, it was on their own terms and which Emily Dickinson was too proud to accept. Hence, with the exception of few poems that were published in the 'Springfield Republican' by Samuel Bowles and by Helen Hunt Jackson in' A Masque of Poets' that too, anonymously-the rest remained locked in her drawers, only to be found by her sister Lavinia after her death in 1886.

Of the major nineteenth-century American writers, only Emerson and Mark Twain achieved in their times a recognition at all commensurate with what later generations have acknowledged being their value as writers. Poe, Melville, James, and to some extent, Hawthorne failed to get a fairly laudable

reception by the reading public. The same is true of Emily Dickinson, with the significant difference that, unlike her peers, she had no literary "career" to be judged – and shaped by judgment –in her lifetime. Barely a handful of her poems was published while she lived, and except for Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, few outside her family and close friends ever saw any of her verse until 1890. In that year, four years after her death, the world was given the first volume of poems by Emily Dickinson, edited by Mabel Loomis Todd, friend, and neighbour of the Dickinson Family, and Col. Higginson.

Discovery of the Poetess

The immediate critical response to these poems was mixed. Those like William Dean Howells, Who recognized a genuine and unusual poetic gift, reacted favorably. It was a signal recognition for Emily Dickinson that in 1891 a critic of Hovels' reputation and influence should have high regard for her poetry. He speaks of her uniqueness and universality in such blowing terms, "If nothing else had come out of our life, but this strange poetry we should feel that in the work of Emily Dickinson , America, of New England rather, had made a distinctive addition to the literature of the world, and could not be left out of any record of it, and the interesting and important thing is that this poetry is as characteristic of our life as our business enterprise, our political turmoil our demagoguism our millionaires."

Jaded Response

Andrew Lang, the critic, immediately dismissed her as Ignorant and incompetent and went to the extent of remarking whether her poems should be read at all. Reacting against Howells, high praise he candidly remarks. "Mr. Howells praised it very highly. I cannot go nearly so far as Mr. Howells. Because, if poetry is to exist at all, it really must have form and grammar and must rhyme when it professes to rhyme: indeed, one turns over Miss. Dickinson book with a puzzling feeling that there was poetry in her subconscious but that it never became explicit". The reason for Andrew Lang's bewilderment is not far from seeking, Emily Dickinson's poetic techniques were too unconventional to be understood and followed by all.

Admirers and detractors, both American and British, were clear enough in their critical sentiments. Still, the present-day reader of their views neither saw with clarity the full nature of her poetic gifts.

A Modern Poet?

Emily Dickinson sustained attention as more and more of her poems- and her letters – were published, though from 1897 to the early 1920's that attention was meager. The interest in her poetry became broader in scope: to the problem of her unconventional form were added the problems of her biography, the significance of her major themes, and the reliability of the published texts. Especially in the 1920's and after, critics began to see the poems for what they are rather than for what they might have been. To some, Miss. Dickinson was more easily a "Modern" poet than a nineteenth–century one. To others, she was of her own time and heritage but also clearly beyond it. And in 1921, Norman Forester hesitantly said she would occupy an "Inconspicuous but secure place" in American Literary history. To be sure, there were British and American critics who maintained strong reservations about the poet's merits, but they were by 1930 a dwindling number.

Growth of Reputation

From 1930's to the present, the reputation of Emily Dickinson has grown steadily and immensely, not in the sense of discovery, of revival, rather in the sense of clarification, what her poetry is and what, consequently, her stature must be. We are accustomed to thinking of the past several decades as an age of criticism, with a very diverse and sophisticated range of beliefs and practices. That Emily Dickinson's poetry should find high favour in so many of these critical perspectives is Itself a testament to her greatness. Furthermore, one sees in this criticism the frequent assumption that she is great, and then the careful exploration of her themes, her techniques, her method, the precise terms of her greatness. The facts and critical relevance of her biography and definitive editions of her work have been accomplished. Her significance to American Literature and culture is largely defined. The recognition of Emily Dickinson is now firm, and she joins Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, and the other company of great nineteenth-century writers.

New Trends: New Voices

The question of Emily Dickinson's growing popularity has often troubled us. Why a poet who failed to gain an ear for her poetry should suddenly be found ascending the ladders of fame? Why the great sages like Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, who enjoyed public acclaim should recede into the background, and this thin, wren-like personality, dominate the literary scene with the great poets of the modern times?

The reason primarily attributed is to the changing literary trends in poetry. The 'boo-boo sob-sob theory of poetry' had long declined into oblivion, and writing poetry offered a challenge to all concerned. Romanticism and didacticism, which were the vogue in Emerson's days, lost their hold and the uneasy times initiated a new trend. The poetry of 1860s & 70s the poetry fraught with problems which the poets had begun to recognize the power of fresh, realistic material communicated by blunt, experimental methods." From this ground-swell of realism rises the adventurous poetry of Sidney Lanier and Emily Dickinson. Yet, the traditionalists clung to the old subjects. Tennyson, Byron, Shelley, and Keats echoed in their verses. American poetry had yet to adopt a singular course in the field of poetry. Although the material was fresh, the poetry itself was in the age-old conservatism encouraged a limited style of experiments by a few poets, such as Lanier and Emily Dickinson – experiments with techniques still contained within the old patterns' ad using the old materials. For these poets, an audience attuned adequately to their techniques was yet to come, which probably explains Emily Dickinson's reticence in proclaiming her poetry to the world. Recognition was to go to her, only after her death and that too amongst mixed reactions. But all the same, she was hailed as unusual. The poets of the twentieth century might almost be grouped according to their response to Emily Dickinson, poetry was a revelation of the mid. Each and every phenomenon of nature corresponded intimately with the activities in her mind. Although she professed no theory of poetry during her lifetime yet references scattered here and there reveal her poetry idea.

Poetry: An Alchemy

To her poetry was the essence wrung out of feeling and ordinary meanings. She remarks aptly in one of her poems:-

"This was a poet – it is that
Distills amazing sense
From ordinary meanings.
And attars so immense
From the familiar species
That perished by the door
we wonder it was not ourselves
Arrested it before".

And her mode of revelation was too difficult to decipher by people gifted with an average sense of understanding. "Her Canvas was the entire Universe and her technique indisputably her own, however

much it has puzzled other writers. She strove to capture the telegraphic thoughts. In her half-rhymes, her Irregularities of speech and rhythm, her spasmodic quality, she mirrored the incongruities and frustrations of human experience the awkwardness in her poetry became a metaphor of life itself."

Sources and Influences

Her affinity with Donne, Henry Vaughan, and Sir Thomas Browne is quite evident. Keats. Keats was another favorite of hers – this might explain the dominant note of pain and despair in her poems. To John Donne, She owes her witty technique, and that probably accounts for the dilemma that her poems posed before Higginson or, for that matter Samuel Bowles. As Allen Tate passionately remarks, "Great poetry needs no special features of difficulty to make it mysterious. When it has, then the reputation of the poet is likely to remain uncertain. This is still true of Donne, and it is true of Emily Dickinson, whose verse appeared in an age unfavorable to the use of intelligence in poetry. Her poetry is not like any other poetry of her time. It is not like any of the innumerable kinds of verse written to-day ...it is a poetry of ideas and it demands the reader a point of view...It also requires the deep understanding that must go beneath the verbal excitement of the style, a highly developed sense of the specific quality of poetry – a quality that most persons accept as the accidental feature of something else that the poet thinks he has to say. This is one of the reasons why Miss Dickinson's poetry has not been widely read."

Allen Tate attributes the late recognition of Emily Dickinson to a lack of tradition of criticism, proper Intelligence to understand her poetry, and failure of the cities to grasp more than biographical details. "She is too near to possess the remoteness of literature, "He says and continues in the same vein," Perhaps her appropriate setting would be the age of Cowley or Donne. Yet in her historical setting, she is nevertheless, remarkable and special."

Pure Poetry

Emily Dickinson was a poet in the purest sense. She passed by all the contemporary events, and no mention is made of any major happening in her poetry. Like Jane Austen, she kept within her "two inches of ivory" and, like Keats, refused to use poetry as a medium of social propaganda. She was concerned with greater events of Life, Death, and Immortality.

The personal revelation of the kind that Donne and Miss Dickinson strove for, in the effort to understand their relationship, is a feature of all great poetry: it is probably the hidden motive for the

writing. It is, in fact, the perfect literary situation it produces because it is rare, a spec,ial, and perhaps the most distinguished kind of poet. They show a variety of feelings. To use a Keatsian phrase, she loaded her poetry with ore, her paradoxical statements, punning, and her astounding style of verse-arrangement filled one with bewilderment and surprise. Her poetry is difficult but because it surprises us by its fine excess it sends a chill down our spine. This probably accounts for her steady growth of renown in the twentieth century.

The problem of judging her better poems is much of the time a subtle one. "Her meter at its worst, ...is a kind of stiff sing-song, her diction at its worst is a kind of poetic genius of the highest order “8

Mixed Reaction

Thus opinions vary sometimes on this side of the argument and sometimes on the other. Her reputation has suffered many ups and down. while critics come down hard on her for her lapses in verse, rhyme and expression, In the same breath they cannot help expressing a wonder for such 'an amazing sense Conrad Aiken declared her poetry" perhaps the finest in the English language" Harry Hansen another critic rates Emily Dickinson the greatest poet of America.

In 1915 F.L. Pattee said of Emily Dickinson "Her poems are disappointing. Critics have ached Higginson, until Emily Dickinson has figured, often at length, in all the later histories and anthologies, but it is becoming clear that she was overrated. To compare her' eccentric fragments' with Blake's 'wildness' is Is ridiculous. They are more conceits vague jottings of a brooding mind, they are crudely wrought and like their author's letters, which were given to the public later, they are colorless and for the most part lifeless. They reveal Little of either Emily Dickinson or of human life generally. They should have been allowed to perish as the author intended" (9).

Yet a few years later, F.L. Pattee revised his opinion Emily's poems he stated, "are startlingly, even crudely original .... some of them remind one of the works of Blake .They are the record of the inner life of an abnormally sensitive soul – fragments. lyrical ejaculations, childish conceits, little orphic sayings, often illogical and meaningless, lines and couplets at times that are glimpses of another world, spasmodic cries, always brief, always bearing upon the deepest things that life knows- love, death, nature, time, eternity" (10).

The prevailing criticism seems weighted in the direction of A.L. Hamptons' appraisal, "The translation of quite everyday experiences into moments of startling beauty, the lightening and humorous acceptance of everything from bees and birds, and flowers to death, to loneliness and to

light all streaming through her mind into the scheme of the world, give one a fresh sense of life. the unerring aim of her words pins her quick understanding, quivering to the page. Her words and concerns may range from a whim, capitalized to a profound realization of the meaning and effect of experience common to us all "(11).

By 1914, however, when Martha Dickinson Blanch 1, the poets' niece and heiress to her literary estate issued 'The Single Hound' a new batch of poems, and this time refreshingly free from alterations poetry in America had taken out a new lease, and a new kind of audience was prepared to read Emily Dickinson, more nearly, on her own terms. A highly self-conscious poetic renaissance was in full swing and "modern poetry", under the aegis of one fad after another , Imagism, Free Verse, Vortices and so on claimed Emily Dickinson and "rescued" her from the popular crowd. The rescuing process continued over the next several decades as more of the poems were transcribed and published: 'Further Poem' (1929) 'Unpublished Poems (1935) and restoration in yet another sense came in 1950 in 'The Poems of Emily Dickinson', the product of masterpiece scholarship of Thomas H. Johnason. It comprised of 1775 poems and fragments. Numbered and arranged so as to preset them as precisely as could be determined in their order of composition, the text of each poem preserves with exact fidelity the form she herself employed, including the characteristic dash she used as a kind of musical notation, more to achieve dramatic emphasis, as If to make each word of phrase a character. Final restoration of the sort came with Mr. Johnson's three volume edition of' The Letters of Emily Dickinson" (1958). Her letters are valuable for, she often used her letters to the actual world beyond the Amherst fence as trial flights for the "Letters" she winged over the fences of mortality.

Long Awaited Reaction

So she has been restored – restored as a professional poet of the first rank, not merely as a quaint female scribbler with petite but penetrating insights. And restored in a way that would not have surprised he, for she said that incredible was never incredible when it finally occurred. It is not so incredible after all, for. her reputation from 1890 to 1955 has nearly always been tended by words of devotion. Her achievement as prosodies now gives her first rank, where at first it was overlooked or excused in deference to the mysterious "Power" of her thought. Her thought too still attracts high praise, though now as in the words of her editor Thomas writes, "an existentialist In a period of transcendentalism" she merits rank not only for her skill with meters but also for her tragic vision" (12).

An Existentialist

She fronted existence in all its dreadful breadth. Death and extinction, the way the way the individual personality perished bit by bit, agonized her. she fronted existence in all its minute particulars too. Each needling sensation of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell that told her she was alive also told her that life was passing, the experience was almost unbearable. But she rendered It bearable through sheer force of will, forcefully taking an ironic stance that could hold both life and death at a distance, permitting her to nibble away at the soul piece so that she could digest immortality a little at a time.

It is a tragic poet that she stands exclusively in her own right. Talk of her' tragic vision' conjures up comparisons with the s Shakespeare of' King Lear. Not a mad king but the robin she said, "was my criterion for Tune"

A Pocket Consmos

The province of New England served as her cosmos. She saw the Universe in a butter-cup or placed Death in a chariot and was entranced by Eternity in a rush of Cochineal. her first admires savoured her Universe, and her later critics the butte-cup. The difference, the originality of Emily Dickinson comes from the way she sings.

Emily Dickinson wrote once complaining.

"This is my letter to the world

That never wrote to me-

The simple News that Nature told –

With tender Majesty

Her Message is committed

To hands I Cannot See –

For love of Her-Sweet-Countrymen

Judge tenderly of me".

One is tempted to add: "The letter had been misplaced and remained in the 'Dead Letter Office' but suddenly a postman found the correct address and posted it. And now the world indeed judges "her tenderly (13).

'A poet recently restored', her popularity to-day speaks for its universal freshness. She appeals immediately for she deals with the basic problems of life. In her own times she had been ignored

'Like a Cinderella whom the Prince Fame did not claim'. But ultimately, in 1955, Thomas H. Johns on published the complete works of Emily Dickinson, tracing each and every trait. This is the first study of its kind and gives us some insight into the methods, techniques and thought processes of the poet.

Although as an explicit philosophical movement existentialism belongs to the twentieth century, its father-philosophers were Kierkegaard and, as a background presence, Kant, and all the conditions for its emergence as a stance or a way of life or an explicit philosophy already existed in the consciousness of Emily Dickinson's time - her distinction is that she brought to conscious expression in poetry what was potentially already there: and, in doing so, she speaks with a voice more recognizably attuned to our century than to her own. To use her own words, we see her better for the Years:

> That hunch themselves between -
>
> The Miner's Lamp - sufficient be -

To nullify the Mine Emily Dickinson not only confronted and explored in poetry the basic situation, the human predicament as it presented itself to the underlying consciousness of the age, in response to which existentialism as a working philosophy emerged: she also, first among the poets of our language, brought to conscious definition in poetry the emergent existentialist consciousness itself. Another poem in which she explores the consciousness both in itself and through some of its ramifications. First, this:

> No Rack can torture me -
>
> My Soul - at Liberty -
>
> Behind this mortal Bone
>
> There knits a bolder One -
>
> You cannot prick with saw -
>
> Nor pierce with Scimitar -

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Lal Ded and Her Vaakhs: Revisiting the Mystic's Perspective

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Abstract

The paper aims to explore the vaakhs of Lal Ded under the framework of mysticism. Lalleshwari, the mystic saint-poet, a moral guide, popularly known as Lal Ded (Granny Lal), is one of the greatest litterateurs who hailed from medieval Kashmir. Lal Ded is remembered for her vaakhs that reflect her wisdom of Trika philosophy which she shared with the natives in the vernacular. Vaakhs are a priceless possession, and the wisdom underlying the vaakhs marks as the legacy for the posterity. Lal Ded is still alive in the heart of the natives through her vaakhs, and the very language of the region is indebted to her as she enriched it with her proverbs. The paper aims to examine the mystic elements in her vaakhs and the wisdom for the immortal soul in the mortal frame. Also, the paper explores how the narrative of the vaakhs is still pertinent in contemporary times prompting one to look within and cherish the holy gift of life, and at the same time serves to establish an eternal bond of love among all Kashmiris. In today's world, where differences are valorized, her vaakhs corresponds to interfaith dialogue by surpassing all religions through the doctrine of mysticism.

Keywords: Mysticism, Vaakhs, Divine Love, Unity, and Interfaith Dialogue

A person of the reason is never satiated with the observances of the phenomenal world as he has an inner quest to know the unknown, to comprehend the unfathomable, that is, far beyond his grasp. He has an unquenchable thirst to probe the mystery of the universe as his urge does not cease at the theoretical and the empirical. Besides, being a person of reason, she is bestowed with a soul that makes her a conscious being who has the propensity to reflect and introspect and to love. Love, in its higher form, stands for man's urge for communion with the Divine. The love which the mystics around the world speak of is Divine Love and the Divine for the mystics is the Transcendent Being.

Mysticism involves a person's spiritual quest for seeking communion with the Divine through unifying love. It is man's direct experience of the Divine, which is described as imageless by all the mystics. B N. Parimoo, in The Ascent of Self: A Re-interpretation of the Mystical Poetry of Lalla Ded, states that:

> Mysticism sums up the recognition and realization of the self in man and the Macrocosmic Self and the identification of the two as one. Self-realization and God-realization are one and the same thing. The mystic aims at dissolution of the individual self into the Universal Self so as to attain Truth-Consciousness- Bliss. Mysticism is a practical discipline and the goal is achieved after a hard struggle. (xii)

Mysticism has its roots down the human history especially as a religious experience. The medieval period marks the inception of mysticism worldwide. The word 'mysticism 'comes from the Greek word mycin meaning 'to close the eyes', is also the root of 'mystery '(Faizili 9). Mysticism, as a separate subject, is the product of the west. "It has intermittently appeared in Christianity notably in the writings of St. Augustine, and St. Avila…" (Fazili 7).

In the Indian context, it dates back to the Upanishads. "Hindu mysticism was always regarded as part of philosophy and religion…. Tat tvam Asi, Ayamatma Brahma, Aham Brahma Asmi are an eloquent indication of how much Upanishads are imbued with mysticism" (Abraham 6).

There are various meanings and connotations of mysticism. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines the term 'mysticism 'as "the practice of religious ecstasies (religious experiences during alternate state of consciousness), together with whatever ideologies, ethics, rites, myths, legends, and magic may be related to them." A.N Dhar in his Mysticism across Cultures, quotes the poet Coventry Patmore who describes mysticism as "the science of the ultimate" (2). All the religions of the world have the belief in the unseen. Mysticism is the esoteric aspect of the conventional religion. Mysticism and religion are integrally related as every religion aspires towards experiencing the Divine. Thus, mysticism has different connotations in different religions. Gershom G. Scholem posits that there is no mysticism but mysticisms:

> "… there is no such a thing as mysticism in the abstract, that is to say, a phenomenon or experience which has no particular relation to the other religious phenomena. There is no

> mysticism as such, there is only mysticism of a particular religious system, Christian, Islamic, Jewish mysticism and so on" (Scholem 6).

Literature represents culture and tradition of a society and also serves multitude of purposes. Besides, being the blueprint of the society and a cultural artifact, it serves as an introduction to the world of imagination, ideas, and experience in the form of art. Poetry is a higher form of an art as it is used to communicate higher truths since time immemorial. Poetry of faith or religious poetry is marked by the element of sacredness. A. N. Dhar quotes Donal Davie in Mysticism in Literature, that, "the very act of poetry implies religious view of the world" (6).

Mysticism and poetry are interrelated. The basis of mysticism is conviction of unity: semblance of all the things. Mystics teach us how to value one another and cherish the holy gift of life and promotes humanity, brotherhood among different religious affiliations. Rabindranath Tagore in his book Gitanjali, defines unity as "He who sees all human beings as himself, who realizes all beings as himself, knows truth" (99-100). The paper aims to revisit the medieval mystic's perspective and endeavors to explore and expound the ethical teachings of Lal Ded under the rubric of the wisdom of Kashmir Shaivism which falls in with the fundaments of her poetry.

The Hallowed Valley of Kashmir and the Kashmir's Literary Tradition: The union territory of Jammu and Kashmir is one of the most beautiful regions in the south Asian countries that is bestowed with natural resources by the Almighty. The valley of Kashmir is said to be the crown of Bharat and is called Kasheer in the vernacular. It is also called as Rishwaer- the Valley of Rishis or Rishi Vatika as it was the abode of the Rishis. The genesis of Kashmir has been based on the oral legends recorded in ancient texts like Nilmatpurana, Rajatarangani, and Baharistan-i-Shahi to name a few. Nilamat Puran deals with "the ancient history of Kashmir in respect of its creation, its original inhabitants-Nagas, Pisachas, and Brahmins, their style of living, customs, festivals, and topography" (Bhat 5). Kashmir, in the prehistoric times was a deep lake called as Satisar, named after Sati, the consort of Lord Shiva. When the lake got infested by the demon, the Naga inhabitants could not come and dwell there and sought the help of Sage Kashyap. Due to the miraculous deeds of the sage the demon was killed and the land that emerged from the desiccation of the lake water was named after the sage Kashyap as Kashyap mar. Thus, the name Kashmir also implies "land desiccated from the water," from Sanskrit 'ka 'which means water and 'shimira 'which implies to

desiccate (Bamzai 5). Hence, Kashmir's cultural essence is marked by miracles, metaphysical traditions, and mythical actions.

Also, in the past, Kashmir was known throughout the world as an important center of learning and significantly contributed in the development of Sanskrit. All the major schools of Indian Aesthetics were founded by Kashmir theoreticians. P. N. K. Bamzai wrote in his book Culture and Political History of Kashmir, "In ancient times Kashmir was the 'high school 'of Sanskrit and scholars from all parts of India came to the Valley to study at the feet of great teachers and savants." (233). Kashmir is a blessed land where saints and mystics of all the times have been venerated. Since time immemorial, it possesses a rich literary history. In the valley, poetry has been the most preferred form of artistic expression. Mir Mohammad Hanif, in his book Imprints of English on Modern Kashmiri Poetry, posits that "the written records of the literary tradition in Kashmir show that, even in the tenth century, there was a well-developed poetic tradition, grounded in mystic philosophy" (24). He further states that "it is a recognized reality that Kashmiri poetry, from the medieval times to the twentieth century, was 'spiritual 'in nature…" (7). Rajatarangani in Sanskrit is the masterpiece of ancient Kashmiri literature. In medieval Kashmir, Kashmiri literature was nourished in the vernacular at the hands of two great mystics of the period: Lalleshwari and Nur-ud-Din. These two stalwarts of the Kashmiri Language enriched the literary heritage by the richness of their phrases and metaphors from their respective mystical poetry. Thus, it is worth delving into the treasure haul of Kashmir with its great literary tradition along with the mystic Lal Ded.

Lal Ded and her Vaakhs: the Ceaseless Songs of Devotion: The real history of Kashmiri literature began with the mystical verses of the great saint-woman poet, Lalleshwari (1320- 1390) in the fourteenth century, the time that also marks the inception of Islam into the valley in a gentle pervasive manner. She was born into a Brahmin family and was named as Lalla. Out of veneration, Hindus called her Lalleshwari and Muslims called her Lalla Arifa (Razdan 9). Both the communities endearingly called her Lal Ded which means Grandmother. She was married at a young age, and her in-laws called her Padmavati. Her conjugal life was not blissful as she was always tormented by her mother-in-law, who left no stone unturned to perturb her and also provoked her son who ill-treated her. As a woman, she refused the role assigned to her by the then contemporary society by walking out of her marriage and rebelled against the culture of silence. Thus, giving her spiritual yearnings a voice in the form of vaakhs. Lal Ded has survived through

the oral tradition by her vaakhs: words of profound philosophical value. The first mention of Lalleshwari was by Mulla Ali Raina in Tadhkirat-ul-Arifin (1587) followed by Asrar ul-Akbar (1654) by Baba Daud Mishkati and Tarikh-i-Azmi (1736) by Khwaja Azam Diddamari.

Ranjit Hoskote in his book I, Lalla: The Poems of Lal Ded states that "Lal Ded is arguably Kashmir's best known spiritual and literary figure: within Kashmir, she has been venerated both by Hindus and Muslims for nearly seven centuries…Called vakhs, Lalla's poems are among the earliest known manifestations of Kashmiri Literature…" (x). The word vaakh, applicable both as singular and plural, is cognate with the Sanskrit vac, 'speech', and vakya, 'sentence '(xi). "A typical vaakh is a four-line stanza… The word is derived from Sanskrit word vaakiyaani which means a cryptic saying" (Hanif 27). Between the mid-fourteenth century and the present, a total of 258 vaakhs attributed to Lalla have circulated variously assuming the form of songs, proverbs and prayers. Her vaakhs have come down to us as a rich legacy and the key themes are the domain of spirituality, the injustices prevalent in the society, and a revolt to conventions, journey of the self to Self through meditation and yogic cultivation of the breath, love, and universal brotherhood. Lal Ded lived through a time of seismic turbulence. The most important object of her mission was the removal of confusion caused among the masses by the preaching of the zealots. The ways of living together adapted by medieval Kashmiri locals to thrive in a composite culture without turning antagonistic to each other in an anti-conflictual manner can be best explained by the mystic insights of Lal Ded.

The literary study of Lal Ded is based on the interpretation of her vaakhs. Her vaakhs were responsible for molding the character of her people and setting up a tradition of love and tolerance. She conveyed the essence of Kashmir Shaivism in a simple way. She was initiated to embark the spiritual enterprise at the hands of her Guru Siddha Srikantha. She acknowledged the teachings of her spiritual mentor as the eternal message of the Divine and practiced it. Her Guru instructed her to focus her energy from the outside world to the lotus temple inside her as the first step in Sadhana. Says Lal Ded:

> The Guru gave me but one percept,
>
> "From without turn inward",
>
> It came to me 'Lalla" as God's word:

I started roaming nude (Dhar 175).

Love is another important factor that emerges out of the vaakhs. Love matrix is complex as it is physical as well as metaphysical. Her vaakhs provide horizon of Divine love. Divine love means the love for God and his creation irrespective of different religious convictions. LaL Ded acknowledged that different religions corresponds to different paths leading to the ultimate goal of seeking the Divine. The devotion to God and love for his creation is characterized by transforming of love from the lower self to higher self. Her love for Shiva is so intense that she finds him all-pervading and bewildered, she asks, what she should offer who is one in all. She professed pure Love for the Divine in the following vaakh:

You are the sky and the earth

Day, wind-breath, night.

You are grain, sandal paste, flowers, water.

Substance of my offering, You who are All,

What shall I offer you? (Hoskote 62)

The Love of the Divine is marked by self-knowledge and a man can sail through the sojourn on the Earth through Self-knowledge. Inner enterprise is vital to eradicate the nafs (lower self). Says Lal Ded, Shiva is realized not through rituals and observances, but through the knowledge of radiant mind. "Shiva is worshipped best when thought lights up the Self" (Hoskote 39). Says Lal Ded:

Fool, you won't find your way out by praying from a book.

The perfume on your carcass won't give you a clue.

Focus on the Self.

That's the best advice you can get (Hoskote 43).

Lal Ded as a mystic is not a world negating seeker rather, she treats the body playing an important role in bringing self-refinement. Self-knowledge abets in resolving the inner and outer conflicts leading to a universal vision. Self- knowledge through self-discipline dispels the darkness from

one's inner self and promotes love and unity for the divine creation as we all are manifestation of God:

> Shiva lies in many places.
>
> He doesn't know Hindu from Muslim.
>
> The Self that lives in you and others:
>
> that's Shiva. Get the measure of Shiva (Hoskote 104).

The mystic poet Lal Ded, intoxicated by divine love redefined herself, and the world around her as the manifestation of God through symbols, images, and conceptual ideas in her poetry. The poet have left a legacy of vaakhs that propagates spiritual discourse for the progeny to gain insights: how at individual level one can be liberated and also, gave place to the marginalized by propagating the concept of one God. Her vaakhs are a testimony to her mystic experience. Her vaakhs are addressed to men of all faiths. Lal Ded realized the essence of the Universal and the one religion that belongs to all, that is, humanity.

Mysticism in Kashmir is a counter-discourse that reiterates the message of peaceful co-existence. A close scrutiny of the medieval poet: Lal Ded connects us with the past that stood for Unity in Diversity, connects us to our forgotten roots of Self. "The chronology of her existence testify to her being the pioneer and forerunner of the Bhakti movement of India" (Razdan 22). It is important to recognize, comprehend, and evaluate mystical poetry of the medieval mystic as her poetry responds to the needs of modern human beings. In today's world, where differences are valorized, her poetry corresponds to interfaith dialogue by surpassing all religions through the doctrine of mysticism. The poetry of Lal Ded focuses on the lost identity of unity and oneness due to change in the narrative and how lost identity of oneness could be revived by application of the insights provided by the poet, in the vaakhs from spiritual vantage point.

Conclusion

Today, mysticism is garnering renewed interest and understanding as it aims towards human beings 'inward transformation. Although the modern world is on the path of technological

advancement, the possibilities that lie beyond the empirical cannot be rejected. Spiritual vacuity has plagued man's psyche because of rampant ongoing violence and conflict in many parts of the world. Mystics of all ages and climes emphasize man's inherent Divinity and the goal of spiritual life is the human pursuit of the Divine where the soul yearns for the communion with the Celestial. The mystic is the most legitimate custodian of religion, and their poetry is the poetry of aspiration and fulfillment. Mysticism is a positive trend and mystics promotes mutual understanding and interfaith dialogue. The narrative of the vaakhs of the most revered mystic saint poetess: Lal Ded, states the ascent of the self from the lower to the higher plane of consciousness. As quoted by a famous Lithuanian-American Poet and Filmmaker, Jonas Mekas, "In the very end, civilizations perish because they listen to their politicians and not to their poets," (Goodreads).

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Family Dynamics and Trans-national Themes in Hannie Rayson's *Hotel Sorrento* and *Inheritance* : An Indian Reading

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Abstract

Great works of literature touch readers to their very core beings partly because they integrate timeless themes that are understood by every reader. Themes like family, family ties, sibling rivalry and land ownership touch upon some of our most basic emotional responses and make a work classic and timeless. The dynamics of family is one of the oldest themes known to the stage. In Australian theatre also plays concerning the family are frequent and some of the greatest Australian dramatists are recognized for the plays that are centered on family life. Hannie Rayson, a Melbourne based playwright, is no exception: her works express a profound concern for the role of family in the Australian society. This paper analyses two plays: Hotel Sorrento (1990) and Inheritance (2003) by Hannie Rayson. From an Indian perspective, both plays transcend the boundaries of time, space and nationality. Hotel Sorrento, a tragic-comic domestic drama, addresses notions of Australian cultural identity and presents the dilemmas, doubts, heartbreaks, memories and unresolved conflicts of three sisters. Though the family is located in an Australian milieu, the sibling rivalry, family ties, affection and alienation, are recognizable in the Indian context. Inheritance addresses universal dilemmas of land ownership: peasantry and rural experiences and urban divisions in the twenty-first century. Other parallels between contemporary India and Australia that will be discussed in this paper include the desire for land, the narrow-mindedness of many rural communities, and post-colonial reconstruction of cultural identity as portrayed in both plays.

Keywords: Australian Theatre, family, transnational, sibling rivalry, ownership, universal.

Great works of literature touch readers to their very core beings partly because they integrate timeless themes that are understood by every reader. Themes like family, family ties, sibling rivalry and land ownership touch upon some of our most basic emotional responses and make a work classic and timeless. Family issues are interesting because everyone in some way or the other can relate to them. As Sam Shepard, an American dramatist puts it, "Everything can be traced back to the family: what doesn't have to do with family? There isn't anything, you know what I mean?

Even a love story has to do with family. Crime has to do with family. We all come out of each other – everyone is born out of a mother and a father and you go on to be a father. It's an endless cycle" (Bigsby 21). Family issues are intensely personal yet powerfully universal.

The dynamics of family is one of the oldest themes known to the stage. In Australian theatre also plays concerning the family are frequent and some of the greatest Australian dramatists are recognized for the plays that are centered on family life. Hannie Rayson, a Melbourne based playwright and one of leading playwrights of Australia, is no exception. Her works express a profound concern for the role of family in the Australian society. She has written a number of intense, intelligent and often witty family comedies, which engage with Australians 'sense of cultural isolation, Australian identity, the impact of "free market" policies on education, collision between rural and urban Australia, females 'perspective of looking things and callous political psychology of Australia. Play after play she delves into complexities of human relationships, emotional and moral decadence and growing materialism. The tension between tradition and modernity, individual and society, the margin and the centre are also explored in several of her plays. Her plays decry the wrongs in society. Rayson believes, "Theatre practitioners can show spectators the best and the worst of their own desires, beliefs and behaviour, with hope of challenging or changing them" (Hadley 111). Among her plays the best known are Room to Move (1985), Hotel Sorrento (1990), Falling from Grace (1994), Competitive Tenderness (1996), Life After George (2000), Inheritance (2003), Two Brothers (2005), The Swimming Club (2010) and Extinction (2013).

An acute awareness of social identity enables a dramatist to move from personal life and space to the larger issues important for a society. The present paper is an attempt to analyses Rayson's Hotel Sorrento and Inheritance to look at how both plays transcend the boundaries of time, space and acquire transnational appeal. Rayson's Inheritance (2003) is an assessment of the realities of Australian rural life and Australian character. It is story of two farming families, Dibs Hamilton's family and Girlie Delaney's family, who are twin sisters in their seventies. Dibs and her husband Farley inherited the family farm, Allendale and did well with it but now Dibs craves to sell it and wishes to move out to city. They have three children. Julia, the daughter is a divorcee from Hamish, and William, the son, lives in city with partner Kevin. Both Julia and William are well educated city dwellers and they display no responsibility towards their farm. The third one, Neville or so-

called Nugget is adopted Aboriginal son, who is loyal, tolerant and stoic. He successfully runs the farm and has close ties with it.

Garlie Dalaney, whose husband is dead, lives nearby on a small farm, with her son Lyle, who is a poor farmer and his wife Maureen. The family of Delaney is poor and less successful. The first part of the play incorporates the celebrations of the eightieth birthday of Girlie and Dibs and the gathering of family members. In the second part many anxieties erupt regarding the future of Dibs and Farley Hamilton's farm Allendale. Both Hamilton and Delaney struggle to acquire land. Inheritance is a "multi-generic" (Jo 75) family drama, with comic elements, but also tinged with tragedy. In it Rayson exhibits the dynamics of family – both for good and bad. She examines the way favouritism creates winners and losers: how anger kills relationships: the way grievances may be covered up for a time and how the sins of the fathers are passed down the generations. These issues presented in a wonderful piece of drama made it such a great success in the theatre as one critic observes, "I saw Inheritance on Monday and it was fantastic. I also saw One Day of the Year: The Way of the World and The Glass Menagerie and Inheritance wins by a mile" (Crofts 24).

Hotel Sorrento (1990), now turned into a film of the same name, portrays dilemmas, doubts, breaks, happiness, sadness and confusions among three Moynihan sisters. Sisters can experience great closeness, but when they fall out, the conflicts go deeper too. Hilary the elder one has stayed at a ramshackle house, which people call affectionately as "Hotel Sorrento", with her father, Wal Moynihan, who is a widower, and her memories and some bitter and unsolved conflicts. She is running a shop in the main street. The other two sisters have taken their memories with them and are leading successful careers in London and New York. Meg Moynihan is the middle one, who is a novelist and has been in London for ten years. She is married to Edwin Bates, who is a partner in a successful publishing firm in London. Meg has just been nominated for booker prize, for her autobiographical novel Melancholy, that is about her past in Sorrento. Pippa Moynihan is the youngest sister, currently living in New York. She is highly paid advertising executive.

After remaining away from each other for a long time, when they meet at their home in Sorrento, they are canopied by old memories and tragedies which coerced them to believe that for all of them life can never be the same. Hotel Sorrento gives an insight into the Australian family unit. In the play the family becomes a metaphor for Australia. Just as a family must look at itself in a new light from time to time, so much a nation. By providing glimpses into the tensions, differences,

loyalties and betrayals in a family Hotel Sorrento provides an intense emotional drama which simultaneously raises ethical and intellectual issues about loyalty, ownership, betrayal and truth etc. Through the intense unit of family Rayson is also able to raise larger issues of national identity very convincingly and effectively, equally highlighting the issue of ambivalence and unresolved conflicts in both the spheres.

Many of world's greatest plays, whether it be King Lear, The Doll's House or Death of a Salesman have a family at their centre. Inheritance and Hotel Sorrento successfully manage and spin around this universal theme i.e. family and its struggles. Hotel Sorrento portrays dissention within a family, whereas Inheritance exhibits clash between two kinds of rural families. Both plays display how economic pressures and changing social modes affect personal relationships in a family. The tensions among the family members are often the result of socio-economic factors. The extended family structure, whether it be classical extended family or modified extended family, as exhibited in both plays is much alike to Indian extended family structure. As in both plays, in rural parts of India the typical family unit consists of grand-parents, parents and a couple of children, with dad out working and mum staying at home looking after kids. Rural India and rural Australia have common pattern of inheritance of property. After the death of father family's property goes into mother's hands and after that to sons. In Inheritance William many times constrains his mother to sell the farm and to join city. But at the end of the play she transfers all the property to Lyle.

> DIBS: I've done it Girl! Here – look. All legal and proper. See? I've transferred the property to Lyle (95).

In India legally the daughters also have equivalent share in property but generally they refuse to take. In the play Julia craves to stay at Allendale because she is going to have a baby but she never demands her share in property.

With the passage of time both Indian and Australian family system has gone through a number of changes since the beginnings of industrialization, and it continues to change today. Some changes which have commonly been thought to have occurred are, remarriage, more births outside marriage (e.g. Julia in Inheritance is secretly pregnant to her Indian boyfriend and she wants to give birth to this baby at any cost), growth of Lone parent family (as Julia is living with her son Felix), rising divorce rate (Julia in Inheritance is a divorcee, Pippa in Hotel Sorrento is a divorcee), declining family size, more child centered, and emergence of nuclear families. Though in India these changes are very scarce as comparison to Australia but they occur scantly.

Inheritance descants the divisions between city and rural ways. It shows the degree of alienation between city life and rural ways. Exactly the same thing is happening in Himachal Pradesh as in rural Australia, i.e. the city-dwellers are becoming more educated, richer and resourceful while countryside is lagging behind, particularly economically. William and Julia in Inheritance who are educated and leading happy life in cities, are more successful than, Lyle the uneducated but hard-working farmer, cousin of William and Julia. Lyle is suffering economic hardship. Through the play Rayson represents power struggles of the ruling elite and the voiceless minority on a smaller scale. The Hamilton and Delaney families as a whole represent two major groups that make up a majority of Australian society: the bourgeoisie and the working class. The Hamiltons have private school and university education and the Delaneys work like dogs. The relationship between the two families is one of mutual contempt just like that which can exist between classes in Australia. The power struggle over the fate of the family farm provides a forum for the examination of power structures in contemporary Australian society.

William wants to sell the farm and forces his mother to do this. In Himachal Pradesh there are many counterparts like William who seek to abandon the rural ways for the cities ʾcomfort and for further education. They seek to improve opportunities and lifestyles. Many children of aging farmers have left agriculture as their occupation. Both in Himachal Pradesh and in rural Australia, push and pull factors are responsible for the migration of villagers to cities. People leave their place of residence due to poverty and lack of basic infrastructural facilities like health care, education. Cities attract people because of better job opportunities, availability of regular work, relatively higher wages, better opportunity for education, better health facilities and sources of entertainment etc. At the end of the play the death of Lyle symbolizes death of agriculture. Maureen sells the farm to get money to start her political career. This symbolizes those people who are selling their rural property to get hold in the city.

The rural setting constructed in Inheritance is a far cry from the bush life painted in the Australian literary canon. The characters and relationships reveal that life on a farm can be far from peaceful. For Fiona Roughley the play presents, “the cruel realities of bush and of being women in such an unforgiving and masculine environment” (19). People in the bush are presented as narrow-minded and intolerant to everything which does not suit their ways of life. The setting seems inhospitable not so much because of the harsh environment but rather due to the harsh attitudes of the people. The play depicts rural people as intolerant, for example, William lives with his partner Kevin and

his father essentially regards him as a trouble. The implication is that his sexual preferences are intolerable. His homosexuality is criticized by his father.

Theme of "ownership" in the play has universal application. Everyone wants to inherit something from one's ancestors. In second act of the play, tensions grow more, who will be the one to inherit the family property. The Hamiltons and Delaneys are divided and struggling in different ways to keep the land which should not be owned by any of them. In the play family relationships come into conflict as tensions between the generations erupt over the issue of inheritance. "The drama revolves around who will inherit the farm with an ending that is most unexpected, yet thoroughly appropriate" (Payne 16). Disloyalty and betrayal irrevocably damage relationships in Inheritance. Disloyalty to and betrayal of Nugget are at the heart of the family conflict. According to Martin Ball, "The perversion of Farley's will and denial of his illegitimate Aboriginal son's inheritance has a neat metaphor in the erosion of the High Court's Mabo judgement" (16). Disloyalty of a father towards one daughter makes her life miserable. The breakdown of relationships in the Hamilton and Delaney families reveals the devastating consequences of betrayal and disloyalty. But not everyone is disloyal in the play.

Hotel Sorrento, built around the reunion of three sisters, depicts a family in crisis. As Rayson herself points out "at the heart of the play is the family and the sisters" (A Sweet Pensive Sadness vii). The unfolding of family secrets and how they have poisoned the sisters 'relationship gives the play its momentum. Rayson's main concern in the play is the characters 'need to face the truth about themselves and the past. In the play sibling rivalry, family ties, affection and alienation, are recognizable in the Indian context. Sibling rivalry is the main crux of Hotel Sorrento. In the play when three sisters get united in Act II, then feelings of hostility start emerging. The news of Meg's arrival after ten years from London bestows no solace to Hilary and Pippa. When three sisters encounter each other than initially they share their past memories but later on things start turning. Three sisters feel uneasy in each other's presence:

> PIPPA: I want what Hilary wants. And since she's the one who's made the sacrifice.
>
> MEG: Please don't tell me about Hilary's sacrifice. She is the one who made the choice. Hilary. You made the choice.
>
> PIPPA: There was no other choice.

MEG: She made the choice (58).

The conversation among three sisters ratifies "People coming together… reconciling their differences. It doesn't always happen" (55).

While family relationships can bring support, joy and other wonderful benefits into one's life, these relationships can also bring stress, particularly when there are unresolved conflicts. It is more difficult to let go of conflicts within the family. Edwin tells Meg that things have changed in ten years and thus everyone has changed also. To this Meg replies, "No. They haven't. That's just it. It's like there's this highly elasticized thread that's tied around us three and it stretches from Australia to Britain and to the states and all of a sudden it's just given out and thwack we're flung back together again" (51). But Meg knows that the unresolved conflicts among the sisters are so big that time cannot heal them. So the family reunion is an uneasy one. Hilary feels overshadowed by her successful sisters and now she is planning to sell her father's house and wants to move away. Pippa feels overshadowed by Meg's presence, while Meg feels reprimanded and underappreciated and feels ignored. All these feelings among siblings are universal and could be seen anywhere among human beings.

In the play illicit love affairs also cause confusion, strife and hostility among three sisters. In scene twelve of Act II Meg unveils the secret which was under mask for last ten years, that she was in love with Gray, Hilary's husband when he was alive but Gray developed an affair with Pippa. This was/is the main cause of conflict among three sisters. Generally everywhere this type of illicit love affairs engender a family feud. Sisters hesitate to share these feelings with each other and it fabricates a lot of confusions among them. Family institutions are strong in India and this type of incidents rarely happen but rather they are not improbable. So complexity in dealing with human emotions has universal connotation.

Family can be defined as a group or related people who are dependent on one another by trust and loyalty. However the Moynihan family is so broken in terms of trust and loyalty that it almost ceases to exist, as Hilary says, "What family? What family are you talking about? There is no family anymore" (86). The family is torn by the past which none of the family members were

brave enough to speak about until curious Troy pushes the limit. The sisters remain unsuccessful in resolving their conflicts and differences.

The fragmentation of the family unit is completed with the sale of the family home. The play ends with the voice of an Auctioneer selling 'Hotel Sorrento'.

> AUCTIONEER. [Voice over] Ladies and gentlemen… with this beautiful location the possibilities are endless. Holiday flats, guest houses, even a luxury hotel. What a beautiful site for a hotel. Ladies and gentlemen, I offer your number one Ti-tree Road Sorrento. Who'd like to give me a reasonable offer? (88)

So the family disintegrates at the end because the sisters are divided by simmering family resentments. Each sister is ready to face the future separately. Communication and sharing are missing in Moynihan family. The unspoken feelings are so dominant, the bitterness among three sisters so thick that any effective communication is blocked. The bond among the sisters is full of distrust, betrayal and suspicion.

The situation in Hotel Sorrento echoes Louis Nowra's Radiance (1993) which is also about the reunion of three sisters, Mae, Cressy and Nona. These Aboriginal three sisters come together for their mother's funeral. In Radiance also the theme of secrets and lies dominates as each sister reveals a secret that she has kept hidden all her life and, in the process, uncovers the lies that have been told to conceal these secrets. Both the play focus on the need to retrieve the past—both at personal and national level for an integrated self and integrated nation through understanding, bonding and faith. However unlike Hotel Sorrento, Radiance offers a happy reunion of the family as each of the sisters discovers that like their mother, they all have victims of racist prejudices of white Australians.

Another universal issue in Hotel Sorrento is the theme of love. Bruce Bennett says, "Unfulfilled love, broken memories and desire for completion are universal qualities which can be most fully explored in the local and particular circumstances of individuals in their moments of aloneness" (133). This is fully applicable to Hotel Sorrento. Moreover the universal theme of love has occurred in many dramatic productions, be it not only the ability to love, the human need to love, but also the lack of love in humanity, and the presence of conditional love. Meg loved Gray and this remained unfulfilled:

> MEG: No, he wasn't my husband. But I loved him.

That's what you don't understand. I loved him too (52).

Hilary gets infatuated with Edwin. Pippa and Gray too had an affair. All characters in the play suffer "an Australian's inability to express passion" (Mellor xiii). Wal loves his three daughters but cannot tell them. Meg loves Gray but never admitted it. Equally Gray was quite infatuated with Meg, as Meg says but he never told this to Meg. So, inability to express emotions is a universal quality among humans.

In the play "meg suffers the conflicting emotions of a love hate relationship with her country and family… Ironically, the country she has refused to live in for ten years is also the life source of her work" (Mellor xii) Hilary's character in the play substantiates the role of women in India. In Australian as well as in Indian societies women still perform the majority of domestic and child tasks around the home, even when they have paid jobs themselves. Cooking the evening meal, household cleansing, washing and ironing and caring for sick family members are still mainly performed by women. Hilary in the play does all these things.

The play ends at a dolorous note and the family is ready to face the future. At the end of the play Meg asserts,

> D 'you know why I came home? Because I wanted to see if I could fit into this family again. I wanted to see if the three of us could be together. I want to know now, whether you two think it's possible?
>
> [Silence]
>
> You'll never forgive me, will you, for writing about something that we couldn't talk about (87).

All the emotions involved in the play are "painfully strong, very recognizable and have universal relevance" (Mellor xii). Tara Morice who played the role of Pippa in the play states, "Hotel Sorrento will probably appeal to everybody who has a family even if you don't have sisters. We all experience breaks, confusions, dilemmas, doubts, happiness and sadness" (Mellor xiii).

Rayson's art of characterization gives her plays again a universal quality. Her men and women are true to the eternal facts of human life and not merely superficial study of contemporary society. Her characters are round characters, and are full of contradictions – strengths and failings. Rayson's use of some Indian names like 'Amitab 'and her use of some Hindi words like 'Pundit Ji Maharaj', 'Pyjamas', 'Veranda 'are sufficient to captivate any Indian reader. The condition of literature being timeless means that it can be applied to different contexts and situations. In nutshell both the plays easily transcend the boundaries of time and space and acquire universal outlook. The plays allow the readers to relate to the characters and their struggles.

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Revisiting the Timeless Folklore of Chamba

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Abstract

Folklore reflects human experiences by and large through folk songs and dances, art and architecture, legends, paintings, poetry, riddles and children's songs etc. The permanence of the Folklore of any country, community or tribe can be analyzed in its universal themes of love, hate, revenge, morality, ethics, sacrifice and honesty with respect to conditioning of time and space. Folklore of District Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, is a phenomenal amalgamation of the vernaculars: Pangwali, Gaddi, Dogri, Pahari and Churahi that weave human experiences to form a phenomenally different fabric of culture and history in the country.

The paper discusses the intensity of passionate love, cult of human sacrifice, gender, environmental concerns and other social and cultural dimensions in the selected legends and folk songs of Chamba accentuating its timelessness. The famous legends and perennial folksongs and ballads, particularly Kunju Chanchlo, Sunni Bhunku, Queen Sunaina, and Fulmo Ranjho would be the centre of deliberation. The paper on the one hand brings out the permanence and universality of Chambiali folklore in shaping and protecting the history and cultural identity of the natives and the need of its exploration and maintenance in globalised world on the other.

Chamba is hemmed in by Jammu and Kashmir, including Ladakh, on the North West, by district Kangra of Himachal Pradesh on the southeast , and by Gurdaspur district of Punjab on the south. Because of its altitude, ranging from 2,000 to 21,000 feet above sea level and physical inaccessibility with difficult terrain, the territory remained largely insulated from the socio-political life of the country. Consequently, fewer studies were carried on the region that was nurtured by the Ravi and its tributaries and ruled by many monarchs and feudal since centuries. Not much was known about the land and the people except what was written in the diaries of some British explorers or in the reports of some enterprising divisional commissioners of the then British Raj. It was the western gaze that made a way of carrying out the studies to explore its past in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The region has a pre-Aryan history of settlement. It is believed that Kolis, Halis, Dums, and Chanals inhabited the western Himalayas, who later were dominated by either some branches of

Aryans or people from the Gangetic plains who entered the hills during the mediaeval period. The monarchical history of the Chamba state possesses a remarkable series of inscriptions, mostly in copper plates, from which its chronicles have been completed and authenticated. Founded probably in the sixth century by Marut, a Suryabansi Rajput, who built Brahmpura, the modern Bharmour town, Chamba was extended by Meru Verma in 680 and the town of Chamba built by Sahil Verma about 920. As mentioned in Imperial Gazetteer of India, "The state maintains its independence, acknowledging at times a nominal submission to Kashmir until the Mughals conquest of India. Under the Mughals it became tributary to the empire, but its internal administration was not interfered with…The state first came under British influence in 1846" (130).

The social, political and cultural history of Chamba is found in the insight of stories, legends, songs and drama or customs which reflect conditions of life in that particular time in which they were formulated. The historical treasure of the folklore of Chamba state came into lime light when it captured the gaze of western historian: archeologist and scholar of Sanskrit, Dr. Sir Jean Phillip Vogel, a Dutchman who later became Indian, when his book The Antiquities of Chamba State Parts I and II was published in 1911. The historical Bhuri Singh Museum of district Chamba was founded by Sir Phillip and Raja Bhuri Singh in 1908. When the first seminar titled, History and Culture of Chamba State was organized by Himachal Pradesh government in Bhuri Singh Museum on 26th September, 1983, the key note speaker Karl J. Khandalavala, a famous historian, had a wonderful reason to explain the history of Chamba through its folklore. He states, "The history of Chamba state abounds in legends and there are two sorrowful tales with this town" (10). The first tale belongs to the Sahil Varman's daughter Champavati who was taken away by divine spirit for ever as retribution because the king suspects the chastity of a pure minded maiden. But the paper details the second tale that belongs to the historical figure and the legendry heroine of Chamba state queen Sunaina.

The legend of queen Sunaina narrates the story of the shifting of the old capital of the state to the newly founded one i.e. from Bharmour to Chamba in the tenth century. The new capital, it is said to have dearth of water and the King, Sahil Verman, decreed to construct a water channel from a nearby stream. But the water refused to enter the newly built channel. The channel appeared in the dream of the king in form of a spirit prophesying that it needs human sacrifice from the royal family if the king wanted water in the capital. The story is deeply embedded in the folk songs of

the district. In fact, in the traditional folk song of Chamba, called Dholaru, which is usually sung in the month of March on the beginning of New Year, according to Indian calendar, by the local folk singers, the sacrifice of the queen is commemorated by and large by them moving house to house:

Kuhal supne ayi ho ranya jo
Kuhal supne ayi na!
Kuhal ke glandi oh bhayio
Badiyan baliyan mai leni na!

Kuhal appeared in the dream of king
Kuhal appeared in his dream!
Oh brothers! What the kuhal utters is
Human sacrifice!

The legend further describes that when the king woke up he immediately consulted the dream with Brahmins. The Brahmins uttered that there is no other alternate than to appease the divine power with a member from the royal family. After deep contemplation the daughter-in-law of the king was selected for the sacrifice. It is said that she was at her parents 'home during the incident. The king immediately wrote a letter to his daughter-in-law, in form of a royal decree, expecting her immediate arrival at the royal palace. She reads the letter in the light of the stars and gets ready to go to her in-laws. When her parents appealed her to stay on, she replies:

Sasu da likhya hunda ta modi mai dindi
Soure da likhya mai kiyan modan!

I would ignore the call of mother-in-law
But how could I ignore the call of father-in-law?

When the queen reached the royal palace she was taken away with maidens to where the water course joined the main stream. A grave was dug for her and she was entombed alive. No sooner the grave was filled with earth then the water started flowing through the channel. After that this water, for the inhabitants of Chamba, never ceased to flow. The sacrifice of the queen is commemorated each year in form of 'Sui Fair'. The legend unravels the historical positioning of

women of the royal palace where feministic stance of the folklore cannot be side lined. The folk song subtly unearths the patriarchal structuring of woman where a king was considered next to God, but for as far as the concept of appeasing the spirit for public welfare it was woman whose life was supposed to be put on the stake. The king neither sacrificed himself nor his wife and son but the daughter-in-law who genetically didn't belong to his family. The folklore in form of the legend of queen Sunaina on the one hand exposes the experiences of individuals, particularly of women, and the dark phase of human sacrifice on the other. "Such sacrifices", says historian Khandalavala, were not unknown in those for off days when the divine powers were believed to speak through the mouths of priesthood leading in extreme cases even to sacrifice of human life"(10).

Besides the legend of queen Sunaina of tenth century B.C. the paper discusses how the kings of the Chamba state has been portrayed in the folklore emerged in the l8th and 19th centuries. These songs are Raja Tere Gorkhiyan ne Lutya Pahad , and Chhimbi Paniyan jo Challi. The first song is a kind of complaint against the Gorkha army of the king:

Raja tere Gorakheyan ne lutya pahad
Raja tere Gorakheyan ne lutya pahad
Lutya pahad te gori de mathe da shingar
Tisa lutya Berra lutya Bhandal Kihar
Sohani Sohani gadna lutiyan
Chanju de Churana lutiyan
Luti Pangi Dhar
Raja tere Gorakheyan ne lutya pahad

Raja, your Gorkhas have looted the hills
Raja, your Gorkhas have looted the hills
Hills are looted along with the charm of a blonds 'forehead
Tissa, Berra, Bhandal and Kihar have been looted
Beautiful Gaddhans (girls of Gaddi community) are looted
Churhens (girls of Churah region) are looted
And Pangi valley is also looted.

The folk song subtly exposes the corruption and sexual harassment of native women by the Gorkha army of Chamba state. Historically, it is fact that many Gorkhas had been employed in the royal army to protect state from external invasions. However, in the mainstream history Gorkhas have been entitled as fearless and robust warriors but the folklore portrays them otherwise.

The folk song Chhimbi Paniyen jo gayi is based on the legendry story of a lower caste maiden Chhimbi. The king fell in love with Chhimbi during one of his hunting tours and brought her to the royal palace where she was killed by other queens for her lower caste status.

Dalpat dalpat ho chhimbi paani jo gayi
Terede so Chhimbi Paani Jo gayi

Through pedestrian Chhimbi went to fetch water
O really Chhimbi went to fetch water

The song narrates the dialogues exchanged between Chhimbi and the king. In the entire song the king praises the each part of her body and she in the entire episode urges that she belongs to the unacceptable Chhimbi caste.

Raja: Paira sohane issa Chhimbi de ho
Jian sunne di khadwan
(Chhimbi has beautiful feet
Like golden foot wares)
Chhimbi: Paira heri mat bhule raja
Mai ta jatti ri Chhimbi
(O king please don't praise my feet
I belong to lower caste Chhimbi)…
Chhimbi jo babru khawaye bhaiyo
Chhimbi maari mukayi ho
(O brothers! Chhimbi was given poisonous babru
And she was killed).

The folk song of Chhimbi expresses the khawayis, amorous nature, of the kings. The Khawaas is a typical chambiyaali word which is used for a woman who was considered as an object to be consumed by the king. There are myriad of anecdotes portraying how the king along with his Wajirs (ministers) used to visit Tissa, Churah, Bairagarh, and Bhandal regions for hunting trips. These royal trips have been written in the history of Chamba as the saga of the adventures of

Maharaja. But the folklore records these trips with entirely separate perspectives. In these regions of king's choice the small royal colonies were constructed and on the royal decree and the beautiful maidens of nearby villages were brought before the kings and other ministers to be selected as Khwaas for them. In this way, the word Khwaas came into the domain of society for those selected maidens who were supposed to spend nights with the king and his courtiers. The folk song Chhimbi Paaniyan Ki Geyi is based on the concept of Khawaas. But the song portrays the terrible story of a maiden who unfortunately belongs to the lower caste called Chhimbi.

The folklore of Chamba is rich and extensive with variegated songs and dances where distinctive life style of people is reflected by and large. It presents the kaleidoscope of mesmerizing love songs, hymns dedicated to god Shiva, Gaddhi, Churahi, and Pangwali Natti and distinctive music which fascinates the visitors and tourists to dance and sing. A large variety of musical instruments is used in the countryside. Their charismatically rich music has a phenomenal individuality, tradition, and exotic flavor that attract attention of scholars and tourists. The devotion for God Shiva is deeply rooted in the culture of the district. These hymns are sung during Manimehesh Yatra (Pilgrimage to Manimahesh Lake). The lines from the main hymn "Shiv kailason ke vaasi dhouli dharon ke raja…" invigorates new energy among the devotees while they climb the hills to reach the lake:

Shiv Kailashon ke baasi dhaoli dharon ke Raja
Shankar shankat harna
Mere sami Shankar shankat harna!

Dweller of Kailash and King of Dhauli Range
Shankar, wear the troubles away
My Lord Shankar, wear the troubles away!

Love songs, elegies, melancholy, passion and sacrifices in love are the fundamental features of the folk songs of the region. Folksongs of Chamba are the living sources to understand the mind and heart of the people. There are songs full of the narratives of the individual's longings for their lovers and beloved and of their separation many a times due to dissimilar caste and class. These songs unravels the socio-cultural perspectives of the existing system where marriages and love makings outside the socially permitted domains were not acceptable. Many folk songs have been

evolved out of the unsuccessful love stories where social and cultural taboos of the society appear as one of the chief reasons. Two famous folk songs of the regions Kunju-Chanclo, and Fulmu-Ranjhu have been evolved out of the complexity of the relations between the individual and society. These love stories generally deals with the passionate love of two pairs whose love is impeded by the social norms of the time. In both the legendry stories Kunju and Ranjhu were the sons of upper castes prosperous landowners. But the heroines of these stories belonged to very poor background so as per the social norms these girls were not suitable matches for Kunju and Ranjhu.

The story of Kunju and Chanchlo reveals the selfless nature of love. With her poor family background Chanchlo is a dark complexioned girl and the entire social system was against the lovers. It is said that in order to prevent the couple's regular meeting Kunju's mother sent him to his maternal uncle's home from where he joined the army. When he came back Chanchlo was forcibly married to someone else by her parents to avoid the social criticism. When Kunju knew this he became heartbroken and left home for ever. Their legendry love story is embedded in the cultural history of the region and the folk song is sung in the entire state of Himachal and equally famous in some parts of Punjab and Haryana. It is a narrative song where broken heart lovers exchange dialogs:

Chanchlo: Kapde dhoan chham chham roan Kunjua
Witch button nishani ho haye meriye jinde
Witch button nishani ho

Kunju: Buttona ra gam na tu kare Chanchlo
Chambe Chandi bahutera ho
O meriye jinde Chambe chandi bahuteta ho

Chanchlo: Washing clothes, I burst into tears Kunju
Here a button is found as symbol of love
O my love! a button is found as a symbol of love.

Kunju: Don't care about button there is a lot silver in Chamba
O my love! There is a lot of silver in Chamba

Chanchlo: Rati o brati mat inda Kunjua

Verry bhariyan bandukan ho
Verryan dag gam na tu kare Chanchlo
Kunju kallah butera ho

Kunju: Don't visit me at night Kunju
The enemies have loaded their guns
Don't care of the enemies
Kunju alone is enough for them

The song itself delineates that how people were against their love affair because it was against norms of the existing norms of the society.

The folk song of Fulmu Ranjhu narrates the similar tragic love story of the Fulmu and Ranjhu. Fulmu and Ranjhu belonged to the same village. Their hidden meetings and love affair could not be digested by the society and Ranjhu's prosperous upper class father forcibly arranged the marriage of his son with the girl of his equal status. But the heartbroken Fulmo died, of the grief of separation, on the same day of the marriage of Ranjhu. When the procession of marriage is on its way, Ranjhu saw that a group of people going to cremate a dead body. Being informed about Fulmo's death, he immediately stopped the procession and went to the spot of cremation and wept a lot on not taking the stand against the social norms. The song is a beautifully woven where the painful condition of a maiden has been portrayed:

Baaduye ssubaduye tu kajo jhankadi
Jhak kajo mardi
Do hath butane de layan Fulmo
Gallan hoyi bitiyan

Why are you watching towards fields and farms?
Don't be puzzled
Just offer him two fists of Butna,
Things are over now.

The lines indicate the perplexity and emotional situation of a girl whose lover is being made ready to marry other girl. Similarly, the position of people is visible how they are spreading salt on

wounds, saying that she should go to offer her lover Butana a substance which is rubbed on the face and body of one who is going to be ready for getting married.

Kuni ta prohote tera viya padeya
Kuni ta kiti kudmai Ranjho
Gala kiyan bitiyan

Which priest decided your marriage?
Ranhju, who has decided your marriage?
Who made it finalized?
How things are over?

The questions posed by Fulmo are in fact is the voice of those who were considered to be silent against the set rules of society. She protests against the society and chooses death, making a new path for the coming generation. In this sense, the essence of folklore could be understood as Dr. Kishore Jadav opines, "…folklore arises from the people, the folk, is the expression of protests and outrage against the exploiting nobles and landowners"(28-29).

The folklore of Chamba involves nature in human activities that not only conjuncts the public with nature but also offers a step towards sustainable development keeping ecological balance ahead. The folklore of Chamba in this way ensures the concept of sustainable development involving all the components from human beings and animals to vegetation and other non-living things by and large. Vulnerable issues of present worlds like the involvement of nature in human affairs, environment conservation and animal protection are sensibly visible in folk songs of Chamba viz. Gudke chamke ho bhaua megha, Sur-Surangani nawan dam baneya, and Mere Chakru jo tole mat landa ho respectively.

Gudke chamke ho bhaua megha ho
Ho bare Chambiyala re dessa ho
Kiyan chamka kiyan gudkan ho!
Ho Ambar bharora ghane tare ho.
Chhoti Surangani te bara dam banya
Kahuri Kuhari ra maidan banya.

With lightening and thundering

O! Brother cloud
Shower on the land of Chambiyals!
How can I shower and lighten
Oh! the sky is clear and full of stars!

The lines depict the direct conversation with cloud appealing it to shower on the land of Chamba. Here cloud expresses his inaccessibility of raining due to the unconditional environment of showering, stating that it cannot perform its duty with a starry sky.

Chhoti-Surangani badda dam baneya is a folk song of Salooni region where a dam was constructed in the 1970s on the rivers Baira –Siul, tributaries of Ravi. The song portrays the tension of natives regarding the imbalance of the environment when large numbers of Kahu (a native tree) forests were cut down during the construction of Surangani dam. The first two lines of the song remind the people about the environmental disturbance caused during the construction of the dam:

Chhoti-Surangani badda dam baneya
Kahuweri kuhadi ra maidan baniyan

Surangani is smaller and the dam is bigger
Forest of Kahu is converted into plain

Mere Chakru jo tole mat landa is a song on the partition of India. It reflects the situation of the people of hill who emerged during the partition. The narrative of the song is a sort of warning to those people who were breaking the centuries-old fraternity of Hindu and Muslim by killing Muslims, particularly Gujjars in the hills. In the song, it is clear indication to the fanatic people that don't disturb the Chakru, a regional bird, the symbolizing the peaceful ecology of hills.

Mere Chakru jo tole mat landa ho
Mi ta paali na katore tere so

Don't throw stones on my birds
We have nurtured them carefully

Apart from folk songs the living folklore in terms of painting has long and rich history in the region with variegated lifestyles of royal families, god and goddesses, natural panorama and

picaresque tales is another domain that needs to be focused. The sources say that the hill painting is the amalgamation of Rajput, Mughal, and Pursian paintings by and large. M. S. Randhawa, one of the scholars of Pahari paintings, opines in his article "A Review of Studies in Pahari Paintings" that: "under the Patronage of Akbar there was a true cultural cross-fertilization between the Persian technique and Indian tradition, and a style of painting known as Mughal, which is truly Indian in spirit evolved. Mughal painting influenced Rajput painting, which developed under the patronage of the Rajput princes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From the middle of the seventeenth century to the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Punjab Hill States nurtured the art of painting, marked by a lyrical style full of rhythm, grace and beauty"(35). Many scholars have meticulously studied the content and approach of Pahari paintings along with trends and periods of its progression. Presently Vijay Sharma, honored by the Government of India in 2012, with civilian award of Padma Shri, and director of Bhuri Singh museum has immensely contributed to the genre casting light on the historical evolution of Pahari paintings. His immense contribution to the genre establishes new attractions and scopes for the timeless folklore of the region. The unique folk art and crafts is the pillar of the culture heritage of the district that exposes the creativity level of a community or nation. The pictorial handicraft of Chamba rumal is a masterpiece with its charismatic embroidery that differentiates it from the different types of embroideries in India and abroad. Vijay Sharma in "Chamba Rumal: An Embroidered Vision" states "Chamba Kasidkari or the craft of 'do-rukha' embroidery popularly known as 'Chamba rumal 'originated and developed in Chamba, an erstwhile princely hill state in the northwestern Himalayas."(81). Presently, the folk arts and crafts of Chamba are not the only a source of employment for the natives but also are the centre of attraction for worldwide tourists. The recipient of National Award Smt. Lalita Vakil and Kamla Nayar are the famous embroider who have contributed a lot to continue the legacy of embroidery in the district.

Folklore of Chamba represents the manifold layers of the journey of human experiences from monarchy and feudalism to democracy through folk songs, legends, dances, painting, riddles, art and architecture. It serves the historical record of the individuals as well as the collective action of the common people under the established instructions of caste, class and gender, declaring them real heroes and heroines of the community. The people of Chamba have nurtured a fascinating culture. It gives reverence for all life bringing us closer to the elemental forces that sustain life on the earth. The study of the folklore of Chamba has environmental, gender, and psychological concerns, and much needs to be done in this area through research. It has an essential function in changing society as it instills sensitivity, honesty and human values among the mass. In the present

world social anthropology, literary criticism, popular culture, and eco-criticism offer many analytical tools to analyze the oral narratives that could be applied to analyze and document the making of the folklore of Chamba, and to understand the historical and political process of social change in the hill community.

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Interrogating the Politics of Canon Formation: A Theoretical Purview

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Abstract

The term ‘canon ’is Greek in origin and signifies a “standard” or “measuring rod” (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). It designates a set of rules and also denotes a body of writing that is considered to be authentic. In English literature, ‘canon ’initially referred to biblical writings authenticated by church authorities as genuine but later also included the works of select authors and validated selectively by critics. The proposed paper interrogates the European notion of “literary canon” as proposed by critics like Harold Bloom, which instead of counter arguing the approach adopted in the formation of “biblical canon,” follows more or less a similar path of exclusion. The paper also seeks to question the politics of canon formation via challenging its universalist dimension and thereby exposing its particularist aspect. An attempt will also be made to unravel the prejudices, biases, and predilections behind the accumulative consensus of critics. To broaden the ambit of discussion on canon formation, the ideas of thinkers such as Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot, Harold Bloom, Wendell V. Harris, John Guillory, and Michel Foucault shall be availed of. To counter the exclusionary stance vis-a-vis canon formation, an alternative extensional and inclusive approach as proposed by Earl R. Anderson and Gianfrancesco Zanetti will be pressed into service.

Keywords: Canon, discourse, marginalization, Eurocentrism, and literature.

The word ‘canon ’has gained wide currency in contemporary literary discussions and debates. These debates have also raised controversy over literary canon. Although the question of politics involved in canon formation has caught little scholarly attention, yet arguments pertaining to the creation of already existing canon are taken up for discussion quite frequently. Moreover, our contemporary understanding of canon formation contradicts the traditional views that led to canon formation in the past.

Brief Historical Overview of the Term

After Christianity's arrival, the Greek word canon was extended to denote a list of Holy Scriptures (Bible and New Testament) that were authenticated by church authorities as genuine. The markers adopted by authorities to authenticate writings remain unknown. Kilian McDonnell highlights 'Koinonia 'as the standard adopted in the formation of 'biblical canon 'and claims, "The process of determining the canon of the scriptures was a process of the self-identification of the *koinonia,* though the primary goal was the preservation of the gospel" (29). Moreover, koinonia, the experience of salvation conjoining the Christ and the Spirit, incorporates "relationality" among scriptures and people (as it demands the active participation of the communities for whom these writings were intended), further shows "the participation in one reality held in common" (McDonnell 29). But it also displays the problem with standards that led to the politics of exclusion. By including only select writings and ignoring the others makes 'biblical canon 'a close entity that does not provide any space for that are ignored.

Opposite to the authoritative biblical canon are the works termed 'apocrypha': works that are considered invalid according to certain standards. McDonnell considers "oral tradition" as another marker for "distinguishing between books which would be acceptable as scriptures", meanwhile *Acts of Paul* is rejected "because they teach that women can baptize" which was "opposite to the liturgical practice of the church" (38, 47). Consequently, the formation of 'biblical canon 'is not based on certain criteria, rather it also exposes the biases involved in canon formation. Similarly, books that were authenticated in the Roman Catholic biblical canon were considered apocryphal by Protestants (Abrams 28).

The term literary canon is sometimes used interchangeably for classic. It designates those authors, who with accumulative consensus of critics, scholars, and academicians have considered as major, and their works as classics. These literary works achieved the status of "major" as they are discussed fully by literary critics, most kept in print, and included in anthologies and syllabi of literary courses. John Guillory, instead of taking interchangeable interpretation of two terms considers "canon" as a displacement of the word "classic." He claims:

> The latter term (canon) does not now signify the same relatively uncritical regard for the great works of Western literature as its predecessor (classic), but rather a critique of the very regard, a critique that has all but retired the word "classic" as the signifier of a practical era of criticism (Guillory 36).

The word classic has established as the signifier of the practical era of criticism through the writing of critics like Samuel Johnson, who in his "Preface to Shakespeare" considers "Shakespeare canon" as classic because it has outlived his "century", the term "commonly fixed as a test of literary merit" (3). Moreover, Matthew Arnold's concept of "touchstone" in his "The Study of Poetry" has similar implications. He considered Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton as classic (great) writers, as select passages of their writings can serve to evaluate the literary merit of other writings when compared (Abrams 321).

Binarism in Canon Formation

It is not only authoritatively sanctioned works i.e., canonical and the works that are rejected, i.e. apocryphal, present on binary construction, but the very term 'canon 'also has binarism in its praxis. The use of the term 'canon 'first for biblical text and then for literary writings reflects binary opposition. The praxis of the term with reference to both biblical and literary writings obliterates the essential difference between the two. Biblical canon, vested with authoritative power to sanction restriction, is a confining construction that allows neither addition nor deletion. On the contrary, the literary canon is loose in boundaries, suggestive rather than explicit, and always open for inclusions, and thus subject to change when needed (Abrams 29).

Consequently, the Eurocentric notion of making select text prominent (center) marginalize those are rejected to the periphery. This idea is intrinsic to binary opposition, where one aspect remains at the center and other marginalized. Moreover, the binary opposition is not limited to biblical/literary distinction. Even the 'literary canon 'contains binarism, as it is intrinsic to the term 'canon. 'Furthermore, it highlights the politics involved in canon formation via exposing the standards followed for inclusion and exclusion.

Accordingly, the binary present in the canon is double-edged. It exposes the standards of exclusion. The literary canon is challenged for being male-centered and patriarchal that excludes women's writings. But even the formation of female literary canon shows similar prejudices, and by making some writings the center, it excludes other writings and transgender as marginal.

Process of Canon Formation

Canon formation is a social and literary process through which any literary work or writer is designated as canonical. The process involves diverse viewpoints from scholars, critics, and authors to form an accumulative consensus for the assignment of authors and texts in school, college, and university curricula. Canon formation involves several other factors that designate politics involved in the process. Zepetnek claims that "canonization is a cumulative process, involving the text, its reading, readership, literary history, criticism, publication mechanism (i.e., sales of books, library use, etc.), politics, etc." (109). Building his arguments with reference to the postulations of thinkers like John Guillory and Jan Gorak, he contests readership as a prominent marker involved in canon formation. Moreover, these factors are visible while discussing canon formation.

Canon formation is sometimes considered indistinguishable from identity formation. Such views concern with ideological predilection and power relations involved in the process. Silvia Schultermandl condemns the polarization of American literary canon through institutionalization of multiculturalism, which accords "ethnicity" with the status of generic other (288). Stretching the ideas proposed by Guillory, who considered canon primarily as a "political act" and the "representative of a social identity," Schultermandl postulates that "Canon formation is an applied field of identity politics because there is an inherent link between canon formation and national identity" (Guillory 37: Schultermandl 289). Such critiques of canon formation reasonably argue that the process of inclusion is simultaneously a process of exclusion. Even the literary canon that is claimed to be subjective, borderless, and inclusive is not independent from the biases and prejudices involved in its creation.

Proclamations about the inclusive and universal nature of literary canon are contestable because Eurocentric. Eurocentric assumptions of forming literary canon follow more or less a similar path of exclusion. The formation of literary canon as an exclusive phenomenon resembles the methods adopted in the formation of the biblical canon, is exemplified by Harold Bloom in his defense of Western literary canon. Whether he questions the replacement of "world tradition" with that of "western tradition": which shows the monopoly of biblical canon, the selection of writers in the book does not justify his claims to make the canon universal (Bloom 15). Rather, the selection reveals its particularist aspect as he considers Shakespeare at the center of western canon and selects twenty-six other writers on the basis of an ongoing inspiration of Shakespeare's writings.

Bloom considers "aesthetic supremacy" and "originality" as the only markers of being canonical and attacks the values of literature proposed by members of "School of Resentment":

> Originality becomes a literary equivalent of such terms as individual enterprise, self-reliance, and competition, which do not gladden the hearts of Feminists, Afrocentrists, Marxists, Foucault-inspired New Historicists, or Deconstructors – of all those whom I have described as members of the School of Resentment (20).

Whom Bloom portrays as "members of the School of Resentment", have questioned the nature of canon formation. These diverse critics, whether Feminists, Marxists, or deconstructive, have opposed the established western literary canon via exposing the biases and politics involved in its formation.

Mary Ellen Waithe highlights such biases while discussing the wrongful omission of women from the English-language canon of philosophy. She proposes few criteria to judge the philosophical merits of women writing, with a view to expand the present canon of philosophy so that it can include the perspective of minority and indigenous people. By proposing an extensional approach of canon formation she claims, "More than one hundred women philosophers satisfy one or more of these criteria" (Waithe 31). Moreover, the process of canon formation is contestable as it encompasses ideological biases, political affiliations, and the values of elite European white male. Consequently, the power politics involves to marginalize and exclude the interests of minorities.

Revisionist Thought on Canon Formation

There is a much ongoing debates between the challengers and defenders of traditional standard canon. Defenders of traditional canon argues for the high artistic and intellectual quality of canonical works, their aesthetic power, and appeal to widely shared human concerns and values. Challengers, on the contrary, aims to transform existing power structures via not merely opening but replacing standard canon by marginalized and excluded. Revisionists without taking any stand with defenders or challengers, re-vision to investigate historical, material, and institutional processes that construct the literary canon. Revisionist thought is evident in views presented by Barbara Herrnstein Smith and Richard Ohmann.

Barbara Herrnstein Smith in a similar fashion to Harold Bloom contest for the traditional aesthetic values for canon formation. But she goes a step further and examines the process through which artistic value is granted. Her views concern with what she termed as "aesthetic axiology", and highlights general logic of categories such as "value," "aesthetic," and "taste." Rather than seeing these categories as static, she portrays them as dynamic and further "contingent." These categories according to her are universal but not static, as they involve complex social processes in their creation. She claims:

> The specific "existence" of an object or event (literary work), its integrity, coherence, and boundaries, the category of entities to which it "belongs," and its specific "features," "qualities," or "properties" are all the variable products of the subject's engagement with his or her environment under a particular set of conditions (Vincent B. et al. 1914).

She postulates that "art" has a purpose to shape human relation to it, and interrogates the dynamic nature of this relation (based on value, taste, and aesthetic pleasure) as "contingent," because the interaction constantly changes and cannot be known in advance.

Discussions on canon formation are dominated by established standards of literary evaluation based on autonomous artistic merits. The revisionist approach, as presented by Smith, contradicts such established standards and inspects those institutions that are considered peripheral in the discussion of literary merits. Richard Ohmann revisions the process of canon formation in the context of American fiction via focusing on aspects of distribution and marketing. He contests that attributes like editing, marketing, advertising, and reviewing make complex institutional channels that determine the reception of books in the market, consequently "preselect" works as "precanonical." He validates the role of advertising for "aesthetic judgment" that is inflected by capitalist criteria. He further claims, "if a novel did not become a best-seller within three or four weeks of publication, it was unlikely to reach a large readership later on" (Vincent B. et al. 1882). Accordingly, the aesthetic judgment does not merely contain artistic value, rather it shapes modern capitalist class division. The common working class (literary agents, editors, critics, reviewers, taste-making intellectuals, professors, students, etc.), people having literary social affinities, influences more to determine literary merit, but have a "marginal position with respect to capital"

from that of "ruling class" (intellectuals who manage class affairs and its institution (writers)) (Vincent B. et al. 1890).

Discourse of Canon

Our contemporary discussions on canon formation should avoid biases while taking different approaches into account. The discourse of canon validates several such approaches i.e. extensional and intentional which are further characterized by collective and distributive modalities. Earl R. Anderson claims, "literary scholars tend to define the canon extensionally, in terms of examples and specimens, rather than intensionally, in terms of the attributes of a canonical work" (1442). Extensional approach appeals to the inclusiveness and further proposes every literary work as a member of category called "literature" via avoiding questions of good, bad, or best.

Extensional model with its distributive form is more scientific than others modes of discourse, but conceptual grounds of canon in this mode are "logically impossible" even though "all modern discourse about literary canon takes place within this modality" (Anderson 1443). According to Zanetti and Anderson, canon formation should concern more with "attributes" of canonicity rather than "specimens", and claims, "the idea of a literary canon can have validity only if defined in terms of its attributes, as Aristotle defines tragedy and epic in poetics" (Anderson 1443).

The discourse of canon contains mixed modalities that exist simultaneously at same moment. Anderson highlights four modalities in the discourse: "the extensional distributive one of logical positivism," "the extensional-collective one of nominalism," "the intensional-distributive one of Aristotle," and "intensional-collective one of Plato" (1443). Consequently, at the level of discourse, canon formation provides a perspective that exhibits the co-existence of mixed modalities. He further claims:

> From the perspective of discourse analysis, (co-existence) make perfect sense and illustrate our capacity to discourse in all four modes. The traditions of philosophy have historically privileged one or another of these modalities: the extensional-distributive in favor at present. But because all four coexist in ordinary language and in human thinking, it is unlikely that any one will reign forever (Anderson 1443).

The priority of one modality over another problematize the very nature of discourse. It further leads to the question of exclusion that is pertinent to canon formation. The perspective of discourse makes us aware to avoid presuppositions before engaging in discussions of canon formation.

Conclusion

To sum up, the politics of canon formation is not limited merely to the politics of inclusion and exclusion, and it is rather grounded in material, ideological, and socio-cultural realities, which determine a relationship with literature and literary texts. The term canon and its praxis exhibit binary formation. Similarly, the process of canon formation is simultaneously a process of identity formation, characterized by binarism and the construction of marginalized other. Canon formation presents a complex phenomenon of social interaction, which requires revisioning to expose the politics behind accumulative consensus of critics arrived at in accordance with the market pressures. The discourse of canon formation interrogates as well as unsettles inherent binaries therein via challenging the privileging of one particular thought/idea over the other in the course of discussion and debate pertaining to the formation of canon.

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Pride and Prejudice Revisited

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Abstract

Even as this is being written, someone in the world may be either reading *Pride and Prejudice* or writing another story about a Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet. Reading Jane Austen's classic novel is like a ritual participation in a legacy. It enlightens readers about what marriage is, what to expect from it and what it does to us and our lives. Over the ages, reenactments of the story have appeared, subtly, like a *Bridget Jones' Diary*, and not so subtly, like in *Jane Austen Stole my Boyfriend*, or *Pride and Prejudice and the Zombies*, and Sharon Lathon's Pemberley series that continue Elizabeth and Darcy's love.

Two film versions, by Simon Langton and Joe Wright, have remained true to the original milieu whereas *Bride and Prejudice* by Gurinder Chadha takes it totally out of context into India and America, like the popular Indian teleseries *Trishna* set in India.

The question arises: while critiquing their own social milieu adopting the trenchant satire of Austen's pen, do they offer anything to surprise, interrupt, and interpret our engagement with the experience of the original reading of the classic? The paper attempts to answer these questions in the light of the New Historicist notion of cultural exchange.

Keywords: Film Studies, Adaptations, New Historicism.

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Pride and Prejudice **Revisited**

Adaptations are now being analyzed as artistic creativity products caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual transformation to convey new meanings. In this process, for an adaptation to remain a work of art, it needs to be an independent, coherent, and convincing creation with its subtleties of meanings. Our favourite books, like Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice,* written and revised between 1796-1811, published in 1813, possess the ability to plunge us into a magic realm, into an atmosphere that embraces all our senses. Films and other media, images, sounds, the spoken word, music, and the performing artist's mediation guide us to a new aesthetic experience, bearing intertextual echoes with the original text. Ranging from narratological to historical, critics such as Linda Hutcheon, Thomas Leitch, Brian McFarlane, Dianne Sadoff, and Julie Sanders have expanded the field of adaptation study beyond issues of fidelity. The result is that, as Deborah Cartmell observes, the "most recent adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* are ... as much dependent on previous film and television adaptations as they are on Austen's novel" (126).

Ever since the novel was adapted into a movie in 1940 by Robert Leonard, *Pride and Prejudice,* in its 80 years of visual media history, has engaged and intrigued the changing generation of viewers. The legacy continues even in the 21st century. Apart from the staggering number of television series and movies, *Pride and Prejudice* in its visual manifestation reveals the New Historicist notion of cultural exchange--a process by which cultural practices and images are negotiated and exchanged between two generations of historical eras. Alistair Duckworth "suggests that Austen tends to be all things to all people: conservative, feminist, Romantic, Augustan, etc" (Stasio and Duncan 144). Linda Hutcheon maintains that, in experiencing work as an adaptation, the reader/ viewer "oscillates" between the adaptation and its source (xv). Andrew Wright asserts in a detailed evaluation of early 20th century adaptations of the novel that even the first world versions across genres are "at least as open to challenge as the third-world versions" (424). According to New Historicists, just as the author is "historically bound and cannot escape

the power of her culture and ideology", the text is also used to understand the "social energy in order to decipher the ideology of a given culture" (Dogan 92).

The once much-appreciated dramatization of *Pride and Prejudice* by Helen Jerome had been performed in both New York and London in the mid-1930s. Aldous Huxley and Jane Murfin (1940) wrote a script for a film produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Even the musical *First Impressions*, which was performed in New York in 1959, was inspired by Helen Jerome's play. There are some distinct differences in these versions, especially in the play: there are three daughters instead of five. Moreover, the type of production house of the film version and the plays determined their length and their run-time in the theatres.

Some conclusions can be drawn from the adaptation by Helen Jerome, and the film and musicals: regional and historical origins of the adaptations impacted upon them, adaptations were controlled by the market and commerce by way of transmission and dissemination, and proximity to the original language was indeed important, because as Wright says, "no one writes Jane Austen so well as Jane Austen" (423).

Due to the very fact that films depend on screenplays, and therefore on the literary source material as well, they are essentially doubly performative. On-screen, the performers must adapt from a written script adapted from a novel, as Leitch says, "the script is a performance text - a text that requires interpretation first by its performers and then by its audience for completion - whereas a literary text requires only interpretation by its readers" (Wilson 150, 323). As Thomas Leitch points out, direct communication from writer to reader, which we often take for granted, is a two-layered adaptation between the audience and the original source.

In the film *Bride and Prejudice*, scripted by Paul Mayeda Berges and directed by Gurinder Chadha, there is a unique multi-layered interface between filmmaker and audience**.** Cheryl L.Wilson comments that "*Bride and Prejudice* is and is not Jane Austen, is and is not Bollywood, and is and is not Hollywood, it can reach the "multi-national" audience Chadha identifies as her target by providing each viewer with something that is familiar and something that is not" (324).
Since both the texts, the film and the novel, critique women's status and the performance of femininity required to achieve and maintain it, they achieve the same ends with some humor. Chadha's position as an African-Asian immigrant originally from Punjab is unique. Moreover, she is a British filmmaker tying up with Hollywood, shooting in India, and using Bollywood

conventions. She is both inside and outside of the West, and the East as well as Hollywood, and Bollywood, introduces multi-layered nuances regarding race, gender, family, and nationality. In the words of Cheryl A Wilson, "such complication prompts a reflexive re-reading of the novel's conclusion" (324). As a result of this mix-up, a Westernized feminist and social perspective, an extended Indian perspective of identity embedded in Bollywood, a genre she effectively uses, Chadha can convey the incongruities at the heart of globalized encounters, though modern, yet something akin to Jane Austen's perspective.

In two of the critical areas, one finds that the tweaking of the plot/story: the additional layering of three different social conventions, Indian, American and British: and the use of filmic grammar both challenge and enrich the existing fictional framework that *Pride and Prejudice* offers.

Firstly, Lalita, Chadha's Darcy, an American, doesn't need to rescue Lalita or even stage manage Lakhi's wedding as Lalita herself joins him in her search for her wayward sister. Laita has more agency than Elizabeth in the original. She and Darcy also manage to fall in love and marry despite their two mothers, one who searches online on Indian matrimonial sites for a husband for her daughter. The other who openly matchmakes for her son at a party, right? in front of Lalita, his beloved.

Secondly, Darcy, by convincing his mother not to expand her hotel chain empire in India, rejects the power structure his class and position offer him. However, will the mixed-race couple not always have to negotiate the class and cultural difference imposed by the presence of the controlling mother-in-law in Lalita's life? Is their marriage not already fraught with the contradictions of American metropolitan/ultramodern society versus Indian rural/traditional? The adaptation thus succeeds in "ultimately tempering the celebratory ending of the film", as Wilson comments (329).

Thirdly, Chadha had made her intentions clear about how she would make "a Bollywood-style Hindi movie that somehow interacted wholeheartedly with another cultural tradition," in this case the "English literary tradition" (Chadha and Burges cited in Wilson 331). Since both the Austenian novelistic milieu and the Bollywood format make integral use of song and dance to suggest sexual tensions and attraction, Chadha uses song and dance full tilt in her adaptation, successfully integrating the two traditions of comedy and song and dance, effectively closing the gap "from Amritsar to UK"(331).

The term fanfiction**,** called fanfic for short, refers to stories produced by fans based on plot lines and characters from either a single source text or else a whole group of books. They express the passionate rendition of fans and their admiration and aspirations for their favourite characters or era, or an ethos the characters inhabiting that world, represent. These fan-created narratives often take the pre-existing story world in a new, sometimes bizarre, direction. While the activities of fans may take many forms, writing stories deriving from one or more source text has long been the most popular way of concretizing and disseminating their passion for a particular fictional universe. Pugh (2005) hints at the democratic quality of the genre, whereas Stasi (2006) claims that fanfic is "canny, sophisticated and resonant with postmodern textuality" (129). While some critics place fan-fiction alongside conventions of the literary world, critics from the media studies world consciously avoid evaluatesing fan-fiction based on the any kind of serious evaluative criteria. Due to their tendency towards making academic value judgments, they are often called "Aca-Fans" (Thomas 3), like Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandhogs, and S. Lee Herrington. Alan McKee (2004) accuses first-wave theorists of ignoring the discourse of fanfiction as something powerless compared to the pre-existing powerful text. Later theorists look at fanfiction as a more participatory culture: fans create communities, they are like a process, these works are like work in progress, they are additive, they want more and more of a never-ending story, they participate in social networking, uphold standards of privacy, loyalty and belongingness. They create merchandise and tell stories about an Alternate Universe: they create new models for new theories to emerge. For example a whole new occupation or home industry has emerged, of making memorabilia and "merch" or merchandise of these fictional characters. In the case of *Pride and Prejudice*, through puppet-making of actors like Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle, the larger than fiction aspect of these characters emerges: to so many fans these actors ARE Darcy and Elizabeth in their collective imagination. Bronwen Thomas shows how fanfic has evolved new terms like PWP (Plot what Plot): AU or Alternative Universe, Merchandising and OOC (Out of Character), (9) Fanon (10), in place of "canon."

Jonathan Gray (2003) proposes new values for appreciating fan fiction, especially those related to challenge and change, and even according to genre or medium. Bronwen Thomas suggests that "we may need to explore a new understanding of the aesthetic value that reflects the decentralization of contemporary culture" (13).

Sarah Cardwell justifies the use of comparative studies for "comparison of texts in different media" to gain "a fuller and more complex understanding of the specificity of the media themselves" ("Adaptation Studies" 56), while George Raitt suggests that "one must approach an adaptation as an intertext" (128), going beyond binaries and good or bad choices.

Raitt further proposes that screen adaptation, and in particular reading/viewing a screen work informed by differences, enables us to study how new and different stories actually emerge. For example, what if the heroine was not intelligent or pretty? Aragay and López Apegaon write about the post-feminist world, in the late-twentieth-century cultural context, in which women like Bridget Jones of the famous intertext *Bridget Jones' Diary* are free to choose their lifestyle. Still, they are therefore free to choose even traditional roles and feel anxious in fulfilling them. Bridget is a free modern woman who is still trapped to find a socially acceptable date, first, and then a husband, in a socially acceptable dress to cover a socially unacceptable figure. Seeing her plight, one feels that Elizabeth or Lydia were far better off in their times. Thus a modern adaptation actually challenges the precepts of the *Ur* text.

New tele-series are the latest to join the intertextual paraphernalia of Pride and Prejudice remakes. These texts often show how the younger generation is quite jaded in their view of the adult world, like Amanda Price in the tele-series *Lost in Austen*, whose relations with parents, feelings of rejection, and loss colour her perceptions of love and romance as well. Through the device of time travel, Amanda becomes an "Elizabeth Bennet figure" (Raitt 132) and starts judging the new fantasy world she inhabits with the eye of a disillusioned adolescent critical of hypocritical parents.

Amanda Price switches between the two worlds, the world of Austen in which Lizzie has left the village to stay in London and whom she replaces at her home as if she were a secret friend. Amanda meets with the most awful of scrapes, as a result of being from the modern American world thrust onto Regency England. She is unaware that her disclosure to Darcy that she is not a virgin could make a difference and is distraught when he says he consequently cannot marry her. Darcy does not rescue the Bennet family from ruin, and it is he who articulates the world view attributed to Austen's Elizabeth when he tells Amanda he cannot marry Caroline Bingley because he does not love her. Elizabeth is in London and is not interested in marrying at all! Caroline Bingley discloses to Amanda that she is a lesbian but is determined to marry Darcy and will endure physical love with a man because endurance is the specialty of the female sex. After a twist in which Jane marries Mr. Collins before she realizes that Bingley loves her, Mrs. Bennet tells Amanda "there is nothing to be done for it - the world is full of miserable, loveless marriages - she will find a way to endure

it - women do." Amanda using her best her post-feminist voice replies "we are not condemned to endure our lives: we can change them." But she really doesn't have the power to change anything at all.

Thus, at first glance, *Lost in Austen* portrays a post-feminist heroine choosing to change the direction of her life, to voluntarily enter a fantasy world that limits her role as a woman. But, when the novel and television series are read /viewed together with other works like *Bridget Jones ' Diary*, in an intertextual cluster, resulting differences and new interpretations tend to undermine a reading of the post-feminist view of the world in the respective literary and screen works.

Similarly, in *Jane Austen Stole My Boyfriend* by Cora HarrisonJane Austen and Jenny are friends who while away their time in Bath: dancing, shopping, watching men, fantasising over them and finally falling in love, but alongside that there's the life at Bath which complicates the innocent friendship, and Jane becomes the talk of the town as a girl who steals boyfriends. This Jane is also the repository of an extraordinary imagination, fantasy, irony and capability of high flirtation and is yet is full of vulnerable charm. The Austenesque persona is exploited by the author to carry fanfiction to the level of mock autobiographical fiction.

In Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies,* in an original twist, Austen allegedly co-authored her last novel with the American author, Seth Grahame-Smith, in April 2009, with elements of modern zombie fiction. Specifically, Grahame-Smith has meticulously preserved the original effects of dry-humour, emotions, and even syntactic constructions of the original text. Also, by publicly crediting Austen's co-authorship, Grahame-Smith has surpassed the boundaries of a regular adaptation and steered a creative practice of remixing to negotiate between two eras and generations. While transforming Austen's intended social depiction from subtle metaphors to literal monsters, Seth Grahame-Smith has blended into a classical text the paradigms and conventions of horror and popular fiction.

> "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains. Never was this truth more plain than during the recent attacks at Netherfield Park, in which a household of eighteen was slaughtered and consumed by a horde of the living dead" (Grahame-Smith 1).

So begins *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies,* the undead reformulation of the canon. Smith declares in an interview that, "The point wasn't to rewrite or modernize the original. Rather, it was to preserve as much of it as I could while surgically weaving in (as seamlessly as possible) new words, lines, paragraphs, and occasionally – pages of new battle sequences" (2009).

Therefore, the purpose of this literary-remixing is a more metaphorical reinterpretation of certain aesthetics in cultural history, under the humorous and sarcastic veils of horrification and 'zombification'. The Zombies are roaming the English country-sides and yet everyone is as excited to dress up and go for a ball to meet their probable match. As Smith further comments: "Many of Austen's characters are rather like zombies...They carry on single-mindedly in their bubbles of immense wealth and privilege, no matter what's going on around them," (Dennis 2009), very much like Mrs. Bennet during the Napoleonic wars. Jane Austen's Elizabeth who is a strong willed, intelligent, lively, attractive girl here becomes a far more ferocious person, whose reaction to Darcy's opinion about her in the ball brings out killer instincts:

> "As Mr. Darcy walked off, Elizabeth felt her blood turn cold. She had never in her life been so insulted. The warrior code demanded she avenge her honour. Elizabeth reached down to her ankle, taking care not to draw attention. There, her hand met the dagger concealed beneath her dress. She meant to follow this proud Mr. Darcy outside and open his throat"(Smith 15).

The Bennet sisters are trained warriors, Mr. Bennet trains them in martial arts and weapons training, moulding them into a fearsome zombie-fighting army, Elizabeth being the best among them. She can singlehandedly fight and defeat a hoard of the living dead. Even Lady Catherine is described as the greatest warrior in whole of England. This fictional, almost radical feminist, description of the Victorian women as warriors and saviours of England from the 'unmentionables 'empowers the live female characters created by Austen and at the same time renders a sarcastic comment on their political nature hidden under the masks of sophistication.

Austen presents the callous argument between Lady Catherine and Elizabeth as follows:

'And will you promise me never to enter into such an engagement? '(Austen 193) Smith, however, alters the scene with a more literal expression of the characters 'animosity:

"I would sooner die than see my honour so defiled." "Then Miss Bennet," said Lady Catherine, setting down her parasol and removing her coat, "die you shall." Upon this, she set her feet for combat (Smith 193).

Seth says in an interview to Den of Geeks that "many of Austen's characters .... simply carry on with their gossip and romances and manners and balls, despite the fact that people are being gored and eaten alive." Thus, Seth Grahame Smith's creative exemplar *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* has paid its own unique homage to this canonical text by Jane Austen in more than one way, interrupting it with references to Zombie fiction, nuancing it with radical feminist undertones, which surprise the readers and interpret the original text in a challenging way.

A YouTube video adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* called *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, produced specifically for the Internet platform YouTube, transfers the story of Bennet family to the year 2012. Lizzie, an American graduate student, the protagonist and primary first-person narrator telling her story format typical of YouTube: the vlog. Biweekly, a video was posted Lizzie Bennet's YouTube channel, resulting in an adaptation that spread over the course of almost an entire year, ultimately reaching one hundred episodes on the main channel and adding up to seven to ten hours' worth video material. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* creators also chose to embrace a trans-medial approach to the adaptation process, adding other Internet-based media like Twitter, Tumblr, Lookbook, Pinterest or Facebook to entertain fans. Followers could explore the characters', as well as the cast and crew's social media profiles. Additionally, *The Secret Diaries of Lizzie Bennet*, a fictitious diary in print, complementing the YouTube series was published in 2014 and a novelization from Lydia Bennet's perspective is due to be released subsequently.

Vlogs, like new series, fanfiction and film or television series have thus the ability to give viewers a sense of intertextuality, narrative fiction, experimentation, transmedia storytelling and the unique possibility of interactivity. Even if it remains fragmentary, an adaptation is worthwhile because it embeds the text in a network of creative activities and interpersonal communication. They can no longer be dismissed as adolescent forays into fictive adventures: rather, they do surprise, interrupt, challenge, and interpret our engagement with the experience of the original reading of the classic. And all through this, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* lives on.

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The Digital Mythologies of *Mahabharata*: A Study of the Epic's Memetic Adaptations

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Abstract

The *Mahabharata,* like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* has outlived its own time and place of composition. The epic has continued to dominate the popular literary discourse not due to its grandeur but due to its earnest compliance to the medium in which it is rendered. Its thrall is not due to its antiquity but due to its versatile ductility. Its vivid and contentious existence has now reinscribed itself into memes. It has traveled great cultural and linguistic distance, giving birth to many self-replicating portrayals and translations and now surviving as a primordial prototype for memes to habituate. Memes have opened up new avenues of expression which have resonated well with the *Mahabharata.*

This paper aims to identify and study the various strains through which the *Mahabharata* memes have been duplicated and replicated. The epic's attainments are now conveyed in a colloquial and vernacular manner. The Mahabharata is no longer an aesthetic artifact to be revered, but o be subverted and inverted so that it may facilitate memes. Its idiosyncrasies too provide enough meme fodder for their replication. Memes have altered the way cultural phenomena like the Mahabharata are perceived and deciphered. I propose to study how procreation of the Mahabharata through memes is facilitated by cultural, political, language discretions and affinities. This arbitrary exclusion and inclusion make memes breeding grounds of aesthetic-philosophical deliberations and negotiations, which can be a worthy subject for serious, scholarly discernment.

Keywords: The Mahabharata, Memes, Replication, Subversion, Duplication

With genesis in the "neo-Dadaist art which primarily focused on the use of modern materials, popular images, and absurdism, associated with neo-realism pop art, and assemblages" (Smith 12) and appropriated from Richard Dawkins 'coined word *mimeme,* i.e. "for a unit of culture passed on by imitation" (Blackmore 6), memes have come a long way from being "categorized as assemblages, photomontages or collages, and then paintings, literature, and performance art (Smith 11). An internet meme is defined by Knobel and Lankshear as the rapid uptake and spread of a "particular idea presented as a written text, image, language 'move, 'or some other unit of cultural

'stuff '(10). Internet memes are usually subtitled photographs, humorous in content, and often with the intended purpose of mocking human conduct and actions. Verbal articulations are superimposed on farcical images for a comic effect, though a few images may have "heavier and progressively philosophical substance" (10).

This paper tries to analyze meme's preoccupation with the *Mahabharata.* Vast stores of information, like Mahabharata, are usually maintained in a variety of external media, although they depend on interaction with a human mind for their copying and development. Memes, like pen and paper, have emerged as the new "cultural artifact" (Distin 202). They ensure not only "the fecundity of the information that they carry" but also its preservation, replication, and longevity. They ensure the "continual development and the remarkable persistence of their content." Hence like Mahabharata, "memes and their effects can be found both internally, in human minds, and externally, in human culture" (Distin 202).

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The *Mahabharata* has become enormously complex over time, and this complexity has been replicated by various agents of culture, from comics to memes. Replication is hence most efficient if it builds on what already exists rather than starting afresh each time:

> The most successful sort of replication will be particulate: if the constituent parts of what is replicated were to blend, then the end product would be a conglomerate rather than an assembly. The units of an assembly must be "self-assertive": each maintains its own individuality within the assembly (Distin 42).

These self-assertive/integrative tendencies and the overall compromise of various units of the *Mahabharata* enables its "complex assemblies to be replicated with relative fidelity" through memes (43). It is perhaps the reason that a *Mahabharata* meme has a greater chance of penetrating the existing meme pool and lasting due to its fecundity and modern adaptability. The *Mahabharata* and its complex cultural information have been replicated and preserved from generation to generation. This constantly changing flux is quickly absorbed by the variating, replicating meme. There is no dearth of the mutations and combinations their alliance has led to.

Bringing the *Mahabharata* to meme is more than just "bringing old ways of thought to a fresh situation." It is to force their recombination to produce new ways of thought and new knowledge" (Distin 53). It comes across as mostly sarcastic parables, not imparting any religious messages but a lampoonist response to the prevalent social and moral views. Memes are not products of previous

careful study but an exercise in "mulling things over in one's private thoughts" or result of a collision of "meandering trains of thought" (Distin 53). It is as if "existing elements of one's knowledge, which had previously been inactive," have been stimulated. Putting it in terms of memetics, the forced recombination of this existing knowledge will reveal much in terms of memes which is now relevant to the novel situation. Thus new memes may be acquired and replicated (54). The re-conceptualization or re-representation of the *Mahabharata* is a "thought experiment," i.e. "the imagination is exercised in a controlled fashion in order to examine theoretical implications or to explore conceptual boundaries," earlier done through novels and dramas and now through the "recombinative innovation of memes" (54).

The *Mahabharata,* too, has given meme the bequest of prolonged attention. The *Mahabharata* has a 'cultural fitness 'which offers a 'perception of appropriateness 'to memes. Memes 'success is not simply a "matter of their effects 'compatibility with the existing cultural environment" but also on their ability to be "anchored to reality" according to the "perceptual evidence" (62). Meme has found the receptive cultural environment of the *Mahabharata* assenting to its effects. Memes on the *Mahabharata* survive not only due to their spawning nature but also due to the "ancestral analogy" of the epic. Another aspect is the "transference of feelings," i.e., the "mimetic transmission of emotion" or empathy one feels for the predicament of the Pandavas, as in Fig. 8 (62). They offer a "therapeutic release of thoughts and emotions" (62) through the ambience of the *Mahabharata.* Emotions might provoke selection but do not aid in the replication of a meme. Memetic success or failure is based not on the memes ability to incite empathy for a relevant experience or situation but also on one's prior understanding and, at times, often admiration for the subject or information being shared, often disregarding the trustworthiness of the content and trusted facts and evidence:

> Every individual differs in his or her susceptibility to adopting particular memes depending on genotype, development, individual experience, and social environment, and this susceptibility is not itself exclusively the product of past meme adoption (Distin 64).

Both the cultural influences and meme's content assure its memetic success and replication rate. Mahabharata's evangelical element has given it a duplication success. It tends to come across as part of a heritage that has to be preserved and reproduced. Some might possess strong political views which "entail the demand that they should be held by all" (65). Both Memes and

Mahabharata are a slave to dictates of human psychology and cultural novelty in order to stand a chance of being copied accurately or enduringly.

Even though religious doctrine survives mostly by incorporation of instructions, slavishly carried out, the *Mahabharata*, despite being a religious treatise, has spread epidemiologically. It has been evaluated, vivisected, recommended, and then passed on. The *Mahabharata* memes go 'viral 'not due to the intrinsically great value of the epic but due to the ubiquitous quality of the epic to become all compatible with our times and culture. Its idiosyncrasies have not altered much between generations. Both the *Mahabharata* and Memes possess inherent selfishness to survive and replicate in all mediums and modes. Both tend to exploit their cultural environment to their advantage.

Dennett suggests that memes depend "at least indirectly on one or more of their vehicles 'spending at least a brief, pupal stage in a remarkable sort of meme nest: a human mind" (qtd. in Distin 78). It is in this gestating period that the *Mahabharata* swells and comes forth as a "meme vehicle" (78). It has become an "interactor" for memes to thrive on their novelty and replicate (78). The act to distinguish between a representation and the thing that it represents is hence rendered futile. Rosaria Conte, too views memes as "a symbolic representation of any state of affairs" but then goes on to say that an artifact can incorporate a meme, even if its content is not easy to decode (qtd. in Distin 81). An artifact like the *Mahabharata* can be a 'meme interactor, 'for it is able to facilitate the replication of a meme. It contains within itself the representation of the information to be copied:

> Representations, not artifacts, realize generalized information – and artifacts can persist long after the information that gave rise to them has disappeared (82).

The *Mahabharata* is a culture investigated by the 'meme machine of the mind 'through different inquiry levels. Memes and the mind have formed a formidable corollary to explain the emergence of new social media consciousness.

In Dennett's opinion, "no real replication is going on when someone extracts information from an artifact. Instead, "there is a sense in which he is recreating the information for himself" (93). An artifact like Mahabharata, on the other hand, "contains no information about which of its features are accidental or aesthetic, and which are essential to its function" (94). Blackmore insists it is one's inference about which features are significant and hence can be imitated thus each one

"brings to the situation his range of experience and level of deductive skills" (95). Blackmore refers to it as "Memetic Drive" where cultural evolution depends on memetic imitation:

> As the tendency to imitate "meme fountains" proliferates, and people become "better at imitating the successful memes," so culture will expand, and memetic evolution will begin to result from competition between varieties of cultural traits (97).

However, in facilitating this memetic drive, the *Mahabharata* is insouciantly fulfilling its role as *Upajivya,* i.e., one which sustains, enlivens, or operates as a source. In *Adiparvan 1.92,* the *Mahabharata* itself claims it to be classified as "an *upajivya kavya* for all the great poets, like *Parjanya* (god of rain) for all the beings" (qtd in Chakrabarti and Bandyopadhyay 85). It has been regarded as a *laksyagrantha,* for it expounds upon the criteria of literary theories to be devoted to itself (86). It is sucking on this succulent, nourishing tendency of the *Mahabharata* that memes have been able to thrive and replicate.

II

The *Mahabharata* as an *itihasa* function as an augmentation of the past, present, and future. It is a prescriptive as well as a descriptive tractate of what ought to be (*purusarthas*) that what was or has been. It is a repository of occurrences and episodes, which are "poems in being and becoming" imbrued with subtle meanings (*suksmartha*) and major concepts (*pradhanartha*) (*Adiparvan* 2.31-33, qtd in Chakrabarti and Bandyopadhay 87).

Few memes thrive on this fugacious "incidental benefit," i.e., they gain social relevance by explicating prominent social events or occurrences (Distin 86). They tend to add awareness to the communication function in the popular culture. They appeal to sentiment as well as judgment even if received and interpreted beyond their intended purpose. For example, a *Mahabharata* meme on sexual harassment (Fig.1 and 2) would only be successful as long as barricades to such moral debasement are in action and operating well. On the other hand, the rise of such cases renders the meme, according to Blackmore redundant and 'unadvantageous. 'In their bid to gain and retain attention, memes will succeed best if they are consistent with "facts and skills that we have already absorbed, being influenced particularly by those to which we are greatly attached" (Distin 205) i.e. sexual harassment, as in the figures given below:

Fig.1. Meme illustrating the lack of consent in sexual affiliations. Taken from *Google Images*. Source lost.

In Fig. 1, a "synchronic and diachronic notion of cultural series" comes into play striving for "novelty and change" (Distin 205). The model for the study of the image here is that of synergy (the image of Draupadi dissension embedded in the *Mahabharata*) rather than that of supersession (in which each new medium of memes tends to take the place of a previously dominating 'old ' medium of text). This 'incident 'meme is an astute portrayal of "glocalisation, i.e., the mutual reinvention of the local and the global" (Baetens 183). Here the context or the incident supersedes the image though the grey template lends itself to the somberness of the #MeToo campaign. The call to go back to Dharma 'is endorsed through Draupadi refusing Jayadratha's advances and reiterating the concept of swift justice, i.e., Bhima pulling out all of Jayadratha's hair, leaving five tufts, an emblem of the Pandavas 'mercy.

Fig.2.A meme widely circulated in the aftermath of the #MeToo online campaign. Sinha, Suchetana. Image of Lord Krishna and the gopis, 22 October 2017.*www.youthkiawaaz.com*,youthkiawaaz.com/2017/10/metoo-its-not-harassment-if-the-lord-does-it/

In Fig. 2, the late eighteenth century Kangra style Pahari rendition of Lord Krishna stealing the clothes of gopis, taken from *Bhagavata Purana*, erotica, or the *rati* rasa, is invalidated to generate awareness regarding sexual harassment. Here, the digital-born memes are "integrated into real environments outside the screen, giving birth to new forms of communication and agency" (Baetens 183-84). This subversion of sensual to obscene while reprising the motif of sexual harassment takes one away from the aesthetic philosophies of art. The palettes of saturated red, blue, and yellows reminiscent of the *bhakti* tradition of Hinduism instead of eliciting reactions to the divine, who is a deity of cosmic order, are obturated by the yellow text cloud with #MeToo written in black. The iconography of anguish and despair of the gopis at having their clothes stolen reinforces the theme of the torment of sexual provocation. The nonchalance of the playful god is rendered sinister in the framework of #MeToo.

III

Memes are "not acquired by imitation alone but by a complex process of construction and integration" (Distin 102). The *Mahabharata* is an axiom of philosophy consisting of various adages and epigrams. The hybridization of dictums and the *Mahabharata* reinforce its sermonic

idiosyncrasies. Dan Sperber believes that "human brains use all the information they are presented with not to copy or synthesize it, but as more or less relevant evidence with which to construct representations of their own" (103). Through a "mix of decoding or perception (*pratyaksha*) and inference (*anumana*), the information provided by the stimulus is complemented with information as well as its "intrinsic properties" already available in the system" (104). For the successful imposition of proverbs on the *Mahabharata* template, justification of violence seems to be the unifying design. It is mainly due to the fact that the *Mahabharata* is an allegory of ends justifying the means, though however despicable the means be. The Bhagavata Gita is itself a recital that both condones and condemns war. Hence it is this similitude that memes dwell on and replicate. Memes have found Mahabharata to be an analogy of vehemence as well as peacefulness, onslaught, and passivity to which precepts and aphorisms are augmented to allow for successful cultural transmission. Cultural transmission hence requires "inheritance from the previous generation of the relevant properties" (Distin 105).

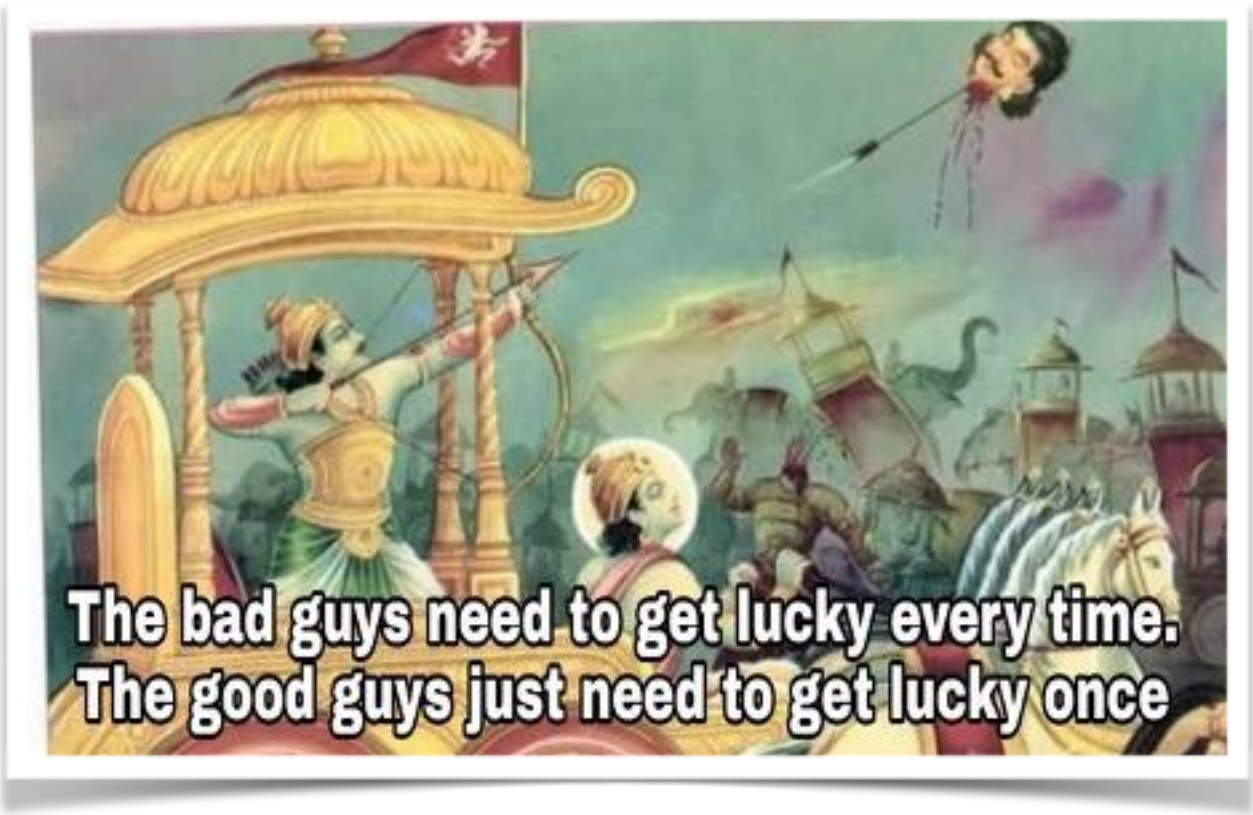

Fig.3. Here, the slaying of Karna by Arjuna while the former is trying to release the stuck chariot wheel is justified by a pretext of the quote. Taken from *www.thenextmeme.com.* URL lost.

This "cultural approbation" according to Sperber is like an exercise of an intelligent observer trying to infer the "ideology of justified violence" by replicating the *Mahabharata* through a Steve

Murphy quote. (Distin 110). The intrinsic properties of the *Mahabharata* fuse with the "constructive cognitive process," i.e., Steve Murphy quote in the creator's mind. Sperber refers to this as "observational learning, i.e., evolved domain-specific psychological dispositions," which is "violence and its justifications" are crucial for replication (110). Meme, like Athena from Zeus's head, comes forth as an "interpretation of the observer's brain" (Distin 110).

Fig.4.Meme depicting Lord Krishna and Arjuna riding into the Kurukshetra War, exonerating if peace could be talked over, a flute-playing cowherd would never fight a war. Taken from *me.me/t/mahabharata*

Both these 'proverbial 'memes are late nineteenth-century calendar-art. It was a highly transformative, democratizing, and propagandizing art which dictated the single point objective of worship and portrayal. These devotional aesthetics through memes "replicative machinery" have evolved into "psychological mechanisms" (Distin 108), which allow one to draw an analogy

between Mahabharata and an anonymous Facebook post. The enjoinment of the ephemeral past with symbiotic anachronism of the *Mahabharata* lends itself to successful memetic duplications.

The *Bhagavad Gita* and its vivid and contentious existence have reinscribed itself into memes. It has transverse great cultural and linguistic distance, giving birth to too many self-replicating portrayals and translations and now surviving as a primordial prototype for memes to habituate. It is disentangled from the usual circumstances of its familiarity, and an "appropriate stimulus" interjects it to begin the exercise of "extricating their common features and comparing individual representations" to come across as a "communicable, manipulatable, memorable and widely applicable meta-representation" (Distin 134).

Seemingly abstract information, as in the meme given below (Fig. 5), comes together in "cultural input" of the mind, "is a powerful and replicable form" (Distin 149). This "meta-representational cognition" is the result of "development of not only the content of our thoughts but also our capacity for thought when we begin to compare different representational systems with each other: to meta-represent" (154). This memetic replication of an ISKON painting commissioned under its Krishna Conscious Project takes a humorous jibe at how the grandeur and splendor of the Mahabharata have inspired the magnificence and opulence of Hollywood movies. This is a lower order (Hollywood) embedded within a higher-order system (Bhagavad Gita).

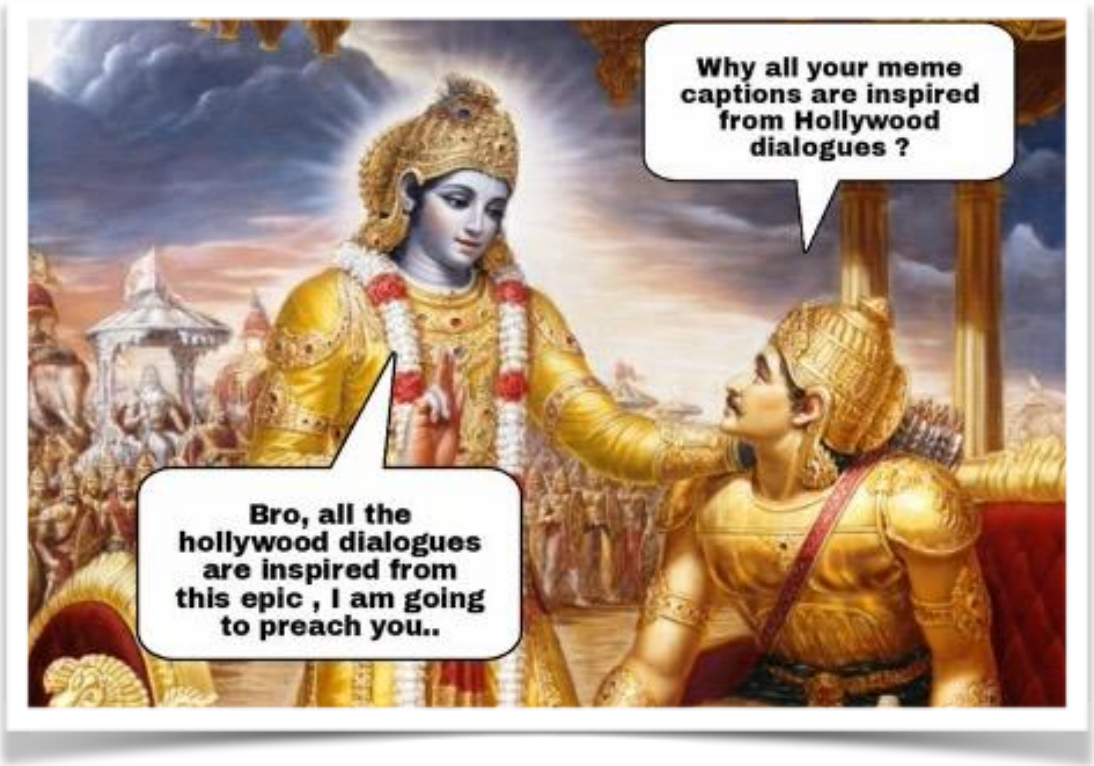

Fig.5.The above meme (*www.memedroid.com)* illustrates the ‘cultural inheritance and selection ’ of two representational systems: Hollywood and Mahabharata. The ‘symbol ’(Gita Sermon) and the ‘object ’(Hollywood) are not even remotely collected but come together in a ‘metarepresentation.

IV

The meme demolishes the original premise and reverts it with often a comical, ludicrous interpolation. Bloch contends that cultural knowledge should not be characterized as a “library of propositions which can be transmitted in discrete units.” Yet memes indulge and get away with “superficial blending.” Bloch further contends that “any novel trait which an individual accepts must inevitably be modified to be coherent within its new context” (qtd. in Distin 159).

Fig.6.Lord Krishna is reassuring his father Vasudev while crossing the flooded Yamuna. Taken from *incorrectmahabharatquotes.tumblr.com*

The choice of words here renders a rather poignant and sorrowful episode into a playful antic leading to a ‘playful ’meme. The grievous episode of separation of baby Krishna from his birth parents in this ISKON painting is transposed into frivolity and frolic by the textual comment of Vasuki, the serpent king as being Lord Krishna’s umbrella against the surging Yamuna. It is a renege meta-representation. In the transmission of culture, “the resultant act of re-creation totally

transforms the original stimulus and integrates it into a different mental universe so that it loses its identity and specificity" (160), as in Fig. 7.

Fig.7.The Pandavas despair upon leaving for exile is portrayed through popular rap-lyrics of a film, which is ironically about keeping the faith, leading to a successful blended-playful meme. Taken from *www.picuki.com*

This altered information does not repel 'blending, 'and the context of hope and despair makes it a successful transmutation. It is existing knowledge (the *Mahabharata*) and a life experience "integrating into a "different mental universe" which has inevitably altered the essential character of a portion of information" (Distin 161) i.e., from despair to hope. Though "bits of cultural information are "constantly blended with each other," the distinctive features of each element are not completely lost because of "our ability to partition existing knowledge, to organize and manipulate incoming information, and systematically to synthesize different parts" in jointed whole (199).

V

Memes are also "highly visual and intertextual" (Huntington 7). They make abundant references to many events and allude to many texts. Hence, they become effective carriers of "persuasive political communication," at times dictating the entire discourse (7). Like other forms of visual political communication, such as political cartoons, memes contain visual arguments that viewers

can perceive and influence their political participation. Memes are "informal, casual, and spontaneous for they are typically grassroots, coming from the bottom up, rather than being dictated by some powerful organizing force" (7). They are an embodiment of "knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes regarding political issues, figures, and institutions, as well as on measures of efficacy and trust" of a common denizen (Huntington 7). Since "memes intersect with pop culture and politics, they may be contributing to individuals 'mental models about the political events, issues or figures depicted, or even what political participation entails" (8).

Fig.8. A political meme duplicates the result of General Elections 2019 quite veraciously. Taken from *www.onsizzle.com*

In the above meme, apart from Lord Krishna's chariot, everything is achromatized and faded. This etiolation is the reason to depict Lord Krishna as PM Narendra Modi steering the BJP to a majority win while the Opposition remains dissolved and languished as depicted by the bleached background. Memes here are increasingly working as 'history's record keepers. The depiction of the ruling party "as the invincible warriors in the battle against ignorance and confusion" (Huntington 7) brings to light this cultural parody of a meme as well as their ability to disengage morality and polity.

VI

Dawkins believed that "there are two ways of looking at cultural change, the meme's angle and that of the human individual" (qtd. in Distin 207). We can see the *Mahabharata* development as the consequence of human aspirations, creativity, intellect, and effort, or we can see it as the product of successful memetic evolution and replication. According to Dawkins, they are "two views of the same truth." The only analogous insight that arises is that Mahabharata and memes are not "all there is to life, but merely one way of describing life." The way of representations in terms of "intellect and consciousness, desires and hopes, beliefs and emotions are equally valid" in memes as it was centuries ago in a papyrus (207).

Memes did not give up on the *Mahabharata* "because they were starting from a position bogged down by the "legacy of past theses" but gained support "on the shoulders of the giants who originated them." The pedantic sermons did not "detract them from the value of the enterprise in which they are engaged." The *Mahabharata* and its development will ultimately be "determined by a complex interplay between memes and the New Media environment" (207). Our only responsibility is the content.

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Narrating Cultures Narrating Resistance: A Look at Cinematic Adaptations of Shakespeare

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Abstract

The paper seeks to argue that adaptation is an act of re-writing and re-visioning which is at once a liberating, progressive and subversive exercise especially when it involves texts that are revered across cultures as symbols of art/ literature's ‘universality'. Not only does adaptation challenge the notions of hegemony within the domain of art and culture but can also develop into a form of cultural resistance and re-presentation.The paper probes the cultural and ideological functions of adaptations of cannons showing how it is an extremely political exercise.

One can safely acknowledge the fact that Shakespeare is one of the central figures of the western cannon representing the cultural and linguistic reach of the Empire around the globe. In our own contemporary age too Shakespeare continues to remain one of the most adapted and appropriated literary figures across mediums and genres. Hence one has to ask how and why does Shakespeare capture the imagination of audiences that are temporally or culturally far removed. What strategies of rewriting revisioning during the process of adaptation are employed that helps to render Shakespeare within newer concepts and meanings.

Hence for this purpose the paper will take into account certain important film adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays. Films as a popular medium have often been accused of being one dimensional especially in their treatment of canonical literatures in a sense that they often reaffirm the inherent cultural concepts/discourses of the ‘original’. However the selected adaptations of Shakespeare not only liberate the text but also seek to liberate their own cultural and political histories thus opening ways to engage with textual and social history in their own cultural context and that of Shakespeare’s.

The paper will look into film adaptations like Grigori Kozintsev’s *Hamlet* 1964 and *Karol Lir* (1971) Akira Kurosawa’s *Throne of Blood* (1957) and *Ran* (1985) as well as polish director Andrzej Wajda’s *Siberian Lady Macbeth* (1962) based on Russian novelist Nikolai Leskov’s novella *Lady*

Macbeth of Mtsenk (1865) and Jocelyne Moorhouse's *A Thousand Acres* (1997) based on the Pulitzer Prize winning novel by American author Jane Smiley.

Keywords: Adaptation, Cinema, Canons, Discorse, Ideology, Trans Cultural, Revision, Rewriting.

One can safely acknowledge the fact that Shakespeare is a powerful symbol within the western canon denoting the cultural and linguistic reach of the Empire around the globe. However, it is also true that the idea of a universal, pure unadulterated Shakespeare today is no longer attainable. This paper will discuss certain film adaptations of Shakespeare across national cultural and temporal boundaries.

The films taken into consideration are Grigori Kozintsev's *Hamlet* 1964 and *Karol Lir* (1971), Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957) and *Ran* (1985) as well as polish director Andrzej Wajda's *Siberian Lady Macbeth* (1962) and Jocelyne Moorhouse's *A Thousand Acres* (1997) . The paper will try to focus upon the desire and need that informs thy process of adaptation or revision of texts. The idea then is to read not only Shakespeare but as, cultural critic Raymond Williams suggests, all human cultural activity as an interaction between tradition and the immediate lived experience, to place texts in relation to their historical contexts as well as place them within a larger continuity with "other works and ideas" as well as a "variety of actual experience" (38). Further, we also know that discourses carry within them ideologies, certain selective interpretations, and perceptions of reality are legitimised over others which are then sold as cultural truths. Hence the task of an informed reader or viewer becomes to be conscious of this very important connection between power and ideology and how it influences the process of meaning-making. The given phenomenon of adaptation can be seen as a form of re-visiting and re-visioning texts like that of Shakespeare, wringing them out of their fixed positions, engaging with them to create a dialogue with the dominant cultural and ideological currents in the society.

The first set of films that the paper will discuss are the two adaptations of *Hamlet* and *King Lear* by the soviet director Grigori Kozintsev whose fifty-year long career began during the years of the First World War and the Bolshevik revolution going through the dramatic rise and fall of the Soviet regime, the Second World War and the cold war period. During this time, the director donned many hats, from working closely with the state initially for helping the socialist cause to later working against it to criticize the rampant corruption and authoritarianism of the party. Early on in his career Kozintsev with other revolutionary filmmakers was a pioneer of experimentative Avant-Garde cinema, which was influenced by new wave movements in Europe where the idea was to introduce new modes of narrative and representation of reality. However soviet film

industry was soon nationalised, the party was quick to realise how powerful cinema could be in extending its ideological control over a population with a seventy-three percent illiteracy rate, and hence soviet cinema became the "handmaiden" (Conroy 94) of communist party propaganda.

In this atmosphere, filmmakers were forced to find their way around the totalising state-driven narratives. According to Tiffany Conroy, in order to avoid censorship, exile, or worst execution by the government, soviet artists and intellectuals were forced to lead a "double life" (124), adopting oblique ways to register dissent and critique of the party. Such ways included self-funding and self-publishing of sensitive material for private circulation or adopting techniques of defamiliarization that required situating plots and storylines in distant settings to critique the political and social climate of contemporary times, and this is where the genre of adaptation came to the rescue. Kozintsev's adaptations of Shakespeare ensured a way to communicate dissent through his art and provided him with an opportunity for a critical re-reading of the Shakespearean thematic universe.

Karol Lir, Kozintsev's adaptation of *King Lear*, stays mostly close to the original but deploys a new culturally specific way of looking and representing. Considered by many as a critical commentary on post-war Russia, this film is saturated with bleak imagery and famously shot on the shores of the Baltic sea to perhaps capture the politically fragile relationship between the USSR, Estonia, and other Baltic states during the period of the cold war. The bleak and hopeless ending of Lear reflects the devastation of an entire historical era and social order with the fall of communism.

Similarly, as critic Alfred Thomas very rightly points out, in Kozintsev's *Hamlet* too, the film's imagery draws out a likeness between claustrophobic and prisons like Denmark and the ideological and physical impenetrability of the Russian state under Stalin (73). The character of Hamlet is an individual who stands against the state and strives to bring transparency and truth to an opaque imprisoning system that thrives upon impenetrability. Kozintsev's critics have even likened Hamlet to a Christ-like figure who throws his title and life in jeopardy in his quest to reach the truth and seems to have much more courage and willpower than what he is usually given credit for.

In Japan, in both theatre as well as film adaptations, there was a natural resistance to the idea of a western Shakespeare, the spirit of pre-existing eastern art forms of the Japanese theatre along with historical folk and mythological narratives had to be incorporated within Shakespeare to make it more accessible to the Japanese population just like the case of Indian adaptations of Shakespeare.

In Kurosawa, we find a conscious blending of aesthetics with social issues and a critical understanding of human nature and condition again. The period in which Kurosawa chooses to set

both his adaptations is the period that constituted the middle ages in Japan. The era was marked by civil war and infighting amongst various clans and ruling families lacking centralized power. This period became a significant choice for the director. One reason for this could be because it reflected the feeling of political uncertainty and chaos that determined Shakespeare's own context for his political plays during the Elizabethan- Jacobian era. The other important reason could be that it represented the anxieties of his age the clash between traditional feudal social structures, the militaristic nationalism of the nation, and its quest to become a world superpower that culminated into the apocalyptic destruction during the second world war.

Both *Ran* and *The Throne of Blood* portray societies that are at once defined by violence, greed, and a desperate struggle for power and identity but, at the same time, are also deeply embedded in tradition and hierarchy. However, these systems prove to be extremely fragile and are repeatedly eroded by the quest for power and control. Kurosawa shows how the nature of violence is also cyclical in human history. In *The Throne of Blood,* it is pointed out that lord Tsuzaki who stands for Shakespeare's King Duncan in the film and who's murder Washizu and his wife as lady Asaji is planning, has resorted to similar violent means in his ascent to power similarly in *Ran* Kurosawa's Lear, Hidetora has a similar violent history as a tyrannical ruler who wiped out clans and families including that of his daughter in law and hence has no right to play "a man more sinned against than sinning" (*Lear* 2.3.64).

Lastly, I come to the two female-centric adaptations of Shakespeare, which, even though written from the perspective of Shakespeare's female characters, turn out to be vastly different from each other. Shakespeare's heroines and anti-heroines display complexities and often walk the tightrope of patriarchy, coming across as potential active agents that either flip the narrative of patriarchy or inhabit ambivalent spaces. It is these ambivalent spaces which have the potency to challenge patriarchal structures that feminist criticism and rewritings of Shakespeare have tried to explore.

Wajda's *Siberian* Lady *Macbeth* adapted from Russian novelist Nicolai Leskov's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsenk,* revolves around Katrina Lvovna Izmailova's life. She chooses to rewrite her own life by murdering an old neglectful husband and an abusive father-in-law to be with her lower-class lover but is soon betrayed by him for another woman. On the other hand, Jocelyn Moorhouse's adaptation of *King Lear,* based on the novel of Jane Smiley, is set in Iowa, USA. At the heart of this story is a land dispute between Larry Cook and his three daughters however, the land in the story soon becomes synonymous with the bodies of women in Larry's life whom he wants to possess and literally violates, Smiley here, introduces the angle of incest and sexual abuse of the two eldest daughters at the hands of the father.

While Leskov's novel and Wajda's film end in the suicide of Katrina, having been betrayed by her lover, Moorhouse and Smiley's adaptation of King Lear tries to create an alternative version of Lear where the daughters are not demonised, and mothers are not obliterated. Hence, while one adaptation reaffirms the patriarchal structures of the society where the woman's (Katrina's) death comes as a punishment for her sexual and moral transgressions, the other makes an attempt to retrieve the absent voices of women. *A Thousand Acres*, both the novel and the film are narrated in the first person from the perspective of the oldest daughter Ginny who ultimately frees herself from the systematic violence, abuse, and trauma of years through the act of recounting, remembering and telling her story.

Texts evolve with time: being products of culture, they are condemned forever to remain in flux, invented, and reinvented to appeal to the demands of the present. Hence whether literary, dramatic, or cinematic, they have within them a power to create/represent and negotiate cultural meanings and furnish identities. At the same time, as critic Henry Giroux points out, our position as subjects within the system is never "coherent or unitary, rational source of self-knowledge, but rather a historical and social construction temporarily formed across a shifting range of multiple and often contradictory discourses" (85).

The attempt of the paper through the study of all these narratives of adaptation was hence to see how adaptations negotiate with the literary, cultural, and historical pasts, at times, the discourses of the past are reaffirmed in the present. Still, there are also moments when the act of rewriting or re-interpreting becomes an act of rejecting the totalising grand narratives in history for alternative versions, which bring to the forefront things which were once unseen, unheard and untold.

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Politics of the Bestseller and the Temporality of Tradition

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Abstract

Literature has eternally been celebrated for its plurality of voices and its spectrum of diversity. However, with a climate of continuous surveillance and changing trends, this diversity is threatened. The praxis of power today is helmed by the market, which has redefined the axiom "to make it sell." Earlier no one judged a manuscript by how many copies it would be expected to sell or if the work was "timely" rather, it used to be about a universal timelessness. The wave of marketization into the public sector shifted the concern towards achieving the "best effect" for a packaged product. The Post-Modern climate of commercialism saw a rise of the best seller which redefined the literary tradition based on the market economy. Consequently, literature came to be valued as a profit-making commodity, trying to meet the requirements of a society. The effort to carve a niche, therefore, became a trap for both.

This vein of marketing and the best-selling success of a book did not necessarily ascertain the parameters of its merit. It was an effort of the editors, reviewers, publishers, agents, and the author to construct a bestseller. Tracing the spur in readership in India with the advent of Chetan Bhagat in 2004 to the present times, this paper aims to read the politics of the bestseller and the changing notion of tradition from timelessness to temporality.

Keywords: Best-seller, Commercialisation, Immortality, Literary Fiction, Popular Fiction, Post-Modernism, Temporality, Timelessness, Tradition

"All great literature is only partly the reflection of a particular year or generation: it is also a timeless thing, which can never become old fashioned or out of date…" (Widdowson 48). Definitions of literature have varied over time: however, what essentially remains is its ability to reflect life along with the changing realities of society. Therefore, even if the literature of a particular age derives from the socio-political and economic context of that time yet its basic impulse of humanity resonates at a universal level. Here, universality not only means relatability but also suggests a timeless appeal. However, not all works of literature achieve this status. Timelessness has often been the attribute of the canon. However, the post-modern shift in time and space has destabilised the canon and paved

the way for multiple literature pieces. This break away from the tradition and the subsequent wave of commercialism gave birth to a "culture of literature" governed more by literary agents, editors, publishers, reviewers, retailers than the author to achieve the best-packaged product. Fiction was not a matter of topical interest: however, the market society corrupted non-market values by evaluating everything for sale. This climate saw the rise of the "bestseller" which redefined the literary tradition based on the market economy.

The concept of a bestseller is not new: however, to evaluate it only on the basis of the highest number of sales is to overlook the politics of its construct. Over the years, the meaning of the term has become more layered and political. Initially, it referred to a book that sold more copies than the others in a stipulated time. They were primarily working on fiction, but over time it began to be seen as a pejorative term and suggested a book of low literary value. With the changing dynamics of the term, today it has come to be associated with a book which has hit one of the major bestseller's list, either printed in the Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, USA TODAY, New York Times, or Publisher's Weekly. In addition to this is a new trend, hitting the Amazon Bestseller's list. However, how far do these markers suggest the worth of a book is still a question? There are no justifiable reasons to ascertain as to why a worthy book fails to make a mark, or for the ones which do, are they really justifying their reward?

This paper aims to dissect the evolving construct of the bestseller in India from 2004, a year which saw an unparalleled rise in readership with the advent of Chetan Bhagat to the present times. To understand the impact of commercialism and the growing politics of the construct, this paper would trigger thoughts around the following premises: first, how far is it relevant to call popular fiction, literature? Second, if literature is said to be the reflection of life, then to what extent does the bestseller reflect the concerns and crisis of the times? Third, if a commercial trend that change with the change in time allows space for a work to become an immortal piece of art?

To begin with, it is important to mark a distinction between two holistic categories the paper essentially realises that of literary fiction and popular fiction, respectively. While the post-modernist thought had led to the collapse of those antitheses between high and low, elite and popular, yet what is literary has been deeply rooted in our colonial mind-sets. While popular fiction is quick to be valued as a means of relaxation or distracting one from work whereas: a work of literature is valued for its own sake. It's primarily evaluated for having an artistic or intellectual value, deployed through various usage of language, which is not ordinary. Until the advent of printing, getting hold of a literary work was not easy. Selective bookstores and libraries were the storehouses of such works, which were not accessible to all. However, with the inception of printing, selling books became a capitalist trade so

much that the primary relations of production between the writer and the reader were essentially commodity relations. This "print capitalism" moreover, turned into a global culture in recent times with the access to internet which made everything available for all. Gradually this platform became a global market that infused people with the idea of being noticed, getting attention, to sell. This intention of selling made the task market-oriented. This imposed culture was a trap for both the author as much as the reader. The compulsion of the market made every other story look alike, which targeted a particular section of society, catering primarily to the market economy.

This new culture of literature was based on one-way communication, i.e., the author bought from the reader the story and sold it back to them in return for a profit. The story, therefore, changed every time with the change in trends, fashions, and tastes of the consumer. It became a commodity: it no longer took into consideration the significance, the responsibility of stirring change in society. This newly emerging culture which dominated every sphere of life, leads us to a very pertinent question about the role of money and markets in society. With the advent of growing commercialism, there's hardly anything that money cannot buy. While money couldn't buy literature for entertainment, there came a visibly rooted transition in the purpose of literature. It gave birth to a new tradition that saw a clear shift from timelessness to temporality. In other words, it was easy to mark a distinction between the popular and the literary. As Aaron Meskin, in his essay "Popular Fiction," points out, "there is nothing more to being popular than being widely liked, appreciated and approved of" (120). As distinct from the literary, popular fiction was undervalued as low art. However, the paper here does not refer to the genre in general but to its commercial aspect of marketing the bestseller. "Bestseller" as a term has become so poignant in everyday language that it appears to be a category in itself and is also often interchangeably used for popular fiction. However, the term is used to create a marketing image, i.e., a book becomes a bestseller mainly because an authoritative source says it is, which improves its chances of selling to a much wider audience. However, this could not be a parameter to evaluate the merit of work as the larger purpose is to sell.

The materialist nature of the term and its rampant usage has diluted its importance in the literary arena. This thought leads to the primary concern of the paper as to how far be it relevant and justified to call popular fiction literature? The following proposition has two clear demeanors: first, in considering the relevance of popular fiction vis-à-vis literature, one associates an elitist position to the latter and works through the binary of the literary and the popular. However, in not doing so, it is to take liberty with the canon in the post-modern world. For the past few decades, as marketability and revenue production has taken precedence over all other considerations, scholars of humanities and literature have faced the need to justify their works. Amidst this changing trend and the need to

stay relevant, what emerged was compromising literature which inevitably refused the domain of the literary nor could befit the popular.

This newfound trend made popular synonymous with entertainment, mass art, low art, or junk fiction. This understanding questioned the relevance of popular fiction vis-à-vis literature. To derive an answer to this question, it becomes important to understand what encompasses literature? For long, literature was invariably linked to the canon, against which other writings were evaluated. On the one hand, literature is defined to be a work of merit with artistic value. On the other hand, popular literature is assumed to be lacking in merit and is an ordinary work of leisure. The gap between the two is so much so that the latter does not even find space in public libraries which claim to have a collection of "literary" works. This inevitably raises the question of whether a work of popular fiction, not literature? What makes it less literary? There can be two possibilities in this regard: one, if a work reaches a feat of being the bestseller does that inevitably realises its merit? Second, if a work fails to make a mark in the said category, does that necessarily mean it is devoid of merit? For over centuries, the concept of a bestseller has captivated writers, publishers, and even the general public. Is this phenomenon a complete accident or the result of a carefully executed marketing strategy? Is still a question to ponder?

While several attempts have been made to identify as to why the whole world seemed to be reading the same book at the same time. What is mass readership saying about the books readers want to read? Tracing the trajectories of the bestselling books in India from 2005 to the present times, some common parameters and techniques of construction can be identified. To be a bestseller is no longer a matter of mere chance rather has become a preconceived and a predetermined construct. With the advent of Chetan Bhagat in 2004, the market sale for Indian fiction in India escalated from thousands to millions. However, this has not been an overnight transformation rather was resultant of careful market analysis and of surpassing the dominant gaze. Bhagat managed to shift the spectrum with his first book by pricing it for Rs. 95 back then, an audacious risk to attract young readers. A successful book today is a well-packaged product that is determined by its mass appeal. Consequently, the appearance of a book has come to play a very significant role in determining its success rate. Therefore, the authors invest in a professional strategy to get an exclusive cover designed with an interesting title. While the title is kept intriguing yet it isn't complex, as seen in Bhagat's strategy, which includes a number in his titles as a mark of distinction. In order to ensure a wider audience for a book, readability becomes another significant factor. The bestselling writers have consciously broken away from the elitist, jargonised language of the canonical work rather use lucid language and easy vocabulary to make work more communicable. Moreover, unlike the classics, which have an interwoven plot with a multiplicity of themes and characters, these works are usually devoid of

layered issues rather chose to focus on the journey of the protagonist, often a middle-class individual stuck between the pangs of daily living. This is evident in Bhagat's approach, which wants to share people's minds, to have them wean off social media and make them interested in reading and therefore carve a linear plotline.

Decisive publishing and timely launching also become important aspects of comparison in the process of the construct. Today in a market-driven time, a book's credibility is evaluated from the publisher's brand credibility. It also improves the chances of selling to a much wider audience automatically. Moreover, along with a credible publishing house backing up a book, launching it at the right place also plays a vital role. It is the launch that determines its reach towards the desired audience and also helps in generating maximum revenues. This is evident of the techniques adopted by various writers: for example, Chetan Bhagat's publishers at Rupa print his books at several locations and take millions of copies to bookshops for a countrywide release.

Moreover, as a part of the launching technique today, it has also become important for the author to carve his image. The insincerity of efforts Bhagat has familiarised himself to people through various mediums, be it books, newspaper columns, T.V. appearances, scripting, or social media presence. This has acquainted him to the masses worldwide and is the reason behind his popularity. Another factor essential in the making of a bestseller is to launch it timely. The phrase "timely launch" has garnered much importance amidst the publishers and authors who are opportunists of finding the right moment for launching their book in order to generate a predetermined impact.

This impact can be seen from the trajectory of the bestsellers. The trend of the bestseller gained momentum with the advent of the author Chetan Bhagat in 2004. While his debut novel Five Point Someone (2004) saw commercial success, however, it was his second novel, One Night @ the Call Centre (2005) which brought a swerve in the market. Between 2005-2010 while on the one hand, the call-centre industry in India saw an offshoring phenomenon with the boom in consumerism. On the other hand, Bhagat became almost a household name overnight. According to The New York Times, the novel sold the entire print run of 50,000 copies in less than three days of its release and had set a record for the country's fastest-selling book. The popularity of his works had brought to the forefront the lives, aspirations, and struggles of the young middle-class people. It also paved the way for his contemporary writers Ravinder Singh and Durjoy Datta, who succeeded in the position of the bestselling authors in 2007 and 2008 with I Too Had a Love Story, and Of Course, I Love You Respectively. On a larger canvass, while these writers influenced by economic reasons were redefining popular romance, on the other hand, the social and political issues of the times gave rise to a parallel universe of popular mythological fiction. In the wake of a newly elected central

government and the Ayodhya verdict, the literature of Devdutt Pattanaik and Amish Tripathi came into the foreground. The former's Devlok (2016) and the latter's Shiva Trilogy (2010-13) had sold millions of copies in a short span of time and yet continue to ring the tills. With a successful trail, these writers caught the nerve of the market and developed their popular literature, which was a calculated attempt around similar themes with varied lenses. It is evident of their trajectories while the former was writing Sita (2013), Shikhandi (2014), and My Gita (2015).

On the other hand, the latter produced Ram Chandra Series (2015-19). In this growing battle of being popular, one often tends to overlook the contribution of those writers who were not chasing popularity, yet their works become one. The prime example of this category is the author Arundhati Roy whose work profile clearly doesn't portray a market or a strategy but speaks for itself, for the society at large.

While to timely publish a book is an important parameter to ensure a good economic status yet social factors also become significant to be taken into consideration to ensure the desired impact. It includes efforts like making the market of a book user-friendly, ensuring e-versions of the texts to make it disabled-friendly. Also, to have a pan-Indian reach, the authors also publish their novels in regional languages. Many famous authors like Chetan Bhagat, Ravinder Singh, and Preeti Shenoy, etc have published regional translations of their works.

In the wake of commercialisation and the increasing competitiveness of the lookalike culture, the bestsellers essentially seem to adopt certain compulsive techniques to rescue their space. To justify the making of a construct, it becomes essential to monopolise the market. In this effort, it becomes important for these authors to essentialize a hold on various forms of media communication. As a part of launching to have the book displayed across media platforms acquaints the readers with the project and builds their curiosity. This is evident when Flipkart bought the most expensive newspaper space to advertise its exclusive online retail, as seen a month before the release of Chetan Bhagat's Half Girlfriend.

Moreover, the authors had to continue to make efforts to time and again launch their book at different places and circumstances in order to avoid stagnancy in recorded sales. In other words, to ensure the long run of a book, the author has to find ways and means to keep it alive in the memory of the audience and not become an obsolete product. For example, Ravinder Singh got him I too had a Love Story (2008) published in the U.K. by Transworld Publishers, Penguin Random House after ten years of its publication in order to ensure a mass appeal and a sustained market for his product. In the wake of commercialisation and globalisation, the drive of these writers to write a novel is not merely to tell a story rather, a major reason is to earn a livelihood. Therefore, for most of them, their story is

primarily a product, and they adopt every possible marketing fad to ensure its sale. Writer Ravinder Singh confessed in one of his interviews that he had not even read a single book before he wrote his first novel.

Writing today has not just remained an academic phenomenon rather has become commercialised to an extent that there are software people use to write their novels or hire a writer to write their stories. The shift in the socio-economic culture has brought this shift in the purpose of writing. Consequently, many doctors, engineers, celebrities are using their brand value to publish their bestselling books. This attempt at de-personalised writing raises concern towards its value and purpose. While a work of literature comes with a sense of responsibility to reflect the concerns and crisis of society, therefore, how far does these motive driven books justify the meaning of literature?

This brings to fore the second proposition, the essential feature of literature as a reflection of society. An individual is a product of his surroundings therefore, a work of art cannot be created in a vacuum. It is thus impossible to find literature excluding the attitude, morale and values of societal living. However, to say "the society" is to invoke an entire tradition whose contemporariness has been deeply rooted in the set of values and beliefs made and remade over the years. The role of a writer is to be aware of this tradition: it is what T.S. Eliot has called a "historical sense," i.e., to have "a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the temporal and the timeless together is what makes a writer, traditional" (Eliot, "Tradition" 47). This sense of temporality not just makes a writer acutely conscious of his place in the time of his contemporaneity but also creates awareness of its continuum.

As society evolves, a new tradition evolves, which is a product of the socio-economic realities of that time. In this process, one drifted almost without realising from being market economies to becoming market societies. While market economy was working towards effective production however, it soon came to dominate every aspect of life. Now market thinking and market values became the determining factors in the functioning of society. Everything around was now measured in terms of its utility and consumption. It was a wave of "timeliness" surpassing "timelessness." Publishers considered themselves opinion-makers and decided if the work was "timely" enough to be published in the present and how it should be packaged for its best effect. Therefore, for a work to be called the bestseller it had to achieve that best effect. How much role does the meticulousness of the story and its aesthetics perform remained still a question to ponder? However, One thing could surely be determined that it was just some percentage of the package and not the only thing required.

This conscious following of trend can be clearly reflected in the trajectory of the best-selling writers. Chetan Bhagat who featured amongst world's 100 most influential people's list in 2010, came up with

2 States in 2009, which was a story about the protagonists from two different states, falling in love but have to face trails to convince their families for an inter-state marriage. In 2011 his Revolution 2020 discussed the issue of corruption in education system in India through the differences in the track of two friends: Gopal and Raghav having same aspirations but belonging to extreme social backgrounds. This was followed by Half Girlfriend in 2014, which showed the difficulty of a rural Hindi speaking boy who falls in love with an English-speaking affluent girl. This trajectory of Bhagat's love stories against different backdrops continued in his subsequent works One Indian Girl (2016) and The Girl in Room 105 (2018). Though his novels were set against the backdrop of pertinent issues of today's Indian society yet the lookalike love plots dilute the seriousness of the issues more often. In recent years Bhagat has seemingly experimented to foray in different genres yet the quintessential nature of the plots remains the same. His risk-taking graph is low. Moreover, the frequency of his novels beginning from the popularity of his career has been rampant. He published his first novel in 2014, followed by the subsequent novels in 2005, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2018: almost every year a novel was published without risking the breakdown of his image. It was a clear indication of the need for creating a public image, to set a pattern, to be able to decode the market formula, to desperately carve a niche. To compare his trajectory with another popular fiction writers namely Amitav Ghosh or Arundhati Roy who's gradually progressing works are not an attempt at hit and trial rather addresses poignant issues of culture, history and contemporaneity. Their works were clearly not "chasing popularity" and are not a part of the lookalike culture. The popularity which the novels got in return was in effect an acknowledgement of their merit which not only sold but was very much "popular."

The loss of essence in this trend setting world clearly reflects a gap between the reader and the writer. For these writers writing is a strictly professional activity. The fast paced-ness of these books engages the reader just momentarily to know what is next and to instantly turn the page. This rapidity of their nature doesn't allow the reader to engage with the issue and therefore for the same reason fail to trigger a thought process. This drift away from the purpose of literature saw the rise of commercial fiction which went farther in its reach, was merely plot driven, entertaining and fast paced as reiterated by Karthika V.K., former Chief Editor at Harper Collins.

Following the trajectory, it is easy to conclude that to be popular is to be with the times. The purpose of art has changed today i.e., rather than seeking universality the artists 'intentions are governed by the audience, the market. In other words, whatever sells becomes the new trend and to ensure the growth of their profession, the artists have to change with the change in commercial trends based on mass opinion. However, to give agency in the hands of the other is to negate their selves, their

expressions, and their creativity. The changing commercial trends doesn't let the writer decide and discover his/her art rather force them within constraints to produce a certain "type." To what extent does this process allow freedom of mind for an artist is another question?

This leads to the final argument as to what extent this rapid change allows work to be immortal. According to the trend before a consumer could relish the experience of a book, there are speculations of their forthcoming book. How important is it to allow a work to be situated in a particular time and space, in the present? Understanding the need to justify a work of art irrespective of the changing trends is the responsibility of a writer. However, the bestselling trend seems not to be wary of this responsibility as there is nothing to justify. Their stories come from the audience themselves, who approve of their works through a silent business of numbers. For example, Ravinder Singh one of the best-selling romance writers after the immense success of his first novel, I too had a Love Story (2007) caught the knack of a "type" that would sell and thereafter came up with works on similar lines namely- Can Love happen twice? (2011), Love Stories that touched My Heart (2012), Like it, Happened Yesterday (2013,) and others. However, the larger question is whether this patterning of the series an impediment to the growth of the work? After years of publication, will it still be remembered for what it was, or will it be the author who established himself/herself as the best-selling author be one to be remembered? The bestsellers have a peculiar trait that they're sold primarily for their stories. Once the story is revealed to the reader, he/s doesn't have any further investment in the book. Moreover, that story soon fades away with the arrival of the next book. This swift process of demand and supply has relegated the position of literature to that of mere story and storytelling. What holds importance is the final product while the process from conception to distribution is nullified. Therefore, the ability of a work of art to surpass all ages and be immortal is not the fate of the best sellers, they're a product of "commodity fetishism" (Marx 39). It is not merely the purpose of art that has changed over time but also the definition of what is interpreted as art has changed too. Moreover, in this technology-driven world, the idea of immortality is an insignificant thought as immortality is dependent on memory and memories are being displaced in this fast paced-ness.

Also, for a work to reach the status of immortality is to achieve the state of being a classic. A classic remains so in all ages, it doesn't cease in its universal appeal at any given time and resonates with everyone largely. Thus, a bestseller that reaches immortality will inevitably be a classic. To be immortal is to be remembered forever. In this digital world media plays a significant role in etching a work in people's memories forever through the medium of screen. Therefore, with the trend of filming a novel, it has become easier for the authors to cross that path of immortality and make their works resonate with the audience worldwide. A film heightens the emotion of words on screen and

is successful in bringing a reconciliatory catharsis which a textual reading may not be able to achieve. For example, to read Chetan Bhagat's 2 States and to watch Abhishek Verman's adaptation of the same are two different experiences. While merely reading a story of an interstate marriage was not a new affair and would not have left an impression to be able to remember it forever. However, after the film, the story reached universal immortality. Similarly, reading Five Point, Someone would not have given an experience a 3 Idiots did.

Thus, in the wake of the changing trends, the preoccupation with being accepted and the race of growing business, the stories should not suffer. Stories are the essence of our civilisation and comprise life elements: it becomes the responsibility of the storytellers to be aware of the present bait and not let the market succeed in making us belief the façade. While it is equally important to be with the times but today in a post-post-modern world when everyone else is hoarding trends, literature should also make it new by not setting one.

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Transcending Temporal Boundaries: A Study of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

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Abstract

Margaret Atwood holds a very distinctive and relevant position in the realm of Speculative Fiction even today. She has been foresighted in analysing problems present in the society in her times and incorporated them in her texts which have transcended the temporal boundaries. These texts are as apposite today as they were three decades ago. In her famous work, The Handmaid's Tale, the Canadian novelist has presented a theonomic society that functions owomen's oppressionen on different levels and forbids emotional or physical involvement among people of all genders, t maintain its dominion. The protnovel's protagonisties the societal norms on various occasions, the most relevant being her physical intimacy with a guard, which finally brings upon her the inevitable doom. Atwood establishes her significance with the amount ofnumber that have followed her novels, including not only orks and cinematic pieces, but oth andms of art too. Thiser is an academic attempt to analyse the significance of Atwood's works in the contemporary times, and will look closely at the power dynamics and the relationships among people of the Gilead.

Keywords- Temporal boundaries, gender dystopia, Science Fiction

When you are a fiction writer, you're confronted every day with the question that confronted, among others, George Eliot and Dostoevsky: what kind of world shall you describe for your readers? The one you can see around you, or the better one you can imagine? If only the latter, you'll be unrealistic: if only the former, despairing. But it is by the better world we can imagine that we judge the world we have. If we cease to judge this world, we may find ourselves, very quickly, in one which is infinitely worse (Atwood 333).

The above lines by Margaret Atwood hold a significant position in the discourse of utopian and dystopian studies. The premise of Speculative Fiction, especially utopian and dystopian texts, is posited on the discontentment with the current society. While utopian works originate from the necessity to create a world which could become the basis for change in the real world, dystopian

works are created because reality has terrifying socio-political and psychological elements that may rapidly develop into alarming events. A work of Speculative Fiction becomes worthy of attention only when it encompasses elements of reality. As M. H. Abrams states, "Dystopia means a bad place…in which certain ominous tendencies of [the] present social, political and technological order are projected in some future culmination" (Abrams 417). The present paper focuses on one of the notable dystopian texts, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Margaret Atwood has achieved global recognition through her seminal works focusing on grievous issues, such as the dreadful impacts of climate change, human and technological advancements, etc. Among some of the greatest writers of Speculative Fiction, Atwood holds a very distinctive and relevant position even today. She has been foresighted in analysing problems present in the society in her times and has incorporated them in her texts, which have transcended the temporal boundaries. These texts are as apposite today as they were three decades ago. Atwood is widely known for one work in particular, *The Handmaid's Tale*. The Canadian novelist has presented a theonomic society that functions on the oppression of women on different levels and forbids emotional or physical intimacy among people of all genders to maintain its dominion. The work has a nightmarish quality since it is situated in a world where the movement for women's emancipation had already successfully taken place.

Atwood has imagined a future society in the late twentieth century where a woman's value is measured based on her ability to procreate, which holds the utmost importance in the face of a catastrophic decline in the birth rates due to pollution and diseases. In this totalitarian regime, the law denies women their rights of jobs, property inheritance, inheriting money, and identity. This new government is formed by right-wing religious fundamentalists, who take us back to the world of the so-called traditional values. One could see the glimpses of such sights in many countries of the world, where they advocate a return to the traditional values on the pretext of society's betterment.

The themes Atwood incorporated in *The Handmaid's Tale*, including the constant surveillance, lack of freedom, the routines, lack of intimacy, and the failed escape attempts, are common in most of the dystopian works. Yet, there are more possibilities for Atwood's work to have a plot closest to reality. The author may hope that their created society may serve as a warning to the world.

Quite similarly, we are under constant surveillance today. Everything that is said or done, and everything that's looked up on the internet, is constantly being recorded. People's identities are being fixed into tangible plastic cards, and people are becoming mere numbers. But how much do we bother? As Atwood, through Offred, conveys in the text, "we lived, as usual, by ignoring" (Atwood 62). We are no different from the people of Atwood's Gileadean society, who failed to foresee the impending crisis. We are too fully aware of how technological advancements are snatching away our privacy, yet we are unbothered by it. It's human nature to ponder over one's mistakes when time has passed. Social platforms – Instagram, Twitter, Facebook – play a great role in the fixations of identities. A wrong move on any of these platforms could easily develop into the whole nation standing against a person. Humans tend not to learn from history, but is it possible to learn from the future?

Another theme of *The Handmaid's Tale* is a much terrifying reality today. Recently, abortion bans were effectively passed bylaws in nine US states: Alabama and Georgia passed the most extreme of this law by banning abortion after six weeks of pregnancy, including in cases of rape and ectopic pregnancy. In *The Handmaid's Tale,* the female body is treated as a bone for contention for society's power structures. Patriarchy invariably puts the female body in a paradoxical position – valorizing it on the one hand while also imposing an ideal type. Pregnancy is not deemed an appealing phase for the female body in the eyes of patriarchy, yet the relevance of pregnancy occupies a great space in *The Handmaid's Tale's narrative*. The existence of women is reduced to the sole purpose of domestic care, nurturing, and reproductive affairs. Women with viable ovaries have become "two-legged wombs". Society including the Aunts, who work as agents for the regime, care very little about the handmaids. If the handmaids are to be punished, it must be on the parts that don't prove to be damaging for society's interests. Aunt Lydia explains, "For our purposes, your feet and your hands are not essential" (Atwood 98). They are considered just as containers, and only their "viable ovaries" are valued in a society that assesses women on the basis of their labour.

A society where women are devoid of reproductive rights and body autonomy is already moving towards a dystopian future. "Gilead succeeds in reducing woman's perception of herself as a mere function" (Davaseeli 180), which results in division among women into various categories with varying degree of victimisation – Wives and Aunts ostensibly hold some power over other women: Marthas, Handmaids, and Econowives are each assigned tasks to carry out throughout their lives

and must not detract from their specific roles: Unwomen are denied any agency in the regime and are thrown out of the Gileadean society to rot while cleaning the toxic waste from the biohazards of the pre-Gileadean era. Even men are divided into categories – Guardians, Angels, Commander, and Eyes. The names assigned to men mirror the supreme position men hold in the world's patriarchy and major religions. They are the leaders of the world and guardians of women. The word 'Eyes' automatically establishes supremacy as the all-seeing eye of God.

Although women and men both stand at diametrically opposite sides of power dynamics, both are devoid of their identities. Women as well as men are reduced to categories. Yet, women are the ones who are subjected to complete loss of identity. The handmaids remain an extension of their patronymic titles. Offred's real name is not revealed in the text, and she remains 'of-Fred' even when the future society studies her memoir. Even in her victimisation, she is made to feel as if she is in a somewhat privileged position - "I am leading a pampered life," she says (Atwood 55).

Religious fundamentalism is spreading fast in the world. Many countries have started the practice of fascism to varying degrees. Where imposing a unified religious identity as part of the national sensibility is one, others could advocate coherence based on the nativity. In most cases of fascism, the dominant narrative that emerges has its basis on the need for the revival of the seemingly *lost* culture and identity. This culture and unified identity are not only based on a political agenda to separate a particular group but also invariably proves to be patriarchal in learning. As we all are familiar with patriarchy's social and psychological domination techniques, we nonetheless fail to discern the extent of its impact on everyday life. Our news channels, education, entertainment media, and advertisements help perpetuate the patriarchal myths and ingraining these ideas subconsciously. A rape survivor is considered more as an equal participant in the offence rather than a victim. Thus it makes the survivor internalize the patriarchal values prevalent in the society. The example of this internalization is depicted in *The Handmaid's Tale*, where Janine is criticised and blamed for the gang-rape she endured when she was a teenager. "*Her* fault, *her* fault, *her* fault, we chant in unison" forces the guilt on her till her barriers to keep the false discourse outbreaks down, and she perceives it as her fault. "It was my fault. I led them on. I deserved the pain" (Atwood 78). As Aunt Lydia advocates, "Modesty is invisibility…Never forget it. To be seen – to be *seen* – is to be…penetrated. What you must be, girls, is impenetrable" (Atwood 34).

In *The Handmaid's Tale,* Atwood very artfully depicts the different ways patriarchy works under a protector's guile, almost as a messiah. Aunt Lydia is the ideal example of how women are made

to think that their downfall is because of the abundance of choice in their lives. In the name of protection, patriarchy confines women in spaces that do not allow freedom of expression. The following quote sheds light on the above argument: "There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don't underrate it" (Atwood 30). This is also mirrored in the Commander's speech when he points out, "We've given them more than we've taken away...Think of the troubles they had before" (Atwood 227). The prime example of "freedom to" and "freedom from" can be seen in the case of an Islamic country, Iran. In the mid-twentieth century, under Pahlan Shahs' rule, before the Islamic revolution in the country, women's involvement in various sectors of society increased. The participation of women in the fields of economy, education sectors, and workplaces increased many folds, and they acquired higher official positions of scientists, judges, minister,s and athletes. However, the "freedom to" achieve greater in the public sector was attained at the cost of giving up the freedom to follow traditional values and women were forced, along with men, to absorb western values that were advocated by the then ruler. In 1979 women participated on a large scale against the Shah rulers in favour of the Islamic Revolution, leading to the overthrow of the monarchy. Ironically, under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini women faced many issues in political equality with men. The "freedom to" was now converted to "freedom from" western expression of liberty. While the veil was seen as a symbol of return to the traditional values of Iran during the revolution, it soon became a threatening force when the talk of the hijab being compulsory circulated in society. In the early 1980s, women were also banned from occupying positions of judges and were discouraged from pursuing law. Some of the changes made during Kholmeini's rule were repealed after his death, but women were not allowed to enjoy major official positions as before. They were encouraged to fill fields such as gynecology, pharmacology, and midwifery – all domestic spheres in nature.

Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is not a traditional dystopian narrative as far as the catastrophic endings of most of the dystopian texts are concerned. Atwood doesn't end the novel at the tragic end of the protagonist, rather it presents a further future society that has overthrown the totalitarian regime of the Gilead. This creates an opportunity for the readers to understand, even through the post-Gileadean era how the folly of human nature works against learning from history. Offred rightly hopes for a future even when the chances are bleak. "Sanity is a valuable possession: I hoard it the way people once hoarded money. I save it, so I will have enough, when the time comes" (Atwood 115). Unlike George Orwell's hero in 1984, who is a self-conscious character and actively takes part in the rebellion to bring about the fall of the regime, Atwood's protagonist is a passive character who gradually emerges as a heroine. In fact, Offred considers not herself but

Moira as a heroine and wishes for her friend to continue her fight against the regime even when faced with dire consequences. Offred doesn't actively participate in the underground rebellion movement, but her actions are indicative of defiance at the unconscious personal level. The will to live and to feel, the constant reminders she gives herself of her name and her past, all these personal actions are suggestive of hope that someday this regime will end and she will be able to experience a normal life again. She doesn't prove to be entirely wrong, because the regime is eradicated in the future, although whether her ordeals end or not little is known about that. She leaves a dried daffodil under the mattress "for the next woman, the one who comes after me, to find" (Atwood 105).

According to Atwood, dystopia and utopia both are "two sides of the same fictional coin". Most dystopias are created, either intentionally or unintentionally, when the ruling body tries to fashion the present world on their narrow ideas of Utopia. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* transcends temporal boundaries because it successfully warns the readers about the psychological domination techniques of patriarchy and discusses its impact at length, which holds much relevance in the present time. Atwood's work brilliantly explores the theme of religion as a tool to successfully incorporate the oppressive patriarchal ideas within the society that deems women as a 'vessel' for procreation. As it is indoctrinated to the handmaids in *The Handmaid's Tale*, "*Blessed are silent*", I ponder whether we can afford to be blessed at present.

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Beyond Boundaries: A Reading of Githa Hariharan's Selected Texts

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Abstract

Feminism in India generally delineates solely with women issues, but Githa Hariharan is one of the contemporary Indian English writers who talk about the plight of both men and women bound by sinister rules of Indian society in one way or the other. In her works, she meticulously explores the issues that people come across, be it caste, class, gender and identity obstacles, relationships, or society. But as a relatively new writer, she stands out from other Indian authors as she is paving way for new feminism through the inclusion of genders in her works. Her focus on a blend of past with the present, mythology with modernity transcends the temporal boundaries and makes her works more relevant as a premise for the upcoming feminist theories. Devi, the protagonist in *The Thousand Faces of the Night*, finds herself torn between mythical preaching and her own needs. At the same time, Sara in *Fugitive Histories* struggles with identity and crisis, and Shiv in *The Times of Siege* is threatened by an extremist group and is able to fight it with the help of his niece, who becomes his anchor of support and strength. So, in the light of the aforementioned issues, this paper attempts to explore how in her novels Hariharan depicts the intricate relationships that various characters share with themselves and with others around them as they become their own as well as each other's support system by defying conventional rules and gender boundaries.

Keywords: Indian women writers, feminism, patriarchy, gender stereotypes

In Judith Butler's words:

> Gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities (146).

Indian society operates on hierarchical systems on multiple levels, so, in order to survive, just like a woman, even a man has to succumb to its pecking order. In Indian society, patriarchal oppression increases with the increase in the financial gap and communal conflict. And if they (men/women) fail to do what society expects them to or tries to go beyond the norms society has set for them, they are made to face the barbarity of the so-called civilized society.

The discourse of feminism in India generally focuses solely on women's issues. Many prominent and acclaimed writers such as Anita Desai, Kamala Das, Amrita Pritam, Nayantara Sehgal, Gita Mehta, Manju Kapoor, and others have critically talked about the atrocities that women have been facing through decades. Indian women writers have meticulously talked about the problems women come across from almost every perspective, be it psychological, socio-cultural, or political. But not many writers have touched upon the subject of subjugation of men by the hands of patriarchy. Githa Hariharan, unlike many Indian women writers, talks about gender issues in contemporary Indian society. What makes her stand out from other writers is her vivid portrayal of a bleak image of contemporary Indian society by showing the conditions of women as well as men as they have to abide by the norms that society has set over the years. Her works contemplate the issues that people come across, be it caste, class, gender and identity obstacles, relationships by portraying characters in a realistic manner dealing with complicated issues, such as tussle between tradition and modernity, identity crisis, quest for freedom, mythology and reality, and constant conflict between East-West ideology.

One of the main challenges of Indian feminism includes women's concerns within the broad spectrum of family and community. For women in India, "Self-sacrifice and self-denial are their nobility, and their fortitude and yet they have been subject to all equities, indignities, inequality and discrimination" (Chawla). This holds when we look at how women have been treated through centuries, even if they fulfill every expectation of societal works and roles. Albeit the socio-cultural conditions for women are changing and have come a long way from what they were a few decades ago, the complete autonomy for what and how women want is still a far cry.

Hariharan has taken a different path by showing female characters bound in patriarchal structures but subverting them or emerging from them to stand up for themselves and others around them. Hariharan's novels show women characters from almost every sphere of a society stuck in familial relations and trying to find a way out. Devi in *The Thousand Faces of Night* and Sara in *Fugitive Histories* try to live up to the expectations of their respective families, but in doing so, they go deeper into their inner conflicts of breaking away from anything that ties them down. "The role of the family and community is especially pertinent to the issue of feminism in India, the conflict between 'compromise 'and 'confrontation 'taking center stage" (Mukhopadhyay 99). As mentioned earlier, the family has always been an important aspect when the question of an Indian woman's freedom arises. It is also evident in Hariharan's novels how difficult it is for women to

prioritize themselves over their families. Sita in *Thousand Faces of Night* is the paradigm of compromise that almost every woman goes through: compromise for her family's needs and its reputation in society, while Devi, on the other hand, stands for confrontation. Confrontation of her desires as opposed to the rules and duties that she is expected to follow. It is quite ironic that Hariharan, in her novel *The Thousand Faces of Night,* has named her characters Sita and Devi after extremely important figures of Hindu mythology. Sita is a dutiful wife, daughter-in-law, and loving mother, just like a woman with the ideals of devotion, service, and self-sacrifice is expected to be. Even when she wants to break free from these roles, she capitulates to it to make everyone around her pleased and because the stereotypes of being an ideal woman have been deeply ingrained in her. As opposed to this, Devi, her daughter, asserts herself by taking control of her life as she runs away from a marriage that she feels is restraining her to the boundaries of her house and is also devoid of any emotions. Despite the teaching of Mayamma on how a married woman should give in to the needs of her husband and in-laws 'family, Devi rebels against the ideals and chooses to be with Gopal with whom she believes she will have a meaningful relationship. She believes that Gopal is not the patriarch like her husband Mahesh, but nonetheless, she finds herself in similar male-dominated bounds. But it is in the end: she emerges as an individual who does not need a relationship to define her being as she stands up to her name 'Devi 'which is the symbol of power, strength, and courage: she realizes that she is no longer a vehicle of other's ends. In Hariharan's other novel, *The Fugitive Histories,* Sara is a strong and independent woman, just like Bim in Anita Desai's *Clear Light of the Day*, but unlike Bim, Sara does not understand the meaning of her life until the end of the novel. Throughout the novel, she oscillates between her identity as a Hindu or Muslin and the horrors of the past and her current situation. She understands that if she wants to survive, she has to make space for herself in a male-driven world.

Over the years, with changes in socio-cultural scenarios, there has been a little change in women's condition. It is not polar opposites of compromise and confrontation, but there is a grey area between them where women are trying to balance both family and their individual needs: this could be seen in *In Times of Siege.* In this novel, Hariharan has shown two strong women from different generations, Meena and Rekha: both are educated but what makes them stand out is the difference with which they perceive things. They are modern women who know how and when to assert themselves. They don't compromise with their own ideals in order to blindly follow societal norms. When Shiv gets in troubled circumstances, Meena takes charge of the situation and gets him out of it. Instead of playing the role of a patriarch, Shiv listens to Meena and is inspired by her, and

since it is Meena who plays the role of a matriarch by helping through his plight, he holds her in high regard. As mentioned earlier, many Indian writers talk about feminism. Still, in doing so, they forget to consider the fact that just like women, men have also been type-casted in roles of bread-earner, protector, and so on. But Githa Hariharan, along with taking a standpoint on feminism, discusses a need to address issues that men face.

"Manhood means different things at different times to different people. We come to know what it means to be a man in our culture by setting our definitions in opposition to a set of 'others '- racial minorities, sexual minorities, and above all, women" (Kimmel 25). Men are often taught that they are superior to others- which means women (specifically) and people from lower society strata. Since Indian society works as a pyramid of hierarchies, the perfect man in this scenario is the one who belongs to the upper class, earns well, and dominates 'others. 'But more often than not, men also stand at the receiving end of patriarchy: however, they don't find themselves in as bad position as women, but nonetheless, they have to abide by the norms or otherwise they are treated heinously. Since there has not been many Indian writers Githa Hariharan is one such writer who showcases a real portrayal of male characters facing emotional and moral crisis at both social and personal level in present society. She has shown difference between two sets of men: materialistic and artistic: former category are men with patriarchal ideology and latter are the men who try to break and get away from the idea of toxic masculinity. Mahesh in *Thousand Faced of Night* belongs to the first category. He is a well-educated man who appears to have liberal thoughts about marriage but when it comes to reality, he is a follower of typical male centric ideals. For him, Devi's place is in her home while he goes out for work. She should always serve her in-laws happily, without tiring or any figment of anger. Her father-in-law is also shown as a deep believer in patriarchal ideology, but his ideals are derived from mythology. He is a Sanskrit professor who still follows the old traditions of brahmin-hood and shares mythical stories with Devi where women are traditional and homely. So expects his daughter-in-law to follow the same ideas. Professor Krishna, being a poetry professor in *I Have Become the Tide*, tries to break-free from mythical and historical patriarchal ideas. He neither believes in the oppressive caste system nor in the suppression of women. As a result becomes a target of an extremist group whose ideals are not only patriarchal to the core but also misogynist, as these extremists believe that a menstruating woman should be kept at a distance, a woman's only purpose is to beget a son or otherwise she is not fulfilling her duties and is thus condemned. Since both Devi's father-in-law and Krishna, are in privileged positions, where on the one hand the former tries to exploit other people by using his

position as the superior male patriarch of the house, on the other hand the latter tries to educate others. In *Fugitive Histories* Bala's husband is shown as the epitome of patriarchal figure: he tamed his young bride to an extent that she chooses to stay quite all her life, for which she is also considered mentally unstable. While Asad is shown as the man with values of respecting his wife and daughter as he does not subdue anybody but rather listens to his wife in every important decision making. Samar, Asad's son, follows his father's liberal ideas and so helps his sister and checks on his mother regularly. He is the one who is shown to have a caring and tender nature as opposed to tough, insensitive image of men. Similarly, Shiv in *In Times of Siege* knows that being a man or a woman does not make anybody immune to violence or problem of any kind. His wife is an educated and wise woman, and so he looks up to her and talks to her before making any wise decision. Similarly, when his wife is not there to help him, he does not shy away from asking for help from his niece as an extremist group attacks him for publishing a new perspective on a historical period.

Where other Indian writers show their male characters either in the light of partition trauma or diasporic crisis, Hariharan depicts her male characters from different backgrounds etched in contemporary times, struggling to make or save their place in society.

Gender dimension and subordination of women and men have some foundational grounds, which is heteropatriarchy. Hariharan, in none of her works, has explored the angle of transgender issues yet. Though she has focused in great detail on issues that men and women go through, but we cannot go as far to say that her novels can be studied in light of gender as a whole concept. However, Hariharan has people from all strata of society facing unresolved problems and challenges. Her works transcend any bound of time as she uses myth and history and weaves it into present to show that situations have been quite similar for men and women since time immemorial. In every era, one has to fight for himself/herself to overcome social restraints and political complexities.

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Response to the Reception of *Samskara*: A Critical Journey

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Abstract

First published in 1965, U. R. Ananthamurthy's *Samskara* created a furore by questioning the graded inequality sanctioned by the traditional *chaturvarna* system. While the book was critically attacked, the film was banned on a pan-national level. However, both the verbal narrative and the cinematic narrative have been able to transcend temporal and spatial boundaries over the past few decades. The objective of this paper is to highlight the critical responses made on the work by various scholars who have examined the work as a representative of two opposing worldviews and present a counter-argument to emphasize a few instances where the work defies any compartmentalisation into a strict binary category as it lends space for liminalities, in-between spaces, and fluid identities to emerge in both the verbal and the visual medium. The paper further argues that during the process of adaptation of a story from one medium to another, the subjectivity of the filmmaker lends new meaning to the discourse, which further dilutes these binaries, rendering the cinematic text as an independent work of art. The arguments shall be foregrounded by a close analysis of the texts as well as cross-references to other critical resources.

Keywords: Binaries, Liminalities, Adaptation, Fidelity, Interpretation

Kannada literature has been categorised into three major phases according to the themes, subject, writers, and its relationship with the outside world. While the first phase from the late 19th to early two decades of the 20th century called "Arunodaya" (Dawn) was preoccupied with presenting reformist tendencies in writing, the second phase, commonly called as "Navodaya" or New Dawn (1920-1960) aimed at responding and addressing the West.

U R Ananthamurthy, in an interview with Rajiv Mehrotra, explains how the third phase of Kannanda writing stretching from the nineteen sixties to seventies, commonly called the "Navya" movement, was rooted in transforming the language at the level of style, form, and imagery. *Samskara* became a key work in Kannada literature. It almost became a manifesto of "Navya"

movement despite the fact that it was subjected to a massive backlash for its supposed anti-brahmanical content. V S Naipaul's oft-quoted argument in his book, *India: A Wounded Civilization* highlighted, "Knowingly or unknowingly, Anantamurti (sic) has portrayed a barbaric civilization, where the books, the laws, are buttressed by magic, and where a too elaborate social organization is unquickened by intellect or creativity" (Naipaul 109). Ananthamurthy readily accepts his deliberate critique of Brahmanism in his words, "Hurting brahmans, for me born and brought up as a brahman, is not an issue that I like, but is inevitable. My writings like Samskara, Ghatashraddha, Bharatipura, have hurt Brahmans . . . What I have written are the essential truths brahmans must face" (Ananthamurthy 107).

The novella has been widely read as a work premised on the functioning of two opposing worldviews. The translator, A K Ramanujan, himself considers characters as "polar opposites" and theme as determining "complex relations between asceticism and eroticism." (Ananthamurthy 101). U R Ananthamurthy not only as a writer and intellectual but as a lover of mathematics too, successfully weaves contradictions within the fabric of his text. From "the crest jewel of Vedic learning" (6) Praneshacharya to the "fallen" Brahmin, the contaminant Naranappa, from invalid Bhagirathi to replenishing Chandri, from the sterile, wasted bodies of upper-caste women to the seductive, voluptuous bodies of the low caste women, from an age-old tradition-bound society to the forces of modernity creeping in, from death rites of the antagonist to the initiation rites of the protagonist, from the strict structure of society to an individual's philosophical investigation—all are adjusted well within the structural contours of the narrative.

TRS Sharma, in his essay, "Renegotiating Identity in 'Samskara," opines:

> "Madhavas as a close knit sect believe in a world of dvandvas of binary opposites. It is a Manichean world they envisage, and one witnesses the Acharya being plunged into a world of dualities: say from the ascetic to the erotic he has traversed – his imagination all aflame with erotica, i.e., from the hidebound village life to the open forest, from the sick invalid wife to the forest river like Chandri" (Sharma 132).

Most of the critical responses on the work have tried to understand the conflict between Praneshacharya and Naranappa as a mirror to the conflict between tradition and modernity, between life and death. The presence/absence of living/dead body, whether of Naranapa's corpse

or the voluptuous flesh of untouchable women, is constantly juxtaposed. Naranappa himself claims that, "Every action results not in what is expected but in its exact opposite" (Ananthamurthy 24) in the verbal narrative, which holds true as the idea behind disciplining the disciples by Praneshacharya has led to their erratic behaviour: asceticism, restraint and self-denial has paved way for eroticism, desire and a wilfulness for seeking pleasures. Not only has it held true in case of corrupt Brahmins in the *Agrahara* but also in case of the most illustrious man, Praneshacharya.

Sura P Rath too through his deconstructive reading understands the novel as ". . . a contest between Praneshacharya and Naranappa, between the brahman women and Chandri, between high caste and low caste Hindus, between Hindus and Muslims, and in larger sense between the dead and the living" (Rath 110). Furthermore, Meenakshi Mukherjee sums up these binaries in a nutshell, in her essay, 'Samskara 'as she explains how the novella presents many opposed/opposing ideas such as varna/karma, allegorical/ realistic, purity/pollution, physical/metaphysical, self/other, rational/ irrational to trace a quest with all its complexities.

Having mentioned this, exceptions to these contradictions are unavoidable. Chandri is an ambiguous character in the novella who lends herself—carnally to be enjoyed by Naranappa for more than ten years, emotionally by Sripathi and his friends for whom she cooks food even at midnight, visually to be ogled by the Brahmins and sexually by the long starved Praneshacharya. Her ambiguity is heightened by the author as she assumes the role of a river, a mistress, prostitute, mother, a temptress, a sexual object and furthermore, through the symbols of birds and snakes. Interestingly, she becomes an agent for both, the death rites or samskara of Naranappa and birth or initiation rites for Praneshacharya, yet denied any lawful status by both of them. By constantly denying her any status yet utilising her, she remains, what Victor Turner in his essay, "Liminalities and Communitas" would call a "liminal" person who is "neither here nor there" but placed "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (Turner 359) structured society. The basic attributes of a liminal person noted by Turner—ambiguity, humility, total obedience, unselfishness, silence, acceptance of pain and suffering are all manifested in Chandri. The common characters of liminal persons or principles identified by Turner are that, "(1) they fall in the interstices of social structure, (2) are on its margins, or (3) occupy its lowest rungs" (Turner 371), attributes that further aligns with Chandri due to her caste, class, gender and occupational status.

Furthermore, within the verbal narrative, the man/woman dichotomy is blurred when the author writes, ". . . like pregnant woman, the brahmans longed for the soups of sour mango-mash" (Ananthamurthy 16). The identities are constantly rendered misty since Pranesha performs roles that are generally assigned to women, i.e., cleaning, cooking and feeding one's partner. Moreover, the young disciples of Naranappa like Sripathi has been assigned to perform the role of Kalidasa's Shakuntala highlighting the skill en (gendered) in him by his teacher, Naranappa. Clearly, there are instances where the man/woman dichotomy gets blurred.

Ambiguity does not prevail only in terms of characters, sections and belief system but also at the level of the creator himself. Hailed as a "critical insider" the identity of the author dissolves into his creation, "…he may have rejected brahminhood, but brahminhood never left him" (Annthamurthy 9) holds true for Naranappa, Praneshacharya and the author himself.

Adaptation of a story from verbal narrative to visual narrative involve changes at several levels according to the medium specificity and the subjectivity of the film maker. It can retain, alter or debunk the verbal narrative depending on the choice of the film maker. During the initial stage of adaptation studies, literature and cinema were seen as two distinct realms where the latter was judged by the accuracy with which it has replicated the former. The approach followed under fidelity criticism led to a widely common misnomer that cinema was necessarily an inferior art form in comparison to literature. George Bluestone in his famous work *Novels into Films* explains novels and films in dialectical terms by calling the two mediums as hostile to each other. According to him, the films allow spectators to see visually through the eye that forms the "percept of the visual image" and imaginatively through mind that forms the "concept of the mental image" (Bluestone 1) in case of novel which marks the essential difference between the two mediums. However, with the recent development in the field of adaptation studies, especially with film theorist like Robert Stam, Brian Mc Farlane, Thomas Leitch and Linda Hutcheon the insistence on relying on the source text has been relinquished with an objective to understand each work as an independent work of art.

The film marked an important landmark within the Kannada New Wave cinematic tradition and was felicitated with several national and international awards after a pan national ban on its screening. Snehlata Reddy, the director's wife played the role of Chandri and the famous writer, intellectual and artist Girish Karnad wrote the screenplay and played the role of Praneshacharya

on screen. A small group of friends with similar ideological leanings and low budget made the film which fell short to capture the philosophical nuances of the novella but managed to garner the attention of critics, scholars and academicians across the globe due to its content. The film retains the basic structure, plot, characters and theme of the novella yet shows certain changes. This section of the paper shall make an attempt to identify a few instances from the cinematic text where the binary opposition maintained in the verbal narrative is not transmuted on to the screen.

The verbal narrative draws a clear binary between the sexually sterile dried up bodies of high caste Brahmin women and the tempting, lascivious, voluptuous bodies of low caste Shudra women throughout the fabric of the narrative. The mythic references to Matsyagandhi, Meneka and Urvashi, the modern brothels of Basrur, Sankara's dalliance with the queen (qtd. in Nalini Natarajan 156) and instances of Brahmins cohabiting with Dravidian women, analogy with birds, snakes and flowers are tropes employed by the author to heighten the sexuality of low caste women in the novella and render brahman women as sexually abhorrent. The film however, departs from such a projection of women. Though brahman women occupy the inner space within the *Agrahara* when men discuss the cremation of Naranappa, these women are not portrayed as a contradiction to the Sudra women. Interestingly, at the beginning of the film, the Brahmin women are involved in performing their daily chores of drawing Kolam and drawing water from the well just as an untouchable woman is the carrying water pot on her waist. Furthermore, constant objectification of women's body parts, instances such as Durgabhatta grabbing a coolie woman's breast or men ogling at the scantily clad sarees in Ravi Verma's paintings are absent in the film. Although brahman men like Sripathi lust after Belli, the film also mentions an instance where another low caste woman Malli slaps a Brahmin boy unfolding how in a caste ridden patriarchal society an untouchable woman too can exude control over her body as well as have autonomy over her decisions. In fact, Chandri, who is likened to a bewitching temptress and a lascivious doll in the narrative, is not even looked upon by the Brahmans when they discuss the death rites of Naranappa. Nowhere does she become a sexual object or a subject of the male gaze in the film. In fact, before her sexual encounter with Praneshacharya, her open dishevelled hair, lifted eyes to look at acharya, loosely draped sari, and drinking water where Pranesh's feet were present are few ideas that the filmmaker employs to highlight the female desire on screen through visuals.

Moreover, the upper caste widow who constantly belches and abuses in the verbal narrative is treated as a nuisance in the organised structure of the *Agrahara,* but rather than portraying her in

a negative light, P Reddy gives her words so much autonomy at the beginning of the film itself, so as to focus on how one of the most marginalised women has the potential of accusing the upholders of power structures before the discussion among men could actually begin. It is through the cinematic language that the film maker shows her affinity with Chandri as they stand together in a moment's flash, bound together in their lonely marginalised state of the single event of the death of one's partner which has/will change their entire life. This bringing together of two marginalised women characters from contradictory caste positions is another instance where the film maker disrupts the caste binaries on screen.

Furthermore, the central premise of the novella is based on the death of the renegade Naranappa and the course of action to be followed for his Samskara. Praneshacharya declares, as everybody accepts, that "Naranappa may have rejected brahminhood, but brahminhood never left him" (Ananthamurthy 9) due to which the onus of cremating his body lies with Brahmins only. Naranappa himself claims that "Every action results not in what is expected but in its exact opposite" (ibid.) and to present the "exact opposite" solution to this crisis, it is not a Brahman man or even a shudra man who do the samskara, but a Muslim man and the low caste shudra woman who "most unceremoniously" cremate him, disrupting the foundations of the essence of samskara itself. In his autobiography, *Suragi*, Ananthamurthy mentions his dissatisfaction towards with the ending of the film. Girish Karnad deliberately insisted on keeping the "suspense" of Naranappa's cremation with the audience so as to lend the film a truly open ending. Ananthamurthy on the other hand, felt that a philosophical dimension is erased since the metaphorical corpse is carried within Praneshacharya even when the corpse has disappeared. Another reason for the film maker's decision to follow the screen player's version of the story instead of the author could have been his awareness of the controversies that the novella had raked up for its anti-Brahminic content and visually showing a brahman cremated by a Muslim could have led to an adversely extreme reaction from the public. In all, even in the treatment of the corpse, an exact contradictory position is avoided by the filmmaker.

Moreover, the ending of the film departs from the ending of the verbal narrative, which further dilutes the binary oppositions between the learned Praneshacharya and the renegade Narranappa. Towards the end of the novella, Pranesh has reiterated the actions of Narranappa, as soon as he realises his action of consummation with Chandri he feels, "I was defeated, defeated—fell flat on

my face" (Ananthamurthy100). In this idea of contest between ritual sanctity and moral corruption, between his earlier self, bound by austerities and Naranappa's corrupt ways, the latter has won and he feels defeated. Praneshacharya reiterates the actions of Naranappa by leaving his lawfully wedded Brahman wife and sleeping with the low caste mistress Chandri, consuming coffee, enjoying a heightened sensual state, and corrupting the entire festival by eating with the Brahmans during the period of pollution. An immediate identification is drawn between Naranappa and Praneshacharya as the latter tells Putta he will meet the prostitute Padmavati later. Putta, at this point, is reminded of Naranappa's visits to the woman. During the last few conversations between Praneshacharya and Putta, Pranesh again tells him a lie in order to get rid of him, ponders if he should pour out his dilemmas in front of the simple-hearted man, decides otherwise but lacks the courage to face the *Agrahara* brahmins all by himself and is pushed inside the cart going to Durvasapura by Putta with a promise of meeting tomorrow. The novel ends while tracing the psychological dilemma of Praneshacharya in the following words, "He will travel, for another four or five hours. Then, after that, what? Praneshacharya waited, anxious, expectant" (138), a typical trope of existential crisis reflected in the Modernist phase of Kannada literature or "Navya movement" with which the author identified himself. The film however, departs from this ending. While Praneshacharya in the novel thinks, "I slept with Chandri. I felt disgusted with my wife. I drank coffee in a common shop in a fair. I went to see a cock fight. I lusted after Padmavati."(132) in the film his thoughts gain greater significance as he speaks them aloud to Putta. Consequently, there is a stark change in Putta's behaviour, a disgust engulfs his face as he hears the truth heightened by the film maker in his denial to accompany Pranesharya and in his symbolic parting of ways by taking a different route for the rest of journey. It would be worthy to recollect that immediately after his sexual encounter with Chandri in the film, Praneshacharya had hid himself behind a tree for the fear of being caught. His revelation to Putta is not a mere purgation of his pent up emotions but rather an act where he claims ownership of his actions that indicates his growth as a person. Praneshacharya, who willingly steps inside the cart to leave the fair for Durvasapura is no more a confused man. He smiles, exchanges his secret, is comfortable after seeing the completely changed behaviour of Putta and is certain that there is somebody back home who is 'waiting 'for his arrival. After crossing the symbolic river for a new beginning, his body language is calm, composed and the head is held high. Instead of interchanging his location with that of Naranappa and going through an existential crisis because of it, he now attains the full meaning of his name, Praneshacharya—the lord and teacher of Prana, of Life itself. In doing so, he transcends the conflicts, the binaries and continues to forge the life long journey.

Since verbal and visual are two different mediums and the same story is created by two different artists, it is inevitable for the differences to arise. Instead of the drawing binaries between the novella and the film, based on the premise that whether the cinematic text has been loyal or disloyal towards it, the focus has to be laid on considering adaptation as what Linda Hutcheon in her well-acclaimed book, *A Theory of Adaptation*, calls, an "interpretive act" by the adaptor in order to delimit the previous text. The film here also becomes an interpretive act away from the contradictory hold of the word.

The contemporary relevance of the work can be witnessed through the lecture series at Max Muller Bhawan, New Delhi, where two months after the demise of Girish Karnad, he was remembered on the Independence Day of 2019 for his contribution to cinema in general and the film *Samskara* in particular. Even after sixty years of its publication, the work has been able to garner the attention of scholars, critics, and academicians across the globe. Unarguably, both the verbal narrative and the cinematic narrative have been able to transcend temporal and spatial boundaries over the past few decades, paving way for the work to become part of the canon.

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Six Acres and a Third: A Timeless Novel of Thematic and Stylistic Innovations

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Abstract

Timeless literature has eternal existence beyond time and space. It has a mighty theme, mighty characters, and mighty style. It explores basic or universal human emotions and experiences that transcend all barriers. It gives new insight to each generation as well. It makes the reader connect emotionally to the characters, situations and problems they encountered even without the knowledge of the society, times, beliefs, etc., of the time when it was written. The writings of Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Kalidasha, to mention a few names, are instances that have crossed the borders of time and space.

Six Acres and a Third is a translation of a classic Oriya novel Chha Mana Atha Guntha, written by Fakir Mohan Senapati, the 'Father of modern Oriya literature. 'Set in colonial Orissa during the early decades of the nineteenth century, it not only explores the exploitation of an evil landlord in a rural Orissa but delves deep into questions like British and linguistic colonialism using stylistic innovations. This paper highlights Fakir Mohan's stylistic and thematic innovations which make this novel timeless.

Keywords*:* British, linguistic colonialism, stylistic, thematic, innovations

Timeless literature has eternal existence beyond time and space. It has a mighty theme, mighty characters, and mighty style. It explores basic or universal human emotions and experiences that transcend all barriers. It gives new insight to each generation as well. It makes the reader connect emotionally to the characters, situations, and problems they encounter even without the knowledge of the society, times, beliefs, etc., of the time when it was written. The writings of Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Kalidasa, to mention a few names, are instances that have crossed the borders of time and space.

Six Acres and a Third (*Chha Maana Atha Guntha*) is a 19th-century classic Oriya novel by Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843-1918), known as the Father of Modern Oriya Literature. Fakir Mohan was one of the pioneering figures of modern Indian literature and an early activist who pioneered the

fight against the destruction of the native Oriya language. Apart from translating *the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Gita and Boudhavatar Kavya* into simple Oriya verses, he has contributed four novels and twenty-five stories to enrich the Oriya language and literature. The original Oriya novel *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* was serialized in 1897-1899 and was published as a book in 1902. It was written forty years before Premchand's masterpiece *Godan* or *the Gift of a Cow*. His classic novel *Six Acres a and a Third was* translated from the Oriya by Rabi Shankar Mishra, Satya P. Mohanty, Jatindra Kumar Nayak, and Paul St-Pierre and was first published by the University of California Press in 2005 and India by Penguin Books India in 2006. It is a literary as well as a historical document. Set in colonial Orissa in the 1930s, it depicts a unique "view from below" of Indian village life under colonial rule: (Back matter). It faithfully records how the "unsavoury aspects" of British colonialism affected life of people in rural India. It was written long before the October Revolution in Russia, and is perhaps the first Indian novel to deal with the exploitation of landless peasants by a feudal lord in British India.

Fakir Mohan Senapati's novel *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*, or *Six Acres and a Third* is set in colonial Indian society /village during the early decades of the nineteenth century. It is a saga of colonialism in Orissa which changed the face of rural Orissa. It depicts a tale of wealth and greed, of property and theft. On one level it is the story of an evil landlord, Ramachandra Mangaraj, who exploits poor peasants and uses the new legal system to usurp the property of others. But this is only one of the many themes of the novel: as the text unfolds, it reveals several layers of meaning and implication. Toward the end of the novel, greedy zamindar Ramachandra Mangaraj is punished by the law and the "Judge Sahib" orders that his landed estate, his "zamindari," be taken away. It is sold to a lawyer, who, it is rumoured in the village, "will come with ten palanquins followed by five horses and two hundred foot-soldiers" to take possession of Mangaraj's large estate (205). The novel is written from the perspective of the horse, the ordinary villager, and the foot-soldier, in other words, the labouring poor of the world. The ordinary villagers react to this news by reminding one another of an old saying: "Oh, horse, what difference does it make to you if you are stolen by a thief? You do not get much to eat here: you will not get much to eat there. No matter who becomes the next master, we will remain his slaves. We must look after our own interests" (205-206).

Six Acres and a Third is not only a critique of British colonialism. It is a powerful indictment of many other forms of social and political authority as well. The novel centers around the zamindar,

Ramachandra Mangaraj: his greed, his influence over the village, various deeds of his to appropriate other people's wealth and his eventual demise. The actual story starts when Ramachandra Mangaraj eyes the property of the weaver family Bhagia and Saria, a childless couple, and plots along with Champa, who is a servant maid in his house and his concubine too, to usurp their property. Mangaraj has an eye on the fertile six acres and third farmland—the eponymous six acres and a third-- and the milch cow of Bhagia and Saria. Champa takes advantage of the superstitious belief of innocent and rustic Bhagia and Saria as they are childless, and Saria is utterly despondent on account of her barrenness. She has to face the indignity in the society being barren and inauspicious. Champa convinces Saria, that she has received the command of goddess Budhi Mangala that Saria would bear a child and they will become very rich if she builds a temple for goddess Budhi Mangala. She further suggests that Bhagia need not worry about the expenses and he should take a loan from the zamindar Ramachandra Mangaraj for this purpose:

> All you have to do is obey Goddess Budhi Mangala's command. Somehow, you must get the temple built. Why worry about the money? Who would not loan you money, once Budhi Mangala's command has become known? And you don't have to go anywhere else, not even in the dead of the night. Ramachandra Mangaraj will lend you the money. I will take it upon myself to arrange loan: you don't have to do anything. Building a temple will not cost much: only one hundred and fifty rupees. With that, a big temple can be raised, as tall and as wide as the Baladev Temple in Kendrapada. Just mortgage your six: it will be exactly and a third acres to Mangaraj, and I will get you the money. Don't think anyone is going to snatch your land away. (114)

The weaver family falls prey to the machination of Champa and zamindar Ramachandra Mangaraj and ends up losing everything to Mangaraj. Unable to bear the loss, Bhagia goes mad and Saria starves herself to death. The death of Saria brings the downfall of Mangaraj and his eventual demise. While justice seems to have prevailed in a larger sense, there is no justice for the affected parties. This brings up the question of what exactly is justice? Is it the punishment of evil or is it the success of good? In most cases, as here, we must settle for the first definition for the good people have already lost their mind and their lives. The perpetrators of injustice getting punished is the only solace we seek from the cruel world. Good people, like Mangaraj's wife and Saria, seem to influence dharma only after their death.

Six Acres and a Third stands out among all other realistic novels because of the "critical vision embodied in its narrative style" (Introduction 2). As rightly pointed out by Satya P. Mohanty, its narrative style is complex:

> Senapati's novel is justly seen as representing the apex of the tradition of literary realism in nineteenth-century Indian literature. But its realism is complex and sophisticated, not simply mimetic: the novel seeks to analyze and explain social reality instead of merely holding up a mirror to it. (2)

Fakir Mohan is regarded as the forerunner of Premchand. For the first time in the history of Indian fiction, Fakir Mohan depicts social realism through rustic characters and themes. In his *History of Indian Literature, 1800-1910*, Sisir Kumar Das points out that in modern Indian literature many plays and novels have 'elements of realism 'in varying degrees, whereas in *Six Acres and a Third*, Senapati depicts in minute details the social and economic aspects of life that influence human relationships and "the variety of characters representing traditional occupational groups" (2). Senapati has adopted a method of analytical realism that probes deep into the underlying causes. He has adopted a "self-reflexive" and "self- parodic" narrative technique. The narrator does not remain aloof: rather he 'actively mediates between the reader and the subject of the novel, 'putting emphasis on how it is told, not what is told. The narrator is neither 'I 'nor 'you 'but 'we. 'He is like a village story-teller sitting with his friends and relations around him and telling them the story in the light of a lantern. This innovative method of story-telling makes it appear like an oral rather than a written story and enables the narrator to be an insider as well as an outsider of the story. In other words, the narrator immediately makes the reader participate in the narrative in the way of making his own interpretation of the 'facts 'described in the novel and making comments. Besides, Senapati uses irony, humour and exaggerated tone which frequently shift to enable the reader to find out what he actually means. The narrator does not want the reader just to go through the novel, but to read it critically as well. Senapati describes that Mangaraj is a pious person who observes fasting in every ekadasi, and at the same time the way he narrates how Mangaraj secretly eats "a large pot of milk, some bananas, and a small quantity of khai and nabata" kept in his room is humorous:

> Every ekadasi [mangaraj] fasted, taking nothing but water and a few leaves of the sacred basil plant for the entire day. Just the other afternoon, though, Mangaraj's barbar, Jaga, let it slip that on the evenings of *ekadasis* a large pot of milk, some bananas, and a small quantity of khai and nabata are placed in the master's bedroom. Very early the next morning, Jaga removes the empty pot and washes it. Hearing this, some people exchanged knowing looks and chuckled. One blurted out, "Not even the father of Lord Mahadev can catch a clever fellow stealing a drink when he dips under the water". We're not absolutely sure what was meant by this, but our guess is that these men were slandering Mangaraj... It would be a great sin, then, to doubt Mangaraj's piety or unwavering devotion (35-36).

This is just one instance how Fakir Mohan Senapati uses irony, humour, parody and satire to criticize contemporary society.

Fakir Mohan Senapati aims at accurately depicting a realistic picture of colonial Orissa. He achieves this goal by interweaving form and content of the novel. He intermingles the then society with the "ideological implications." His realism is based not only on the 'what 'is represented but 'how 'it is represented. The mediating layers shape the perception and judgment of readers. Senapati is a realist not only in a literary sense but in the socio-theoretical sense as well.

Senapati portrays not only an eastern Indian village but a complex account of social exploitation under colonial rule, though he never refers to colonial rulers directly. As Satya P. Mohanty rightly states: ". . . what we get is an unsentimental picture of the exploitative relations among Indian (or Oriya) peasants and landlords, the educated intelligentsia and the ordinary Indian (Oriya)" (16).

Senapati presents the story of "property, greed, and wiles of the powerful" in a new light and from a wider historical vantage point, and through the wiser eyes of the horse, the peasant, and the bonded labour (9). The tale of Ramachandra Mangaraj's appropriation of the six and a third acres land of Bhagia and Saria is less important than the chain of exploitation/ appropriation done in colonial India on account of new colonial land –tenure laws. Mangaraj acquires the land from Sheikh Dildar Mian by deceit. The same land was acquired by Mian's father through corrupt means. Ali Mian rose from a minor police officer to a landlord within a few short years. The new colonial land-tenure laws created a massive upheaval. The zamindaris of several generations were

bought and sold deceitfully using this new law, and Mangarj was the only one belonging to this new class in colonial Orissa. Senapati slyly refers to East India Company while Mangaraj gets ready to acquire Dildar Mian's property and thus puts its power in historical perspective:

> Historians say it took Clive less time to get the Bengal Subedari from the emperor of Delhi than it takes one to buy and sell a donkey. How long do you think it will take Mangaraj to get the zamindari of Fatepur Sarsandha from Mian? (76).

So, the witty and allusive discourse of the narrator reveals the real purpose of the novel than the primary plot. Thus, Senapati interweaves the two themes of power and the ownership of property.

Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843-1918) was conscious of linguistic imperialism in Orissa. He lived during a crucial period in the history of Orissa when Oriya language and Oriya identity was on the verge of extinction because of linguistic domination and conspiracy of the neighbouring intellectuals to replace Oriya language with Bengali. He rightly perceived the imposition of other languages like Persian, English, or Bengali on Oriyas as a form of linguistic colonialism. He puts the situation nicely in the following words:

> In the past, the Persian language had been held in high favor: it was the language of the court. With sharp and pitiless pen, God has inscribed a strange fate for India: yesterday, the language of the court was Persian, today it is English. Only He knows which language will follow tomorrow. Whichever it may be, we know for certain that Sanskrit lies crushed beneath a rock forever. English pundits say, "Sanskrit is a dead language." We would go even further: "Sanskrit is a language of the half-dead" (67-68).

Senapati was not hungry for name and fame. He was worried to save and protect Oriya language and Oriya identity. He was certain that the future of Oriyas, Oriya language, and Oriya culture would be sealed forever if Bengali instead of Oriya became the official language for communication in Orissa. So, Fakir Mohan Senapati started contributing to Oriya language and literature in order to save the Oriya language from extinction. His main goal was to protect the twin interests of protecting Oriya language and Oriya identity. He knew very well that the identity of a race depends on the survival and power of its language. His struggle to protect Oriya's language and Oriya's identity was later known as 'Oriya nationalism. '

Fakir Mohan Senapati deserves appreciation for his linguistic innovations in his first novel, *Six Acres and a Third,* and his other novels and short stories. These innovations changed Oriya literature forever and inaugurated the age of modern Oriya prose: these are based on a vision of social equality and cultural self-determination. Senapati was no romantic nationalist, and his conception of language was based on his progressive social vision. In his novels and short stories, he used and popularized the rich idioms of ordinary Oriyas, the language of "the paddy fields and the village markets"—the language of common Oriyas. It was a popular literary medium that was sensitive enough to the needs of ordinary Oriyas, the common men. He was worried about protection of the interests of Oriyas — much like the interests of any linguistic community. Satya P. Mohanty sums up Fakir Mohan's contribution to Oriya language and literature in following sentences:

> The Oriya prose he fashioned in his short stories, essays, and novels was the language of ordinary people, used for everyday communication, for creative interchange rather than the blind imitation of cultural authority. It was a language divested of the trappings of privilege and power, of the sedimented effects of social inequality. It was the natural vehicle for the radical social and political vision of Six Acres and a Third (Introduction 27).

U. R. Anantha Murthy, author of the famous novel *Samskara,* praised highly on the publication of this translation in these words: 'A significant event for not only Indian Literature but world literature. *Six Acres and a Third* is a foundational text in Indian literary history '(Back matter). Sonali Ganguli rightly states that Fakir Mohan Senapati can be compared with "Charles Dickens as a genial humourist and social critic and with Thomas Hardy as a great storyteller." Dr. Mayadhar Mansingh regards him as Thomas Hardy of Orissa. Fakir Mohan is remembered for his immense contribution to Oriya as well as Indian literature through his thematic and linguistic innovations in his novels and short stories when Oriya language and literature faced the grave danger of extinction on account of linguistic colonization. He is the first Indian novelist to make use of vernacular language and rustic characters and dialogues along with irony, humour, allusions, and other figures of speech in the fiction. These innovations give a permanent place to this novel among timeless literature.

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