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## ***In An Antique Land : A Powerful Example of Shifting Paradigms in Fiction***

*Dr. N K Neb\**

A remarkable change can be observed in critical theory and literary practice since 1980s. A study of various writings informs the shift in theoretical and philosophical paradigms that has brought new orientation in the nature and understanding of literature, more prominently of fiction. The earlier views about literature as a mirror or illusion of reality no longer seem valid. The reality now is understood not as something ultimate and transcendental rather it is treated to be constructed, provisional and contextual. The understanding of literature, particularly fiction, based on the changed perception, problematizes a sense of the real. The new orientation refuses to accept the understanding of realism in literature based on some commonly experienced phenomenological world. According to the changed view the traditional concept of realism and its treatment in literature considers a variety of points of view as a part of a controlled plurality. Therefore, the authority of omniscience is considered to be the voice of commonsense. This kind of an understanding, that does not allow even a single voice to contest the overarching authority, is rejected to be unitary, totalitarian and centralizing that obliterates difference, variety, multiplicity and divergence. Apart from the changed perspective about reality and its presentation in literature there are various other factors that mark a clear shift in paradigms of understanding literary writings. Amitav Ghosh's novel *In An Antique Land* can be studied as an example of shifting paradigms informing a changed understanding of fiction.

The difficulty faced in categorizing *In An Antique Land* as a novel marks the major shift informing the paradigms of understanding literature. The inclusion of multiplicity of genres makes this work variform in nature and "multiform in style" (Bakhtin, 1981:26). It poses a challenge to the traditional concept of the purity of genres. It is significant to note that the novelist himself is aware of the altogether different and striking nature of his work, "No this time I am not writing a novel. Not even sociology, history or belles-letters based on historical research. My new book cannot be described as any one of these. It's a strange sort of work. Within the parameters of history, I have tried to capture a story, a narrative without attempting to write a historical novel.

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You may say as a writer, I have faced a technical challenge" (Ghosh, 1999:152). The different layers of narrative developing within the framework of a single literary work bring out the truth of Ghosh's words. The 'Prologue' gives the background of the anthropological research project undertaken by the writer, along with some references to the history of anthropological research regarding the slave of MS H.6. The different chapters develop into different levels of narrative repeatedly shifting from the writer's experience in modern Egypt to its history and his experience as a research student. The chapter 'Manglore' brings out the cultural interaction in its historical perspective. At one level the narrative brings out the story of the anthropological research about the rediscovery of an Indian slave Bomma and his Egyptian master Ben Yiju. It also brings out the tireless efforts made by the writer, as a research student, and the story of their successful accomplishment. At another level it unfolds the story of Ben Yiju, his slave Bomma and Ben Yiju's visit to India, his marriage to a Nair girl Ashu and the relationship between Bomma and Ben Yiju.

These different levels of the narrative develop with the help of an interaction of history, anthropology, romance, sociology, real life experience and fiction. All these elements make the work interdisciplinary and exhibit the development of a new perception that, "The borders between literary genres have become so fluid: who can tell anymore what the limits are between the novel and history, the novel and biography" (Hutcheon, 1988:9). In spite of the presence of a plurality of the forms of writings what makes *In An Antique Land* an artistic success is the subordination of these diverse categories to the total design of the work. These different elements function as compositional units. But their presence is not obliterated or suppressed to develop a centralized discourse. Their presence as different voices makes the novel polyphonic and interdisciplinary in nature.

The interdisciplinary structure of *In An Antique Land*, makes it intertextual and points out the changed perception of the concept of author or writer. In the changed perspective the function of the author is not to express an already existing reality. He is no longer considered to be the ultimate, originary, unified source of meaning. As exhibited in *In An Antique Land* the novelist, instead of expressing a particular social reality, is engaged in creating a fictional world by arranging different types of material taken from already existing texts. It is obvious from the elements of anthropology and history in the novel. The author, instead

of presenting the question how to understand the existing world seems to be concentrating on the question-what type of a world it is that the reader has to understand. For the presentation of a transcendental world is no longer valid. Moreover; the meaning of the different experiences and incidents, presented in a work of art, is determined by particular socio-historical and cultural context. Therefore, different levels of the narrative in the novel acquire specific meanings due to the particular discourse and the context in which they are situated. It also implies that the novelist is not presenting something original in the traditional sense of the word. It reduces his function to a structuring principle that helps arrange different units. The experiences and incidents presented by the author do not have an inherent meaning in themselves nor do they conform to the writer's sense of reality only. What provides them meaning is their fictional arrangement and their being situated in a specific discourse. For, in the changed scenario, "novelist's business is no longer to render the world, but to make one from language : fiction is no longer mimetic, but constructive" (Woods, 1999:56). The reference for such kind of a fiction no longer remains the author or some concept of reality. The terms of reference that provide meaning to the work and develop a specific understanding are related to the very process of its construction instead of the author.

As the purpose of this kind of fiction is not the expression of some originary, ultimate reality its role then gains significance, "as an intervention in our understanding of social relations through discourse" (Baker, 2000:3) And, discourse is understood, "as the institutionalized practice through which signification and value are imposed, sanctioned and exchanged.<sup>7</sup> The discourse presented in the novel *In An Antique Land* informs postcolonial understanding of reality. It exposes the superimposed designs of the colonial powers. While expressing the historical interaction between two different cultures i.e. India and Egypt, "Ghosh tries to show that the intervention of the West has destroyed the process of dialogue, exchange, assimilation and syncretism of the peoples of the two nations. Instead there is a metaphysics of domination classification and violence which Ghosh characterizes as western" (Woods:14). Instead of a culture of accommodation, adjustment, mutual understanding and compromise, the British imperialists, as shown in the novel, introduce the life patterns governed and directed by their oppressive attitude. The manuscripts from Genzia are seized and scattered far away in England, U.S.A and Russia by the colonial powers to distort, appropriate and suppress the history

of the subject people. It is achieved, "in the process of shaping them to suit the pattern of Western academy" (p.342). As a result of this, "Egypt had become the scholarly counterpart of those great landmasses that were then being claimed and explored by European settlers : unknown to herself, she was already well on her way to becoming a victim of the Enlightenment's conceptions of knowledge and discovery" (p.82). The words of Sir Evelyn, who presided over the Egyptian administration, expressed in an essay titled, "The Government of the subject Races," bring out the colonial designs of the British imperialists : "We need not always inquire too closely what these people, who are all, nationally speaking, more or less in status pupillari, themselves think is best in their own interests .... it is essential that each special issue should be decided mainly with reference to what, by the light of western knowledge and experience .... we conscientiously think is best for the subject race" (p. 91 ). The presence of such elements in the novel marks a purposive stance of the novelist viz a viz postcolonial perspective that exhibits, "the intercourse between power and the writing of history" (p.82). It reveals the nature of fiction as politically symbolic act.

Another significant aspect of the recent thoughts is related to the discredulity towards meta-narratives : the overarching systems of thought used to make sense of experiences and epistemological world. No single system of thought is considered to be final and absolute in providing legitimacy to different social practices. Instead of a unitary system what finds ready acceptance in the changed perspective is the presence and recognition of multiplicity and plurality of voices. In the novel the different views and experiences, represented through different characters and social practices, find expression as contesting but valid voices. Instead of promoting and presenting a unitary world view the novelist seems to advocate the dialogic development of different cultures. This kind of a dialogic understanding makes the narrator comment on the verbal duel between the Imam and the narrator himself in the following words : "It seemed to me that the Imam and I had participated in our own final defeat, in the dissolution of the centuries of dialogue that had linked us : we had demonstrated the irreversible triumph of the language that has usurped all the others in which people once discussed their differences" (p.237). According to the narrator it is perhaps 'the universal, irresistible metaphysics of modern meaning,' that makes people think in hierarchical terms. And in so doing they were being witness to "the extermination of a world of accommodations" (p.237), the world cherished by the novelist.

This changed perspective finds further legitimacy in Bakhtin's concept of dialogics. It sees knowledge of world, self and other as always historically situated, relational, open-ended and perspectival : a process shifting through time and space. In the novel *In An Antique Land* the different cultural and social practices gain legitimacy and meaning due to specific historical and cultural context. The novelist has juxtaposed the two different cultures to bring out the specific meanings of different social practices. For example, the Egyptian women's bewilderment at different aspects of Indian life is a result of the cultural gap. The different ways of life that are natural in the Indian culture are something strange and unnatural for them : "Is it true what they say about you? That in your country people burn their dead" (p.126). Similarly the narrator himself feels confused over the kinship system and the form of marriage practised by these people. Linda Hutcheon's views about historiographic metafiction also advocate dialogic interaction between cultures, "Historiographic metafiction suggests that truth and falsity may indeed not be the right terms in which to discuss fiction ... there are only truths in the plural, and never one Truth; and there is rarely falseness per se, just others' truths"(Hutcheon :109). These ideas find a forceful expression in the novel and express its further nuances in the view that the systems of thought governing 'truth' do not remain fixed in all the times even within a particular society. The narrator hints at this kind of an understanding when he points out, "For Ismail it was Ustaz Sabry who was a figure of respect, not Imam Ibrahim" (p.146). Ustaz Sabry here stands for new outlook based on modern scientific progress whereas Imam Ibrahim is the spokesman for religion and traditions. Similarly, the old custom that women observed, of leaving offerings at the graves of dead relatives, is now described as "unlawful, and contrary to the spirit of Islam" (p.146). It highlights an important shift in the understanding of life.

The fictional discourse in its historical and cultural situatedness not only reveals the contextual nature of the narrative but also marks a provisional stance of the novelist. It challenges the traditional view about the nature of literature as an 'autonomous' art. What emerges as a form of new type of fiction is the articulation of 'heteroglossia' of social voices. This may point out the ambivalent nature of the new paradigms shaping the fictional construct. For, as discussed already, literature or a fictional work is not considered to give expression to social reality. And the contextual nature of the fictional discourse presupposes the presence of a specific cultural structure. But this is an essential aspect of the

views marking the shift in paradigms that have been characterized as, "fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political"(Hutcheon:4). Interestingly, the challenge to the master narratives, a prominent aspect of the changed perspective, is itself subverted when we find the fictional discourse in this novel tending to develop into a postcolonial system or approach to different practices. There are certain direct statements and incidents that point out a particular form of narrative developed to provide legitimacy to a specific point of view. The following words are highly expressive of the emergence of an overarching system," Later the area's wealth was to attract the much less welcome attention of European wartime and colonial powers and it was in course of the struggles that ensued that Mangalore came to lose virtually every trace of its extraordinary past" (p.245). Ghosh's anticolonial stance is further asserted when he points out, "In all the centuries in which it had flourished and grown, no state or king or ruling power had ever before tried to gain control of the Indian Ocean trade by force of arms" (p.288). And instead of promoting or accepting, "a culture of accommodation and compromise", the novelist claims, "the Europeans were bent on taking control of it (the ocean trade) by aggression pure and distilled by unleashing violence on a scale unprecedented on those shores" (p.288). In Ghosh's presentation we find a part of a larger social struggle in the quest for absent or vanishing agents of democratic social change.

Apparently the novelist here seems to take up the role ascribed to press. But the provisional nature of the polemical presentation of the novelistic discourse saves it from becoming a frenzied political analysis. It marks a different orientation expressed in these words : "I think the formal and thematic contradictions of postmodern art and theory work to just that : to call attention to both what is being contested and what is being offered as a critical response to that, and to do so in a self-aware way that admits its own provisionality"(Hutcheon :13). Therefore the alternative presented in the novelist's perspective is not to be taken as something fixed and unchangeable. It acquires a specific place in being provisional and contextual, leaving space for further contesting and discussion. Thus the novelist's perspective does not tend to be final, ultimate or absolute.

An important element that informs the working of a new perspective about fiction in this novel is the concept of difference presented in it. The difference now is not treated in binary terms that

develops hegemonic and hierarchical structures of life. The difference in this context marks the acceptance and co- existence of multiplicity and plurality of voices. The presentation of different cultural practices in Egyptian and Indian cultures through different historical periods, does not develop into an absolute or totalitarian system. The interaction between these two cultures is sought to develop in dialogic relationships. Even the practice of slavery has been presented in its various nuances that challenge the binary hierarchy. For example, “Amongst Jewish merchants of medieval Cairo, for instance, as with many tribes in Africa, slaves were sometimes incorporated into their masters’ households and came to be counted as members of their families” (p.260). The various interpretations of slavery, as presented in the novel, bring out the concept of difference that reflects decentralized nature of meaning. Its different shades in different signifying practices can be observed from the following instances: “in some vocations, the lines of demarcation between apprentice, disciple and bondsman were too thin as to be invisible: to be initiated into certain crafts, aspirants had to voluntarily surrender a part of their freedom to their teachers” (p.260). And in south India, amongst Vachanakara saint-poets of Bomma’s own lifetime, for example, slavery was often used as an image to represent the devotee’s quest for God : “through the transforming power of metaphor the poets became their lord’s servants and lovers, and androgynous in their longing ; slaves, searching for their master with a passion that dissolved selfhood ... indeed, difference itself” (pp.260-61). Similarly, the relationship between Bomma and his master Ben Yiju was based not on the orthodox religions of the middle East rather it was situated in the ‘inarticulate counter-beliefs’ that “have always formed the hidden and subversive counter-image of orthodox religions of the middle east” (p.263).

The treatment of history in *In An Antique Land* presents another important shift in paradigms of understanding. The changed perspective informing the understanding of history no longer considers it an objective and factual account of historical events. Correspondingly the fictional treatment of history is now seen to be different from what earlier used to be called historical novel. In the changed perception history itself is understood to be constructed and a type of fiction. The novelist’s efforts to unfold and trace the historical and cultural background of different cultures express the fictional nature of history. The novelist shows how the centralizing power-structures create certain fictions and project them as history. It can be marked in the Western academy’s efforts to distort and appropriate the history of Genzia. A different understanding of history

that challenges its objective nature and shows it as ideologically saturated can be easily ascertained from these words : “Within the western historiographical record the unarmed character of the Indian ocean trade is often represented as a lack, or failure, one that invited the intervention of Europe, with its increasing proficiency in war” (p.288). All these elements mark the understanding that the demarcation between history and fiction is quite fragile and constructed.

Another significant aspect of the changed perception about life and literature is the understanding of language in its altogether different role. In the earlier systems of critical and literary study language was considered to be a medium of exchange only. The function of language was to give expression to existing reality. It was treated to be objective and neutral. In the changed scenario language is, “conceived as ideologically saturated, language as world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring maximum of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life” (Bakhtin:261). Meaning is now treated to be constructed through different historical and cultural contexts. These different socio-cultural contexts make the conception of language open ended and multivalent instead of a closed and monolithic system. Language is ‘no longer ideology free and, “language is not a neutral medium” (Bakhtin:294). The novel *In An Antique Land* exhibits how ideology imperceptibly creeps into language and functions to develop a specific discourse. The way Egypt is understood in different contexts gains significance : “It is the name (Masr’) by which the country has been known, in its own language, for at least a millennium, and most of the cultures and civilizations with which it has old connection, have accepted its own self-definition .... only Europe has always insisted on knowing the country not on its own terms, but as a dark mirror for itself” (p.32). Language, instead of expressing some transcendental, all pervasive meaning, constructs meanings and images to shape a specific discourse. The words used to define Egypt, for example, “Egyptian darkness,” “intense darkness,” “Egyptian bondage : bondage like that of Israelites in Egypt” (p.32), are not used to reflect something essential in that place. These words rather construct a particular image of that place from a historically and culturally situated perspective. The whole of the fictional discourse in *In An Antique Land*, with its emphasis on democratization of critical and intellectual understanding, is an endeavour to exhibit this changed perspective.

The different aspects of *In An Antique Land* bring out the strikingly different and new features of this work. The various elements

that make this work strange and different mark the emergence of a new kind of fiction. The type of works that develop in such kind of a system not only contest categorization but also challenge and reject traditional systems of understanding used for categorization and classification. In the above analysis of In an Antique Land we find most of the features that mark the recent shift in paradigms of understanding literature or art, developing as an integral part of the novelistic whole. The artistic excellence that maintains the unity of impact along with the new orientation informing the changed perspective makes it a monumental work.

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## Deadly Musings: Crime and Violence in Tarun J. Tejpal’s *The Story of My Assassins*

Dr. Ashoo Toor\*

Violence has become central to contemporary concepts of community and history. It has been incorporated into larger political projects and into the subsequent construction of real or imagined communities. And yet the term ‘violence’ cannot be easily defined or categorized. It continues to exist at shamefully appalling rates globally. Tarun J. Tejpal’s *The Story of My Assassins* is a well crafted crime novel that captures the realities of contemporary Indian life with a journalist’s eye. In his multilayered novel, he not only slashes India’s dubious spiritual serenity, but also lays bare every crippling divide of language, wealth and class. It is a novel about the underbelly of India—the dark underside, of disparate voices, unbearable realities, of people who live on the fringes of society and who are a foil to the ‘India Shining’ campaign. In fact, the novel is a kind of counter-narrative to the official account of the new rising India. It is certainly not a highly sanitized superficial telling, but, a raw, devastating tale of brutality, malignity, marginality, deceptions, gory crime, obscene wealth, sleazy sex and a mindless murder.

The novel starts as a thriller. The nameless protagonist is a jaded, investigative journalist, stuck in a loveless marriage and at the same time, involved in an obscene romantic liaison with a firebrand social reformer, Sara. The narrator protagonist turns on the news one fine morning to learn that he has been the target of an assassination bid. The SI Hathi Ram informs him of five suspects behind the planned plot who had been rounded up in a strange and rather swift manner, which is quite extraordinary in the sense that the police hardly carries out its job so urgently! Sara remarks, “The methods of the Indian police are deadly and inscrutable” (TSOMA 35). The protagonist is provided with a retinue of security without his asking for it, which again speaks about the uneasy strangeness of the case. The suspects—Chaaku, Kabir, Chini, Kaliya and Hathoda Tyagi are jailed and put on trial and all the while the narrator remains clueless about the reasons behind the foiled assassination plot.

Landing like a bombshell on his comfortable life, the protagonist doesn’t buy the story offered by the police. His intelligent mistress too

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smells a conspiracy and thinks that the suspects are themselves, hapless pawns in the hands of some larger, criminal state conspiracy. To her, they seem to be the victims of their own pathetic and degraded circumstances as well as that of the corrupt collusion between selfish politicians in power and the entire state machinery which is twisted and turned for profit by the self-conserving political class. His friend Jai, too, feels the protagonist is being framed. These guys (the police) are capable of everything- could be heroin, cocaine... they stop you at naka, put their hands under the seats of your car...and there it is! Ponds talcum powder! Straight up your nose! Try brushing off every fleck of the talcum! Of course, you will, eventually, but by then, ten years of your life would be over and the whole circus would have moved on a long time back, with no interest whatsoever in your innocence! (33)

Along with Sara, the narrator too is keen to launch an urgent investigation into the lives of his aspiring murderers. The action then serializes to the back stories of the five suspects and in knowing them, we meet our own countrymen whom we never meet in real life. People, who like many millions of Indians are born on the fringes and silently die there, people who suffer the worst forms of degradation, poverty and state apathy, people who either lose their will to live or murder, rape, kill or steal for the most flimsy and insubstantial causes, people who have absolutely no hope from the moment they are born to the moment they succumb to their wretched circumstances. The five assassins are all such people, each a victim of the everyday violence and horror of an India that exists outside the realm of urban sensibilities.

As the journalist protagonist delves deeper into the lives of the five men in custody, and as their stories become the heart of the novel, the readers wake up to the grim trajectories that led each of the assassins from birth to a life of crime. We get a peep into the village backwaters, the urban slums and the underworld milieu with their non-stop exploitation and violence that is almost feral in its savagery, how the story leads to the power centres in Delhi and how “power manipulated the disempowered to do its bidding” (45).

As the narrator gets his first look of the five dreaded ones in the lock-up, he immediately senses that the “poor sods” were being used by the system; as Sara later asserts, “These were India’s true low castes, with neither money, nor influence- ruthlessly deployed against each other to fulfil the agenda of the master class” (47). While the narrator regards four of them to be “fairly non-descript”, who could

not kill a “gutter rat between them”, the fifth looked like he could “kill all four of them before breakfast” (80); the SI opines differently- “For a few rupees. In this country, anyone will kill anyone for a few rupees. Sons will kill fathers, brothers will kill brothers, husbands will kill wives- what is it to kill a stranger!” (97-98)

The first convict, Chaaku, originally named Tope Singh, who “averted his eyes when blood spurted and the chicken flopped about looking for its missing head ... even the defeathering and skinning repelled him” (117), is tutored by his forty something friend, Sukha, “The knife must become an extension of your arm; it must cut, slice, dig with a fury born in hell”(117). Egged on, he first tastes blood at sixteen, grievously injuring Bhupi, Jeeta and Lucky, sons of landlords, who had tormented him for sexual pleasure. He gets a rush of adrenaline on ripping their bodies, severing limbs, and twisting and turning his knife into their privates. “All he could see in their eyes was fear. It was beautiful ... All it took was a knife! A Rampuria. Not size, not wealth, not numbers. Not caste, not creed, not class. Just a knife”(131). The landlord’s revenge on the family of Tope Singh later is an equally blood curdling story where his men with lathis and gandasas torture and bully his old grandparents, rape his mother and aunt, chop the fingers of their farm boy and to humiliate further stick the chopped fingers of the boy into the older woman’s insides. The gory crime of which no further revenge could be exacted turns Tope Singh into a hardened emotionless being, who escapes to Delhi and is “re-christened Chaaku, the knife, an honorific that would one day find its way into official documents and crisp newspapers”(155).

The second convict, Kabir, was named so by his father to “put him beyond the lines of community and religious lacerations that shredded the land”(196). His father, then a ten year old during 1947, had witnessed enough unspeakable crime perpetrated on his close ones to turn diminutive and timorous. His mother’s words resonated in his ears for a lifetime, “We are not Hindu or Muslim, men or women- we are just small people who can only stay safe by making ourselves invisible”(215). Thus his life became a pursuit of anonymity and later for his son, the “flattening out of all identity”(215). The timid and lonely Kabir inadvertently turns into a hero at his English missionary school when he hits back Father Michael who wrongly accused him of an obscene event that occurred in the school function. It is then that he learns that violence is legitimate and can turn you into a revered and much feared

guy. Thrown out of the school and entering a Hindi medium school with many others of his own ilk, he enters “a vigorous, vulgar world without any obvious boundaries”(242). His new friends are all shop lifters and carry their own armours- Azam had a tamancha, Sanju a Nepali khukri, Raja a rampuri, Amresh a knuckle duster, DATun had a steel blade, Aziz carried an axe, Pandit a barrel and Santokh a kirpan. Pandit taunts Kabir, “Just like cows eat grass, men assault each other. You can either eat the grass or be eaten as grass! Tell me, what would you prefer?(251) And so, Kabir took the tamancha, which the police found on him six months later when Aziz messed up with the son of a VIP. Their entire gang is rounded up, jailed and tried and only Aziz and Kabir are booked under the Arms Act, while all others are let free. The police atrocities in the jail include the worst form of sexual torment and abuse that leaves Kabir, less of a man. It is in the jail that he meets a man who offers him a task and good money in return- “The task that led to the murder of an innocent- something that his fearful genes had not prepared him for, and something he never wished to do”(280).

The third and the fourth convicts, the Chinese orphan, Chini and the dark one, Kaliya, the runaway child of an itinerant snake charmer, begin as station rats, who live by stealing from train passengers. Their gang- Dhaka, Chotu, Makhi Khan and Gudiya- all who do not remember their homes or families or how they landed on the station- engaged in petty crimes, stealing, begging, salvaging and slowly graduating to smack, heroin, hashish and ganja. Their life is depicted as one big black hole- how they seek pleasure and solace in each others’ bodies and watch sleazy porn for five rupees at the Sweet Dreams Cinema Parlour; and when their end comes, they die without making the slightest difference to the world.

The fifth convict, Hathoda Tyagi is too brutal to be redeemed. His parents had always felt that his hot head was in flames and that “one day the flames would char his heart and perhaps everything else around him” (389). His friends and siblings needed protection from him and his teachers doubted they could ever teach him anything, especially, the fundamentals of non-violence. Named Vishal, due to his heavy built, he actually had the body of a boxer. He could never tolerate teasing and at school, hammered the heads of teasing boys till their wails of mercy filled the school. He first tasted blood at the age of seventeen, when both his sisters were raped savagely by their cousins to vent their fury over a family feud. He picked a hammer for the first time then and

hacked the heads of all three cousins in one swift strike. Thus, earning a new name of Hathoda, he lands up at the doorstep of the local politician, Bajpai Sahib, the Chanakya of politics, as his special, chosen man who is entrusted tasks of eliminating anyone whom his masters, Bajpai Sahib, Gwalabhai and Donullia Gujjar want dead.

Ultimately, we learn that the five convicts are merely pawns in a much larger game that extends into Delhi’s power centres, and their stories become a powerful indictment of the society that produced them. As the perplexed journalist narrator cobbles together clues to get to the bottom of his attempted killing, the in-depth dossiers of the assassins’ background is laid bare before the readers. Fantastic theories of conspiracies are probed before the narrator finally uncovers the mercenary truth.

As Tejpal colours the details of the intersecting lives of the convicts and the whirlwinds of their fates, he creates an exhilarating panorama of a country where democracy has become a bitter joke, where the state machinery is wide open to exploitation by those who have money and power and where the ‘creamy layer’ never penetrates to the filthy back alleys of the great railway stations where gangs of urchins survive by plundering passengers and sniffing glue. The writer takes us into the different worlds, all brilliantly evoked, that these men inhabit. He spares us nothing in his depiction of the lust, cruelty and despair which are to be found towards the bottom of the heap in India- the rapes, the burnings, revenge, killings and the sheer hideous machinery of sadism. And if the different tales of which the novel is composed of do not hang together, that’s because India itself does not and cannot. As the narrator declares, “There was no big picture. There were no grand connections. There were only endless small pieces, and all you could do was to somehow manage your own...” (477).

The narrative is volatile, explosive, continually disheartening and gloomy. The story is through and through one of misery, hopelessness, exploitation at unimaginable levels, crime- obvious as well as silent and hypocrisy. The simultaneously disturbing and moving social and human drama is in fact a tour de force that showcases India’s realities- the real ones, the ones which get no media air time and the ones which make our country what it is. Brutality, inexorable codes of power and wealth, disparate voices, unbearable realities, devastatingly dark humour, use and abuse of power, sex and obscene passion, uncanny chicanery of contemporary Indian politics et al. shatter any illusions we may

harbour of being a civilized race of people. The deadly nexus of money-sex-power-religion-political goons-industry crushes millions of Indians who are born on the fringes, who suffer the worst forms of degradation, poverty and state apathy, who silently perish without a sign and of course with no redress.

There is a little flicker of hope toward the end when the narrator reaches home after being enlightened by the stranger. He feels a rush of emotion for the stray mongrel at his doorstep. It had always been at the narrator's receiving end, but had unwittingly saved him from Hathoda Tyagi's bullet, for twice Tyagi had seen the lame dog being fed by the narrator's wife. The man, Hathoda Tyagi, who could not be moved by any amount of preaching, was moved by a little act of humane kindness! The narrator also warms up towards his wife, who had unknowingly played a role of life giver and protector. There is hope after all.

Again, the words of the SI ring a message. In the final run, all that matters is the simple pleasures- home, family, love... On an earlier occasion he had remarked, "These men are not scoundrels. Scoundrels can be saints, murderers can be saints, but policemen can never be anything but policemen" (474). Later, just six months from his retirement, ...his nights become full of dreams of his village and his family farm. The mango trees, the sugarcane stacks, the ripening gold of wheat, the green tufts of cabbage, the odour of cattle dung, the woodsmoke in the day, the milk warm from the udder, the haunting call of the koel, the rain falling on mud and the skies full of stars ... I want to decay and disintegrate where I was born and fashioned. I want my soul to wander in the fields of my childhood, not on the streets of Delhi, where it'll get run over everyday by a new Maruti (477).

One wonders then that there is hope after all and we would be able to move from narratives of violence to narratives of peace. It is possible only if we could make peace with our dharma.

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## Selected Literary Canons : A Venture to Reform the Social Fabric

*Dr. Shivani Vashist\**

Literature is the reflection of the life and society in all its varied forms and shapes. From time to time writers have been exploring the various dimensions of the relationship between man and society. Every age has its own compulsions, tensions, fears, aspirations and logic which characterize the works of that time. Novel emerges as a powerful medium to present the age in a descriptive and analytical manner. It represents the social, political, cultural and historical growth of society at a great length. Moreover a writer through his literary work makes an indelible mark on the social fabric of the society.

The contribution made by three prolific and versatile literary canons whose works attracted lot of critical popularity namely Khushwant Singh *Train to Pakistan*, Anand's *Untouchable* and Kamala Markandaya *The Nowhere Man* gained a distinctive place for themselves and were considered as the prophet of their times. They knew the true conscience of the society and believed in high ideological content and social significance of their works. I shall be highlighting that how through these works the concerned novelists have made a deliberate attempt to educate people and tried to convert them to their opinions.

9 Khushwant Singh's *Train To Pakistan* often is termed as 'classics' of world literature in grasping the bitter truth of his times. He detested communalism as well as the desolation of women during the time of partition and proved him to be a master in highlighting the estrangement between Hindus and Muslims. The individuality in Khushwant Singh's writings is on account of his anger and disenchantment with the "...long cherished human values in the wake of inhuman bestial horrors and insane savage killings on both sides during the Partition of the subcontinent between India and Pakistan in August 1947" (Raizada, 126). The novelist brings to the focus the subsequent violence on both sides of the border resulting in cataclysmic mass destruction.

The novel is set in the small village of Mano Majra on the bank of Sutlej river where the only event of importance is a train crossing

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the railway bridge. The partition is represented as an event which the simple village who have lived peaceably together regardless of religious differences cannot fathom. Problems arise when interlopers seek to stir up the villagers to attack Muslim travelling on the train to Pakistan . The ghost train is a metaphor for death. It communicates horror and fear:

One morning a train from Pakistan halted at Mano Majra railway station. At first glance, it had the look of the trains in the days of peace. No one sat on the roof. No one clung between the bogies..... but somehow it was different. Their was something uneasy about it. It had a ghostly quality. (82)

Previously, at Mano Majra, Sikhs and Muslims were friendly to one another; they lived together for centuries. The small village was free from communal disharmony. On one night in the month of August, Ram Lal, a money lender was killed by a dacoit. Juggat Singh , a badmash, lives in the same village. He loves a Muslim girl Nooran . Policemen arrive at the village to look into the case of murder of Ram Lal. Iqbal Singh, a westernized young man also arrives by the same train. He is arrested in the case of the murder of Ramlal. The development in the novel presents the catastrophic events. The ghost train with corpses, from Pakistan, arrives at Mano Majra. Sikhs and Muslims on the platform feel frightened; the sight benumbs them. They fall a prey to suspicion, distrust and hostility. Muslims go to Chandan Nagar, and they are transported to Pakistan. Upon learning that the government was planning to transport Muslims from Mano Majra to Pakistan the next day for their safety, one Muslim said, "What have we to do with Pakistan? We were born here. So were our ancestors. We have lived amongst [Sikhs] as brothers" (133). Meanwhile a group of religious agitators come to Mano Majra and instigate the local Sikhs against Muslims and urge a local gang to attempt slaughter as the Muslims leave on their train to Pakistan. On his release from jail, Juggat Singh goes to the railway station; he looks into every bogie to find Nooran. On rail track, he tries to neutralize the explosive plotted by Hindu fanatic. But the train kills him and goes to Pakistan.

Train to Pakistan is a classic in the post independence Indian English fiction not only because of the bold, brutal and unrelenting realism with which it tears asunder the mask of hypocrisy and and exposes the sordidness and savagery of human life, but also because of the author's optimistic and affirmative world view that emerges from

it, his enduring faith in the values of love, loyalty and humanity and the unconquerable spirit of man in the face of the mighty forces of wickedness and savage cruelties.

Anand's first novel *Untouchable* (1935) is his most artistically satisfying work displaying a rare social awareness and sensitivity. Human dignity occupies a very important place in Anand's scheme of ethical values and conduct. He believes that a writer should train " the higher type of human being who may not always have to seek sanction for his behavior in the external and arbitrary rules of conduct enforced on him by others, but is an individual with the inward monitor of his conscience, who will bend before no tyrants but only follow his own enlightened will"(Anand,90) In 1949, Anand brought out his famous essay in the quest of faith, *Apology for Heroism*, in which he has defined the revolutionary role of the writer in the contemporary situation : Anand remarks:"In so far then, as an art work results from the reflection in the mind of the artist of all the aspects of his experience, it is fundamentally related to life, only improving on it, or rather intensifying it through the " creative myth", so as to change life in the deeper centers of other people's experience and thus in an integral way..... And as he can perceive reality at its highest and disclose the way to a new life, the artist stands as an inspiring force behind all those men and women who face the task of reconstructing the future society out of the shambles of the present" (90).

Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man* depicts the life of an Indian Immigrant who settles in London. The novel treats of the tragic life of an elderly Indian Srinivas, who has nearly spent two-third of his life in London and feels it as his own country. He tells Mrs Pickering with pride: "This is my country now"( 61). The novel treats the theme of East- West conflict which rises due to economic pressures faced by Englanders. The youngmen of England like Mike, Joe, Fred and Bill are unable to secure for themselves a decent job and thus feel hostile towards immigrants. Fred abuses and slanders Srinivas, forcing to consider himself as 'A Nowhere Man', an alien. He tells Mrs. Pickering, " An outsider in England. In actual fact I am of course, an Indian"(242-243). Fred, in his agitation towards Srinivas sets fire to building; but he himself dies in the fire; although, Srinivas is saved from the fire, he dies of shock.

Thus the novel *The Nowhere Man* clearly presents the anguish of alienation in an alien soil of England. Kamala Markandaya views the

difference in the traditions and values of India and the west as a neutral observer and portrays different situations and characters objectively. Regardless of regarding the superiority of the west over the east, she wants them to be complementary to each other so that the mechanized west may benefit from the ethical values of India and the spiritual India from the modernization of the west.

Khushwant Singh expresses the need of communal harmony and compassion by depicting the turbulence that shakes up the whole village and lives of inhabitants of Mano Majra. Anand highlights his concern for the poor and downtrodden class by displaying the class-conflict which exists in the society. He wishes for the ethical and compassionate development of the whole society and advocates for welfare of all the individuals. Kamala Markandaya in her own manner showcases the plight of the immigrants in a foreign land and the psychological and emotional support they need while making their living amongst strangers. The issues and concerns taken up by these writers are still relevant and probe each one of us to look for its solution.

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## The Treatment of Violence in Shashi Tharoor's *Riot*

*Dr. Avinash Chander\**

The present paper aims to focus on the growing instances of violence all over the world in various forms. Violence, these days, is not confined to physical violence. Rather, it has assumed varied shades and forms and has psychological, economic, social, cultural, religious, political and ideological implications. Under the impact of changes in technology, advancement in education, spread of global terrorism etc. have made people invent subtle means to inflict violence upon the others. In this paper an attempt is made to analyze Shashi Tharoor's fictional narrative "Riot" to trace the various instances of violence in the life of major characters and the way these affect their lives.

The novel under study revolves around the incidents of violence that took place in the various parts of India between 1989 and 1992 having roots in Ram Janambhumi- Babri Masjid conflict. The story of the novel is build around a fictional town, Zalilgarh, a part of the state of Uttar Pradesh. This is the same state where the disputed site exists. The novelist has given a detailed description of the violence that takes place in the above mentioned town. But the violence in Zalilgarh can be construed as microcosm of the violence that took place at the macro level in the whole of India. It affected the relationship between the Muslim and Hindu communities. In addition to physical violence, the novel also deals with the violence that took place in the lives of its various characters like Lakshman, Priscilla, Geetha, Katharine Hart, Rudyard Hart, Nandini, Sundari etc. Even the style and language used in the novel have traces of violence.

Both the temporal and spatial settings of the novel refer to the atmosphere of violence that existed in India at one point in history. The novelist chooses a Hindu character, Ram Charan Gupta, to let the readers, both Indian and foreigner, know about the roots of the crisis. He narrates the story to another character Randy Diggs, who is a South Asian correspondent of the New York Journal. He explains the story of a Hindu god Lord Ram's birth in Ayodhya, a town in Uttar Pradesh. He goes on to elaborate, "In olden days a great temple stood there. A magnificent temple. ... Pilgrims from all over India would come to worship Ram there. But a Muslim king, the Mughal emperor Babur, not an Indian, a foreigner from Central Asia, he knocked it down. And in its place he built a big

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mosque, which was named after him, the Babri Masjid.” (Tharoor 2003, 52) (The references to the text at other places are also from the same edition) But now the Hindus have decided to reconstruct the temple there. They think that the birthplace of Lord Ram must be suitably honored. The other parties took the matter to the court which in turn put a ban on any kind of worship or construction on the disputed site. But in spite of court's orders to maintain the status quo, some Hindu leaders have started a programme called Ram Sila Poojan in various parts of India. “Bricks from every corner, every village, of our holy land. Bricks bearing the name of Ram, each brick consecrated in a special puja, worshiped in its local shrine, and then brought to Ayodhya. This was Ram Sila Poojan, the veneration of the bricks of Ram. The building bricks of a great new temple, to commemorate the birth of great and divine king.” (Tharoor, 53) The Hindu leader Ram Charan Gupta puts the whole exercise as ‘to right a great wrong’. The Muslim perspective to the whole scenerio is presented through a Muslim historian, Prof. Mohammed Sarwar, who believes that India belongs as much to the Muslims as to the Hindus.

The violence at the physical plane can be seen in the happenings that take place in Zailgarh. As in the other towns of India, in Zailgarh also a Ram Shila Poojan program has been planned by the Hindus. A huge procession is to be taken in the town and people from the nearby villages and towns have converged in the city along with bricks bearing the name of Lord Ram. As a result, the Muslim community of the area gets terrified. In such a tense atmosphere, a few Hindu boys were busy decorating the town for the coming procession. A few Muslim boys on motor cycles come their attack the Hindu boys with daggers and run away. It further intensifies the already tense atmosphere of the town. In order to control the situation the district administration called a meeting of Hindu community leaders including the leaders of RSS, the VHP, and the Bajrang Dal. To prevent the procession, the District Magistrate tries everything. He employs a variety of approaches like “Calm reasonableness. Firm advice. Earnest appeal. Passionate entreaty.” (Tharoor, 61) He argues with them, “Tensions were high.... Our Ram Sila Poojan program had awakened the fears of the minority community. They were afraid, anxious, easy prey for extremists and hotheads.... If we marched, there was no telling what else could occur. A small spark could ignite a conflagration.” (Tharoor, 61) But when he fails to do so, he lays down certain conditions for the organizers of the procession. The main condition is that the procession should not pass through the Muslim areas. The other conditions are that the processionists should

not carry any weapons with them and they should not raise any provocative slogans against any community. But in spite of the assurance given to the administration by the organizers, the procession passes through the Muslim areas. Somebody throws a crude bomb at the procession from a house. The police tries to control the situation, fires at the house and arrests a person. But the violence spreads out in the town and leads to the incidents of murders, loot and arson.

The violence of Zailgarh and other parts of India is connected with the question of history and truth. For Ram Charan Gupta, the truth is arbitrary and may not be linked with history. Talking about the disputable site, he opines, “I have no doubt where the truth lies. What is important... is that millions of devout Hindus have no doubt either.... Our faith is the only proof we need.” (Tharoor, 121) For Gupta collective faith is more important than historical facts. The birth of Lord Ram may be a myth for some but for others, it is part of their identity. Even Lakshman is of the view, “They may be right, they may be wrong, but to me what matters is what most people believe, for their beliefs offer a sounder basis for public policy than the historian's footnotes.” (Tharoor, 145) A counter narrative is given by Mohammed Sarwar, a Muslim professor of History. He raises the question, “who owns India's history?” Are there my history and his, and his history about my history? This is, in many ways, what this whole Ram Janambhoomi agitation is about – about the reclaiming of history by those who were, at one point, written out of the script. But can they write a new history without doing violence to the inheritors of the old?” (Tharoor, 110) Thus, there are different perspectives to look at history and truth. One cannot be taken as true without doing violence to the other. That is why the novel does not suggest an easy answer to this complex issue and “the reader is left with the realization that in a pluralistic society, truth is necessarily pluralistic.” (Freigang, 31) Even Shashi Tharoor in one of his interviews with Harvard International Review states that the people in India are obsessed by history in a negative way. Many incidents of violence take place because of contending narratives about history. (Tharoor 2002, 03)

The novel also talks about a violence that took place a few years earlier in the national capital, Delhi. The reference is to the killing of Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of the country, by her two Sikh body guards. It resulted in the wide spread killing of the Sikhs in Delhi and other parts of India. “There was an orgy of slaughter, of arson, of looting. Sikh neighborhoods were destroyed, families butchered,

homes torched.” (Tharoor, 194) The S. P Gurinder Singh narrates the incident of how his brother-in-law and nephew, Navjyot, were burnt alive by mob when they were returning home from a cricket match. “The flames must have soared instantly, and these unspeakable motherfuckers watched, cheering, as a decent man and his little boy were roasted alive in their seats.” (Tharoor, 195) Ever since that day the S. P. Gurinder Singh has been “haunted by the thought of little Navjyot, his hair tied on the top of his head under a navy blue kerchief, a bright little boy whose greatest ambition was to open the batting for India one day like his hero Gavaskar. (Tharoor, 195)

But this description of physical violence is just one aspect of the novel. There are other kinds of violence that take place in the lives of some of the characters of the novel. A subtle kind of violence can be seen in the life of Mr. Rudyard Hart and in his relationship with his Indian secretary, Nandini. Both of them are married but they enter into a kind of illicit relationship. Rudyard gets attracted by her exotic figure attired “in gorgeous saris, beckoned with jewelry, fragrant with attar of roses, every nail perfectly painted, every hair in place.” (Tharoor, 36) He enters into sexual union with her in his office, in hotels and even in his own bed room. In this way, both of them violate the sanctity of the conjugal bond. When Mr. Rudyard Hart’s relationship with Nandini comes to the fore, it leads to his divorce. His daughter, Priscilla, gets a kind of emotional shock and says contemptuously to him, “Don’t you realize you were just trying to make up for not being able to penetrate the Indian market?” (Tharoor, 77) Rudyard-Nandini relationship affects Priscilla’s future life to the extent that for years she does not allow anybody to touch her.

Violence can also be seen in the relationship between Priscilla and Lakshman, the two principal characters of the novel. They belong to two geographically and culturally different worlds, one being an American and the other an Indian. But the circumstances bring them together and they get attracted towards each other and indulge in amorous acts of love and sex. They select Kotli, a deserted place outside the town of Zalilgarh, as their meeting place. This indulgence in uninhibited sex provides a kind of an escape to Lakshman, who feels entrapped in a loveless marriage. But for Priscilla, this is perfectly normal as it is sanctioned by her culture and is a part of her upbringing. This illicit relationship, of course from an Indian perspective, leads to a kind of emotional violence in the lives of various characters. Priscilla wants Lakshman to leave his family and go with her to America as her husband. This puts Lakshman’s marriage

under threat and he suffers from a psychic torture. He is forced to choose between his beloved daughter, Rekha, and his American girl friend, Priscilla. On the one hand he has “a good, lovely and loving woman, a chance of a different life, the chance that comes to so few in the world” and on the other hand he feels the “responsibility, an obligation to see [his daughter] through those difficult years of growing up, secure in the environment of a predictable two-parent family structure.” (Tharoor, 239-40) Then, there is Geetha, Lakshman’s wife, who feels that her marriage is under threat and goes to the Swamiji of the Shiva Mandir and urges him to conduct a special puja for her and help her to keep her husband. She says, “Use tantra, do the tandava, use anyone and anything you want, Swamiji, but please don’t let this foreign devil-woman run away with my husband....” (Tharoor, 227)

Along with physical and emotional violence, the novel also contains traces of cultural violence. The novel presents a picture of conflict between two cultures – one Indian and the other American, one oriental and the other occidental. Lakshman, a product of Indian culture, shares his cultural concerns with Priscilla, who has been with other men before entering into a relationship with Lakshman, by saying “How can I know that a woman who has slept with six men will never contemplate sleeping with a seventh”. (Tharoor, 219) He further says, “In my culture, no man with any self-respect gives his manglasutra, his ring, his name, to a woman who has been with other men before.” (Tharoor, 218) In Indian culture the woman one marries is the repository of his culture. Here no one even dares to think of “I have slept with his wife. I have seen his wife naked. His wife has pleased me.” (Tharoor, 218) To Priscilla who is a product of liberal American culture this kind of thinking is a sign of sick mentality. While Lakshman thinks that he cannot afford to sink himself emotionally into a love that might be withdrawn from him as it has been from others, Priscilla feels that she has been used in this relationship. She says, “You want me to stay, so that you can fuck me and then you go to your wife.” She feels that she has put her whole self into this relationship, while for Lakshman it is just a part of his existence. She sarcastically describes her place in Lakshman’s life, “A woman who’s available at your convenience, two evenings a week. You don’t have to give up anything. Your work, your social life, your family, your official commitments. You have it all. Including me.” (Tharoor, 218-219) Looked at from this angle, the novel unfolds itself as a site of various kinds of cultural conflicts and clashes.

If the novel depicts a story of violence at the physical, emotional, psychological and cultural level, it also makes use of language and style which is appropriate for such a kind of story. The novelist has not followed the conventional mode of narration where the incidents and events are presented in a chronological order. On the contrary, he violates this traditional mode and presents before the readers a number of documents like scrapbooks, personal diaries, clippings from newspapers, records of interviews etc. He leaves it to the imagination of the readers to construct their own story out of this plethora of documents. Lakshman, the protagonist of the novel, seems to put forward Shashi Tharoor's perspective when he says, "I'd like to write a novel that does not read like a novel. Novels are too easy – they tell a story, in a linear narrative, from start to finish" (Tharoor, 135) He further says, "why can't I write a novel that reads like – like an encyclopedia.... something in which you can turn to any page and read." (Tharoor, 136) The author's post-structuralist stance comes to the fore when he makes Lakshman utter these words, "Down with the omniscient narrator! It's time for the omniscient reader. Let the reader construct her own novel each time she reads it." (Tharoor, 136) The author's experiments with language, his use of journalistic mode and structural fragmentation of the story have empowered the readers to read the novel as they like and from where they like.

Thus, Shashi Tharoor's fictional narrative "Riot" deals with violence of various kinds. Here we find instances of physical violence, emotional violence, psychological violence, cultural violence and linguistic violence. But the greatness of the novelist lies in the fact that he has succeeded in harmonizing all these types of violence and has presented a story which is gripping as well as enlightening.

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## The Forbidden in Irish Culture and Literature: An Appraisal of Blasphemous Irish Writer's Transition to Literary Stardom

Dr Navjot S. Deol\*

#### Abstract

Although the supposedly civilized nations claim to espouse the freedom of speech and expression, they tend to be very reactionary when sensitive issues are given a voice in literature. Extremely intolerant of anything that could be remotely constructed as a sacrilege of their Catholic faith, Ireland has a chequered history of banning books. Irish writer Edna O' Brien emerged on the literary scene in the early 1960s with her novel *The Country Girl*. The book was banned and burnt in her home town. Her subsequent books met a similar fate. But the years since have seen the same writer and her works being viewed in a different light. Her works have been hailed as a significant contribution to the study of women issues in the Irish culture. This paper examines the culture of 1960s and the factors that lead to the banning of her books. It investigates whether the content of her novels really merited the harsh reaction it got, and finally what circumstances and conditions propelled the writer to emerge from being an outcast to being a celebrated novelist, recipient of many awards and felicitated as a noteworthy female writer.

Edna O' Brien emerged on the literary scene of Ireland in 1961 with her first novel *The Country Girls* which stirred a hornet's nest sparking intense reactions and debates all across the country. The book was banned, burned and denounced from the pulpit. Its contents so riled the catholic community that it prompted a parish priest to organize an auto-da-fe. Not only her debut novel but her subsequent novels met with a similar fate. By 1967 all five of her novels had been banned in Ireland. The books were declared to be "obnoxious, indecent, and obscene" (*Country Girl* 177). She was declared by the Minister for Culture and the Archbishop of Dublin as a "smear on Irish womanhood" (Kersnowski, xviii).

The works that were banned and burned are now considered classics. The writer who was subjected to censure and criticism is now hailed as the grand doyenne of Irish literature with numerous awards to her credit. The steady and remarkable rise of the writer from being

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infamous to being hailed as one of the greatest chroniclers of the female experience in the twentieth century merits a careful study. My paper is structured around three broad areas. Firstly, it investigates the underlying reasons for the outrage that followed in wake of the release of these novels placing the reactions in context of the distinctive socio cultural political milieu of Ireland and the writer's own life. Secondly, to understand the hullabaloo over her initial works, the contentious contents of the first three novels that were later compiled in *The Country Girls Trilogy* are closely examined to ascertain the legitimacy of the intense reaction to her works and finally, the paper analyses the position Edna O'Brien has earned in the Irish literary canon.

The first three novels, *The Country Girls*, *The Lonely Girl* and *Girls in their Married Bliss* discussed sex and female sexuality in a frank and open manner. The reactions to these works are not wholly comprehensible without appreciation of the fact that mid twentieth century was a sort of Dark Age in Ireland dominated by insularity, sexual puritanism and literary censorship where belief in Catholic Church was unquestioned. This candid portrayal of female sexuality was inimical to the puritanical Irish culture of the mid-twentieth century and to the image of Irish womanhood as projected by the regime of all pervasive Catholic religion. Women had to conform to the prototype of an ideal female who was passive and allowed herself to be treated as an object. The double standards of the Irish society expected women to be noble, hardworking, docile, 'desexualized' creatures who submitted to the whims and fancies of men in their lives. Noted Irish feminist writer Mary Ryan elaborates: ....women's desire had to be denied or ignored; for any woman to admit to sexual needs, or to suggest that sex was a desirable aspect of a woman's life presented a 'significant challenge to traditional morality'. (93)

The Ireland of mid twentieth century in which O'Brien grew up was a country in the throes of devotional fervour. Catholic Church which had been bestowed a pre-eminent position by the Irish Constitution of 1937 had a say in all matters pertaining to sex education, contraceptives, premarital sex, virginity, literature or erotica, adultery, etc to mention a few. People were scared of committing mortal sin, burning in hell-fires, damnation. Attendance of Sunday mass, reciting the rosary, confession of sins etc. were the motifs associated with Catholic religion, and Ireland resonated with them in the 1940s and 50s.

Sex education was virtually nonexistent in the olden days because the schools run by the Catholic Church did not provide sex education

and government had imposed a strict ban on literature pertaining to sexual information. Sex was a taboo topic, and not open for discussion in public. Sexual ignorance was commonplace. Talking of those times, famous Irish novelist Maeve Binchy recounted that when she was young; sex was equated with sin and was viewed with suspicion and fear (Burns). She said, "We were all terrified of sin when we were young and sex was explained to us very, very badly. Many girls I knew lived in fear of getting pregnant ... and they were all virgins" (Siciliano). This sanction was because of the apprehension that information related to sex would promote promiscuity, licentiousness and wanton behaviour especially amongst women. It was feared that O'Brien's voice had the potential to plant immoral ideas and encourage women to walk the forbidden path. Her works posed a threat to the moral fabric of the society that the Church had so closely guarded against the infiltration of these ideas.

She was self taught without the aid of University education. She confesses that she had 'no literary education but a fervid religious one' (Guppy). In the years 1941– 46 she was educated by the Sisters of Mercy – a circumstance that contributed to a "suffocating" childhood. Years later O'Brien confesses, "I rebelled against the coercive and stifling religion into which I was born and bred. It was very frightening and all pervasive. I'm glad it has gone" (Cooke). In her personal life, she flouted many of the Christian beliefs and principles and this trait spills into her writings. Indulging in premarital sex was considered deviant behaviour and O'Brien lost her virginity to a boy she had no intention of marrying. In her autobiography she recounts how the priest to whom she revealed all in the confessional said that she would have to atone for the "pestiferous, vile, slime ridden pool of transgression" (*Country Girl* 111) and she confides how she chose to disregard his directions altogether.

There is no denying the fact that Edna O'Brien was bold, brazen and completely unapologetic in dealing with female sexuality. The *Trilogy* which traces the life journey of her protagonists Bridget Brennan or Baba and Caithleen Brady or Kate from adolescence to adulthood contains some of the brutally honest descriptions of female sexual desires and sexual encounters written by a female author. So many years down the lane they still have the ability to make a more modest reader cringe. The escapades of Kate and Baba, their search for romantic love and sexual pleasure, their deliberate plan to get expelled from the claustrophobic convent by writing a dirty note on holy picture that insinuated a sexual relationship between a priest and a nun and ensured

their dishonourable exit from the convent, had all the ingredients to scandalize the sanctimonious nation.

The love scenes of Kate that contained descriptions such as “he had kissed my frightened nipples and they had sprouted like seed potatoes” (The Country Girls Trilogy 236) or “And rivers of love flowed into me, through him, carrying long drawn ripples of pleasure which made me cry back to him ... and her lover’s comment “All those seeds we let go waste” (The Country Girls Trilogy 350) were lurid enough to appal and horrify the Irish establishment. If we compare this to “She saw her father and Etienne in the embrace of love” a line that appeared in Irish novelist Kate O’Brien’s *The Land of Spices* published in 1941 and resulted in it not only being banned but also earned for the book the tag of ‘sodomy book’, it is easy to understand the shock that was elicited by O’Brien’s works.

Baba, the other female character is vivacious, slim, petite who marries a rich man who cannot sexually satisfy her. She indulges in extramarital affairs. One man who is unable to complete the task makes her comment “An Irishman: good at battles, sieges and massacres. Bad in bed” (The Country Girls Trilogy 384). Then she has a liaison with a man who makes a show of his sexual prowess. He bragged that he had studied the art of lovemaking since he was fourteen declaring that he could make love to twenty five women in an evening ( The Country Girls Trilogy 427). Baba narrates: “Then he put the cigarette out and we got down to business. “Is it big enough for you?” he said. Men worry about that a terrific lot. “Enormous,” I said.”You are such a bright girl”, he said. Men are such fools (The Country Girls Trilogy 429). These digs at the inability of Irish men to satisfy the women sexually, their vanity, false egos are a refrain in O’Brien’s works and account for the patriarchal Ireland’s strong reaction against her writings.

In yet another scene, Baba while being examined by a male gynaecologist thinks about the unpleasant and less than gratifying sexual experience of the Irish women “I thought of all the women who had it, and didn’t even know when the big moment was, and others saying their Rosary beads held over the side of the bed, and others saying, “Stop, stop, you dirty old dog,” and others yelling desperately to be jacked right up their middles, and it often leading to nothing, and them getting out of bed and riding a poor doorknob and kissing the wooden face of a door and urging with foul language, then crying, wiping the knob, and it all adding up to nothing either”( The Country Girls Trilogy

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473). This was decidedly one of the most graphic and sexually explicit paragraphs written by a women writer up till that point. Edna’s works surely had enough arsenal to justify the extreme reactions that came her way.

It would be naive to attribute the horrified reaction of the self-righteous people of Ireland to merely the graphic sexual descriptions. Another equally relevant reason for the hysterical reaction was the irreverential and an almost blasphemous treatment of religion that seeped through the thoughts and actions of the protagonists. O’Brien called a spade a spade, mincing no words in exposing the hollowness of many beliefs, practices that were followed in the Irish society of those times. The characters constantly take pot-shots at the Catholic principles and beliefs during the course of the Trilogy. Says Eugene Gaillard, a non catholic “Catholics are the most opinionated people in the whole world - their self mania, he said frightened him” (The Country Girls Trilogy 201). In another scene when Kate is asked to make an Act of Perfect Contrition by the parish priest confesses she felt like “an awful hypocrite saying words that she did not mean” (The Country Girls Trilogy 271).

For all the brouhaha that her works generated, it cannot be denied that Edna enjoys a pre-eminent position today amongst the female writers of Ireland. During the course of a highly prolific literary career spanning more than 55 years, Edna O’ Brien as a novelist, playwright, poet and short story writer “has been both celebrated and denounced, censored and anthologized”( Itzel 1). This shows that the reactions to her works have been by no means homogenous. Ironically, the adverse reaction to her early works elicited enormous curiosity about her works. There is an anecdote about how at a public meeting in Limerick in 1966 O’Brien had asked for a show of hands to ascertain who had read her banned books, she was met with a sea of hands and much laughter. In this meeting, she was also supported by Fr Peter Connolly, Professor of English Language and Literature at Maynooth who defended her saying that authorial intention was important to determine the difference between serious and pornographic fiction (Country Girl, 154)

Even though her works were banned but the reactions were not as extreme as some banned writers have faced the world over. She did not have to deal with death threats, or to seek police protection, nor was she barred from entering the country. Her works, right from the beginning of her career, have received critical praise. Over the years she has been a recipient of numerous awards and honours which bear

testimony to the enduring legacy of her works. Her awards and honours include a Kingsley Amis Award; the Yorkshire Post Book Award; the Los Angeles Times Book Prize; Writers' Guild Award (Best Fiction); European Prize for Literature. Her collection *Saints and Sinners* won the 2011 Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award, the world's richest prize for a short story collection. Her memoir, *Country Girl*, published in 2012 also fetched her Irish Book Award for nonfiction.

Even though O'Brien has rightfully earned her place in the Irish literary canon yet she is remembered for scandalizing the nation with her works which were all written on foreign soil. Nevertheless, her novels remain significant both as works of art and as historical and sociological documents that map the personal experiences of a whole generation of disempowered Irish women, constrained as they were by the repressive Irish patriarchal society of the first half of the twentieth century. She continued to write, refused to filter her content despite the backlash; this in itself can be construed as a spirited denouncement of the oppressive Irish Censorship laws. The controversies generated by her works also fuelled the movement for relaxation of censorship laws that were overhauled in 1967 resulting in unbanning of numerous Irish books.

There is no denying the fact that she paved the way for other Irish novelists, making it easier for the audiences to confront taboo topics. She crossed the line when others did not have the courage to do so. Scottish novelist Andrew O'Hagan aptly sums up Edna O'Brien's place in Irish letters. She states, "She changed the nature of Irish fiction; she brought the woman's experience and sex and internal lives of those people on to the page, and she did it with style, and she made those concerns international." (Cooke)

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## Does Woman Really Exist? A Critical Overview of Violence on Woman in 'Lajwanti'

Gurpreet Kaur\*

Violence is such a hydra-headed phenomenon that the whole globe is reverberating with the poignant cries, sighs, anxieties and horrendous and gory sights with roots lying in the myriad forms of religious extremism, fascism, ethnic racist conflicts, covert economic/capitalist imperialism, political ambitions and crises, gender conflicts and so on. The present global milieu raises some pertinent questions on the overzealous postmodernist turn of history that saw its theoretical gamut turning into praxis in the wide ranging ubiquitous harangues of cultural and epistemological relativism. The demise of metanarratives of Enlightenment's professed goal of universal rationality that were allegedly accused of causing totalitarian regimes and holocausts, have been replaced by more chaotic, translucent, information-overloaded-knowledge-sickening-propaganda-permeated virtual maddening domain with ever-aggravating glocal and global issues of violence.

As far as representation of violence against women is concerned, historiographical accounts are miserably inadequate. The writing of history, as contested by Hayden White and others, is only a statistical abstraction of human predicament with its sole focus on significance of events and their analyses. Fictional narratives represent the singularity of the event but in the process open up profound insights into the real contours, catholicity and contingencies of historical events. Ian Talbot, in his article –'Literature and the Human Drama of the 1947 Partition' rightly advocates that novelists have addressed the 'personal experience' that historians lack. He encourages historians to study the 'human dimension' of partition by employing diverse source materials that include autobiographies and literary accounts of the events. Humans are the central and integral aspect of history and hence exclusion of 'human' proves historiography inadequate in representing the core essence of the story.

A story by Rajinder Singh Bedi – 'Lajwanti' set in the backdrop of partition has been taken to illustrate the painful predicament and vulnerability of women, especially in the context of historically turbulent period that exposes the monstrous truth of patriarchal societies. Though the story may be perceived and relegated to a bygone past of more than

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60 years, but one cannot deny the fact that nothing much has changed as far as women victimization is concerned. The only difference is that today it has been classified into various categories namely rapes, domestic violence, workplace harassment, dowry and marital issues, eve-teasing, women reservations, immoral trafficking, property rights, live-in relationship rights or 'wrongs' and sexual oppression in and outside marriage etc. These categories serve as convenient domains for academics, social research and policy formations. Equivalently, the stratification makes it convenient for the state to address gender violence in legal framework. Underlying all this is the bare fact of perpetuated women subordination to men.

The synchronic attestation to the diachronically constituted phallogocentric 'world' points to the malaise in the very foundations that henceforth shaped the content and form of all discourses since their inception and conception. Aristotle's early recognition of human being as political animal to the later elaborations, by the likes of Foucault and Derrida, on the insidious play of power in its most subtle and covert form delineates and explains the genesis of power and violence as natural corollary of hierarchized structure of not only epistemological categories and metaphysical ideals but the ontological understanding of reality. Keeping aside the man-nature interactive relation, intra human domain in itself is a poignant manifestation of an arbitrarily constructed binary framework. It doesn't take much but a keen and critical reflection to notice that the world belongs to man. It's only in the movement of thought risen from a critical enquiry that one notices the implicit chains, to put it in Rousseau's manner, which have shackled women politically and culturally, despite the piecemeal improvements in progressive democratic societies. Since time memorial, 'mankind' has been unkind to woman. Woman is the ontological 'inferior' other of male to define man as hierarchically better positioned and justifying it through hegemonic consent. This is the diabolic nature of hegemonic dominance, when the victim fails to perceive the tricks of the 'knowledge-producing' conjuror. The ontological critique of gender foregrounds the discursive formation of identity and self.

'Lajwanti' is one such quintessential story that recounts the phenomenon of trauma, memory and identity of a female subject inflicted with violence from the 'other' who 'pollutes' her by abducting and from the one who is her own. Violence in its very pronouncement evokes mutilated bodies, embodied tortures and death. But it is also uncontestable

how violence dwells in silence, gagged voices, legitimized ordeals and unremedied trauma. Lajwanti is a 'norm-al' wife- bashful, learns to derive masochistic joy out of Sunder Lal's sadistic display of 'masculine conjugal role' of tormenting, beating, dictating his wife and then transforming into a 'loving' bedmate at the very right time to reinstate his figure of pati-parmeshwar- the one who is bestowed supreme absolute power over the woman, his worshipper, whose salvation lies in serving her God unconditionally. Lajwanti is abducted during the riots. As the dust settled, the states began their recovery mission. The nationalistic fervor of 'recovering the honour' that is the abducted women work as 'mechanical overhauling' of Sunder Lal. Every morning he leads a procession through the streets and would appeal people to accept the recovered woman and rehabilitate them in the society and families. He would sing the Lajwanti folk song : " These are the tender touch-me-not leaves ,my friend, they will shrivel and curl up even if you just touch them"(Bedi 55). This transformed subject, Sunder Lal, is now magnanimous and empathetic towards his recovered wife. She is now made a Devi- the untouchable. His compassion never asks him to listen to her trauma, to get herself ridden of her 'sins' of past, to bury her past and make the present 'present', nor it compels him to recognize the embodied longing wife waiting incessantly to be loved.

The deification is another form of violent attack on her corporeal feminine demands and rights. The reverence, apparently an honest repentance in Sunder Lal's own recognition, is actually an unconscious instrument of privileged master to hide emasculation of his subject as male in accepting the wife, because of the social obligation, who has been 'polluted' and a crude agony of finding her hale and hearty on her return from another male's territory. There lies the uncanny play of signifiers written on psychic text of self that is gendered in the process of immersing into the symbolic order. The silence of Lajwanti and her inability to share her traumatic memory with her indifferent husband is agonizing. It suggests "the need for a second person to act as a confirming witness in order for the traumatized subject to come to terms with her experience" (153). MiekeBal corroborates this, "such a second person confirms a notion of memory that is not confined to the individual psyche but is constituted in the culture in which the traumatized subject lives" (as quoted in *Limiting Secularism* 153). It also exemplifies Helene Cixous's emphasis that it is difficult for a woman to express herself in a language which is phallogocentric. The story of Lajwanti manifests the myriad forms of violence- initially she is subjected to physical violence

when she is invariably assaulted everyday by her husband on the slightest of provocation. Then she is subjected to traumatic experience of abduction by the male predators of other community. She returns to find her husband a changed man. But her paradise gradually turns into hell when she ceases to a woman for her husband, her deification is another form of violence which seems innocuous but tears apart her identity as a woman. In this way Bedi draws a story of innocent vulnerable Lajwanti's journey from an object of pleasure to a stone- an ossified statue of unspoken emotions and narratives of memory, with an intermittent phase which was perhaps lesser violent objectively as she reluctantly admits that her abductor did not treat her badly. Her life is reduced to a passive site of violence writ all over.

There have been an immense and widespread activism for asserting equality of genders to eliminate the violence exercised by the male over female. These discourses have primarily been sociological and political or epistemological in the broader sense. But the enormity and necessity demands de-ontologising the very rubric of intra-human inter-sex relationship complemented by a studied activism for acquiring equal and unbiased political, economic and social rights. The genesis and possibility of violence between sexes can be mitigated or resolved by destabilizing the naturalized notions/concepts and values which have permeated every sphere of our existential space. Since the advent of liberal and Marxist schools of feminism actively struggling for political economic and institutional rights of women, the ramifications of the movements can be noticed in our country too. But, as in west, the radical and psychoanalytical school of feminism, initiated by the profound theoretical insights of Simone DeBouvoir, Helen Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and others, challenged the very foundations of meanings and symbols created by the phallogocentric authority, no such forceful activism backed by the intellectual critical enquiry could make an impact here. Instead going by the present milieu the very labeling of Modern India seems an oxymoron with medieval feudo-patriarchal archaic notions and values still ruling the mindset of the populace.

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## Disenchantment in the Pursuit of Gender Equality: Benare's Broken Dream in Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence!* *The Court is in Session*

Neha Khosla\*

### Abstract

*Gender is basically a secondary construct that is enforced over the top of the natural distinction, i.e. of sex. The purpose of this paper is to re-emphasize and reiterate through Vijay Tendulkar's drama "Silence! The Court is in Session", that women at every stage of their presence have been a victim of this ever existing, forever flourishing, never ending and refusing to change/ alter patriarchal system. Leela Benare the protagonist suffers at the hands of the society for becoming passionately involved with a married man with a family. Tendulkar, through Benare, very delicately traces and conveys this agony and sufferance, which is the reality of our society.*

**Key Words:** Gender, gender equality, patriarchy, patriarchal system, feminism

Vijay Tendulkar, one of the most exceptional and prolific Indian playwrights, is known for his versatility. His writing career is made up of varied genres of literature that include essays, short stories, criticism, screenplay writing and drama. He is known for his plays like *Shantata!* *Court Chaulahe* (1967), *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972), and *Sakharam Binder* (1972) and has achieved several accolades including the Padma Bhushan, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Filmfare Award, Saraswati Samman, Kalidas Samman and Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar. Vijay Tendulkar, a renowned dramatist, in his play, *Silence! The Court is in Session* has beautifully traced the disadvantages of being a woman through the main character Leela Benare.

Leela Benare the protagonist of the play believes in the magnificence of life. She truly lives up to her name. Leela is a way of describing all reality including the cosmos, it refers to the activities of God. Tendulkar finds it appropriate for Benare to vent out her feelings through short poems wherein she lays bare all the things that happened with her. She almost but subtly discloses about her love affair with her uncle:

Oh, I've got a sweetheart  
Who carries all my books  
He plays in my dolls house  
And he says he likes my looks. (58)

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According to her, life is meant to be lived freely on one's own terms and conditions. She flouts the social norms, the conventional mode of conduct and defies all customs. She doesn't want to be alive for namesake; she wants to feel alive by living life vivaciously. Being different from the others she is naturally sequestered. She is made the victim of a cruel game which involves mostly men and just another woman Mrs. Kashikar. Her private life is disclosed, laid bare and openly dissected revealing her forbidden love affair with a married man, Professor Damle that had resulted in her pregnancy. Benare is filled with effervescence and gusto for life. She feels that she is an individual who has every right to make her own choices and live her life the way she wants. She considers herself as an individual and not merely a woman. It's a shame she is disillusioned by the fact that if she doesn't conduct herself in accordance to the social norms she is sure to be doomed. She tried to be different and so she was punished heavily.

Simone de Beauvoir in her revolutionary book *The Second Sex* argued that women have been defined by men and if any woman as much so attempts to break with this they definitely risk alienating themselves. Being the other gender a woman is made to suffer. It is all to be blamed onto the gender division. Gender which is basically a secondary construct is enforced on top of the so called natural distinction, i.e. of sex. Gender is used to describe the difference in behaviour of men and women which are described as masculine and feminine.

Beauvoir observes, 'One is not born, but rather becomes a woman' (273). A woman learns her role not herself but in relation to that of a man. She is not born to be the insignificant and passive but man along with some external forces has conspired to make her this way so as to maintain their power to eternity. These gender differences are formed by the society on the role of man as the bread earner. It makes him superior and gives him a position of power in the society and family which in turn makes our society a patriarchal society.

Benare who does not conform to this status is considered to be an alien. She considers herself to be a free individual but the others in this male dominated, patriarchal society make it a point to show her, her place in the society that is of being a woman. The play embodies the emotional and psychological conflict of not just the protagonist Miss Benare, who was not only expected to remain silent against the decisions of court and the arguments of the lawyers but like every other woman to observe silence in order to survive in this man made society. Miss

Benare goes against the idea of conventional woman the one who is meant to raise a family, confine herself and her sexual desires within the four walls and thus becomes the object of criticism.

In the words of GulnazFatma: “Patriarchy is the result of sociological construction that is passes down from generation to generation.”(An Internet Entry). It vests power in the hands of men. It’s a system that maintains hierarchy and hegemony between the two biological sexes. Females are perceived as objects, which have to undergo a lot of misery and exploitation in all phases and fields. Vijay Tendulkar in “Silence! The Court is in Session” observes the double standards of patriarchy through the eyes of criticism.

Benare has come to a village to perform with her group. She is a 34 year old, working as a teacher to earn her livelihood. She is loved and appreciated by her students in the school. All her group members gang up against her and so decide to make her the accused. The trial reveals the mean and low mentality of all the men and the society in general. It is through the trial that one gets to know of Benare’s life. At the age of fourteen Benare had fallen in love with her mother’s brother who takes advantage of her innocence. Little does she know that only she would bear the brunt of the mistake that she commits as a child. She suffers then and was the only one who was blamed. Her uncle not only exploits her physically but also gets away without any punishment. She does not know how to respond to things then and has even tried to commit suicide. After all these years when she finally falls in love again she receives a worse blow. Benare who has been in a relationship with a married man, Professor Damle, with a family, got pregnant, but she was the only one who was blamed for the entire act. Even the presence of Damle was not needed when the trial was being held against her. She is being thrown from her job where as no one cared to even question Prof. Damle or dismiss him from the job for such a heinous act. Nanasaheb, the chairman of the education society has decided to dismiss such a lady from the job who is pregnant before marriage. She is accused as if she conceived all on her own. She is blamed for an act which requires two people for sure. Agreed that the norm of conventional morality was created to safeguard the institution of family, the breach was not made by Benare alone, the two men she was in love with are equally guilty. Yet the only one who was punished was Leela. And now she is being forced to abort her baby by these so called protectors of these institutions constructed by men favourable

for themselves. With this Benares disillusionment finally crumbles for she is the only one who is held responsible.

Patriarchy has both productive and punitive aspects. The women, who wish to remain single, refuse to get married or bear children out of wedlock are ridiculed and held in contempt by the society and Miss Leela Benare is treated absolutely according to the social norms for she wanted to bring into this world her love child though she was not married. Motherhood and wifehood both have been glorified to a totally different level in the patriarchal system. These roles have been formed and imposed onto the females. Such roles have been talked about in literature and religion and repetition of all these things is done to keep women actively involved and engaged in playing such roles thus themselves contributing and perpetuating this patriarchal system. Benare steps out of the conventional line and so is accused by the lawyer Sukhatme in strong words: The woman who is accused has made a heinous blot on the sacred brow of motherhood – which is purer than heaven itself. For that, any punishment, however great, that the law may give her, will be too mild for her.... The accused has committed a far more serious crime. I mean unmarried motherhood. Motherhood without marriage has always been considered a very great sin by our religion and our traditions. Moreover, if intention of the accused is bringing up the offspring of this unlawful maternity is carried to completion I have a dreadful fear that the very existence of society will be danger. (114-115). He even goes to the extent of saying that “Miss Benare is not fit for independence” cause she really doesn’t know where to draw a line (115).

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Similarly women who cannot bear children especially male children are treated with disdain and their status in their family is that of a non-existent entity. Mr and Mrs Kashikar have no children. Mrs Kashikar is snubbed by her husband all the time. She is the kind of woman who has defined herself the way men have decided a woman should be. Sally Kempton in her essay “Cutting Loose” has very rightly said. “Men define intelligence, men define usefulness, men tell us what is beautiful, men even tell us what is womanly” (176). Those women who did not fall into this pattern of society, women like Leela Benare who refused to be imperceptible and did not conform to their community identity on their fertility and domestic status were scorned and condemned for being stubborn and even as unnatural to their basic biology. Mrs. Kashikar being so conditioned by this very system comments on Leela’s behaviour towards men. She strongly feels that

there should be some sort limit to ones behaviour. Mrs.Kashikar. Should there be no limit to how freely a woman can behave with a man? An unmarried woman? No matter how well she knows him? Look how loudly she laughs! How she sings, dances, cracks jokes! And wandering alone with how many men, day in and day out! (100)She also feels that these days when you get everything without marrying one becomes this way. Since one has no responsibilities of a family. A woman is answerable for all her mistakes as well as the others. She might be a victim, she will always be a convict and the verdict will undoubtedly be forever against her. Benare is just another woman who has been victimised by the patriarchal system to such a level.Towards the end when the circle is complete, when the verdict is given she sings to herself:

The parrot to the sparrow said,  
 ‘Why, oh why, are your eyes so red?’  
 ‘Oh, my friend, what shall I say?  
 Someone has stolen my nest away.’  
 Sparrow, sparrow, poor little sparrow...  
 Were you there? Did you see it go?’  
 ‘No, I don’t know. I didn’t see.  
 What are your troubles to do with me?’  
 O sparrow, sparrow, poor little sparrow... (121)

Benare is the sparrow that has lost everything, for her nest has been stolen. She has already lost her love, she has lost her place in the society and now even her child is being taken away. She has been robbed of everything that she could call hers. Her private life was questioned, ripped open and her character was taken apart piece by piece. She was trapped like an animal. Everything seemed to her to be slipping away from her hands. No one stepped up to defend or support her. All that everyone did was to denounce her and her actions. No one even thought about the circumstances she suffered. No one cared what her troubles were.

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## Feminist Transition in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*

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Woman is the biological other of man. A creation of God responsible for the creation of human race. In no respect a woman is inferior to her other half i.e. the man. She is equally endowed with intelligence, power and individual personality. A woman plays multiple roles during her lifetime starting from a sweet little daughter to a sister, to a mother to a working woman, so on and so forth. They play a strong role not only by supporting their families but also by determining the destiny of their community as well as their nation. But, from times immemorial, man has kept her as his own personal property and thus not allowed to developed her own individuality. Our patriarchal societies have a particular mindset that the male is superior to the females , physically as well as mentally, so they must submit themselves to the male authority. In such societies there are set standards and rules meant only for women and they are supposed to adhere to them. Therefore in order to rescue the females from the bondage of the patriarchy, feminism came into play. The main motto of feminists is to transform these patriarchal societies and systems. For the feminists, women must write for themselves as the men would not. Feminists have a firm belief that decolonization must be done by each and every woman and they must strive hard in order to move out from the sphere of being victims. They want to replace the position of women from being passive objects to very active subjects.

Feminism began as a movement in about 1960’s and gained momentum during 70’s and 80’s. Feminists look at a work of art from a female oriented point of view. Their work is to set right the distorted, oppresses and invisible image of women. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyse Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* as a feminist text and the transition in the life of central character Celie would be brought out. As this paper is dealing with Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, the focus thus shifts on Black feminism and more specifically on the concept of ‘Womanism’ as proposed by Alice Walker herself.

Women and that too black, connotes someone who is doubly oppressed and marginalized. The black women were disliked not only by the whites but also by their coloured male counterparts. Alice walker

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deliberately moved away from the term 'Black Feminism' as this term was not defining her concept of feminism and thus she replaced the term with 'womanism'. In the introduction of her celebrated book *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* Alice Walker defines the term 'Womanism' and also a womanist as:

1. From womanish (opposite of "girlish", i.e. frivolous, irresponsible, not serious). A black feminist or feminist of color . . . responsible, in charge, serious.
2. Also: a woman who loves other women sexually and/ or non sexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility . . . and women's strength. Committed to the survival of wholeness of entire people, male and female . . .
3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the spirit. Loves love. Loves struggle. Loves the folk. Loves herself. Regardless.
4. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender. (xi-xii)

'Womanism' does not divide black society from within on the lines of gender but, stands for integration and has faith in the wholeness of the society. Throughout her literary career Alice Walker delved deep into the oppression and victimization of African American women and this also forms the basic structure of the novel *The Color Purple* which has 'womanism' as its basic theme. To quote Krishna Mohan Mishra the novel; . . . depicts the antagonism between black men and black women, and the physical and emotional relationship between black women. It concerns Black women victimized by black men physically, sexually and economically, their lesbian bonding against the tyrannical forces of patriarchy and their ultimately gaining triumph over them. (Sinha 178)

The women in the novel with special reference to the protagonist, moves from being victims to self conscious beings and not only women but men also undergo a sea change. The concept of 'Lesbianism' which is also a corollary of 'womanism' has also been incorporated in the novel through the physical bonding that emerges between Celie and Shug Avery in the due course of the novel.

*The Color Purple* is written in an epistolary form. There are as many as ninety-one letters out of which first fifty-one letters have been addressed to the God and the latter letters are either from Celie to Nettie (her sister) or from Nettie to Celie. Sunitha Diwakar in "The Sense of

the Self" elaborates upon Celie's act of writing to God as, "Celie's communication with God through her letters confirms her very existence. Through her letters she asserts that she is still alive. She writes just to survive". (Sinha 123)

The novel opens with Celie's tragic letter to God wherein she reveals about her rape by her own father whom Celie used to call Pa. Celie's father told her not to tell anything to anyone or else he would kill her ailing mother. Celie had two children with her father but both of them were abandoned by Celie's father. It was after the death of Celie's mother that she started nurturing her family. Her first and foremost concern was to protect Nettie from the advances of their father. Like a typical womanist she was desperately trying to take Nettie into her custody. One of the most touching example of Celie's womanism is when she offers herself to her father in order to save Nettie from his advances. "I ast him to take me instead of Nettie while our new mammy sick." (*The Color Purple* 8)

Celie's decision to marry Albert was also for the sake of Nettie. Albert wanted to marry Nettie but Pa-, because of his intensions to molest her, didn't allow Albert to marry her and thus Celie was married to him, a man with four children and a girlfriend. Celie wanted to have a secure future for her sister so she called her up to come and live with her in Albert's home. But here also the problem was not solved as Albert started making advances towards Nettie therefore Celie thought it best to send Nettie along with Mr. and Mrs. Samuels and their two adopted children Olivia and Adam, who actually were Celie's children abandoned by Pa.

Celie was harshly treated earlier by her father and later by her husband, Albert. Celie used to call Albert as Mr-. She expresses his behaviour towards her as very callous. "he look at me. It like he looking at the earth" (*The Color Purple* 21). Albert, a typical patriarchal male believes, "Wives is like children. You have to let'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating" (*The Color Purple* 37). Thus, the novel unfolds the story of Celie who is lonely, sad and full of despair, who is treated like an animal both by her father and her husband. She is just like an object for them to play with and leave. Celie's treatment at the hands of men lets her reveal that, "I don't even look at mens. That's the truth. I look at women, tho, cause I'm not scared of them" (*The Color Purple* 6). She feels comfortable with other women around instead of men. Celie has abandoned her emotions and whenever she used to get a sound beating from Albert

she does not "cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree." (The Color Purple 23)

It is around letter number seventeen that we come across a bold female character who is self asserting and is not allowing her husband to dominate her. She is Sofia Butler, wife of Albert's elder son Harpo. When Sofia refuses to be treated like a servant Harpo complains of the matter to his parents who direct him to give her a sound beating and what surprises in the incident is that Celie also guides Harpo to beta Sofia. Actually, Celie became jealous of Sofia as she was unlike her. Strong, bold and willing to fight for herself, Sofia was a total contrast to Celie. But the rift in their relationship was solved as soon as Celie told her the reason for her (Celie's) doing so and thus Celie and Sofia came closer into companionship. Thus a womanist bond gets established. Both of them then involve themselves into the process of quilt making out of rugs and torn curtains. This quilt making stands symbolic of transformation from rugs into a cozy quilt i.e. from worn out emotions to emotional bonding between women for themselves.

Shug Avery, a blues singer and Albert's girlfriend also brings about transformation in the life of Celie. Celie was very much impressed by her persona and the way she used to handle men. Celie started feeling comfortable in her company and an emotional bond started evolving between them. "For the first time in my life, I feel just right." (The Color Purple 60) Hereon, Celie starts growing, evaluating and analyzing things.

Celie's further transformation is brought about by discovering Nettie's letters. Nettie's letters made her aware of the outer world. The stern mentality of Olinka people towards women as depicted by Nettie in her letters made Celie identify herself with other black women belonging to Africa. New thinking horizons were being opened up for Celie through her sister's letters. These letters became a source of education for her. Celie's doubts on God being white are also cleared by Nettie who says, "the Bible says that Jesus Christ had hair like lamb's wool. Lamb's wool is not straight, Celie." (The Color Purple 141) which indicate that Jesus is also coloured. However, Celie also comes to know that Olinka men make beautiful quilts. This is a typical womanist aspect where there is no restriction on the kind of work both sexes do.

It is also through Nettie's letters that Celie comes to know that that their biological father was a great businessman and was lynched by the whites and that Pa- was their step-father who married their

mother for the property she inherited after the death of their real father. Hereafter, Celie's journey on the path of complete transformation actually begins. She is now liberated of the sin of having children by her father, who actually was her step-father. Celie gathers courage to leave Albert and move to Memphis with Shug. It is Albert who is worried now instead of Celie as he is bothering about the society. Shug takes Celie to her big home and when Celie tries to look after Shug, Shug tells her, "You not my maid. I didn't bring you to Memphis to be that. I brought you here to love you and help you get on your feet." (The Color Purple 218) Once again we are confronted with the womanist concerns where a woman is ready to support another. Celie's confidence in herself gets a boost and she begins her enterprise of making pants. She owns her little factory and is swamped with orders from everywhere. Celie is now an independent and transformed woman who is earning for her own living and has tried to challenge the patriarchal society.

A womanist text not only looks forward to empower women but also care about the men and the society. The novel therefore also is not concerned with female's evolution and bonding alone but also with the transformation of male thinking. That is why we see a change in Albert and Harpo who now "reassess and re-evaluate their lives and develop a better relationship with their women" (Diwakar, 137). Albert during his conversation with Celie after she has returned back tells her, "I'm satisfied, this is the first time I ever lived on Earth as a natural man. It feels like a new experience" (The Color Purple 267). He also admits that it "Took me long enough to notice you such good company, he say" (The Color Purple 283). Harpo has also evolved from a man who wanted to subdue his wife into a man who is now more liberal and assisting his wife in her household works.

Towards the end we come across a confident and self – sustaining Celie, who is sewing pants and "Anybody can wear them" (The Color Purple 218). So, the pants Celie made were not only for males but also for females. She made an attempt to break the distinction between the two sexes. Towards the end of the novel we definitely come across a Celie who is now intelligent enough to take up the decision of her life by herself, who is now in a position to say 'no' to Albert when he proposes her to remarry, a Celie who has now replaced the idea of a white/black male god with nature and learnt that she must also take part in the act of creation out of sheer love and care like nature does.

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### A Janus-Face Study of *Pages Stained with Blood*

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Originally published in Assamese, *Pages Stained with Blood* is a novel by Indira Goswami. It is translated into English by Pradip Acharya. This novel depicts the terror and brutality against Sikhs or anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in response to the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in June 1984.

Narrator is a lecturer at Delhi University and lives in a small flat at Shakti Nagar in Delhi. She wants to write a book on Delhi and so is always avid to any information available from people or books. She visits many places to know the city better and jots down anything worth she comes across. But during her stay, she becomes witness to the frenzy against Sikhs as a consequence of "Operation Blue Star" in Punjab and assassination of Indira Gandhi. This gory Sikh pogrom disturbs her. While living in Delhi, the narrator develops a bent for Sikhism; mainly due to her close association with some Sikhs, whom she considers part of her family like-Santokh Singh, Balbir and Sikh Baba. Brigadier Ratan Mansingh is her close friend and Dr. Monga, her personal physician. As she is personally close to them, the condition of Sikhs depresses her.

Having a literary bent of mind and in her pursuit to write a book on Delhi, she visits various places to garner more information. She is also well aware and well-read about various places in Delhi and narrates various anecdotes of Gurus related to places like Majnu Ka Tila, etc. She frequently visits gurudwaras and mentions about their glowing marble, the decor inside, the calm sweet hymns of raagis, bataashas and delicious langar enjoyed there. She always remembers Guru Tegh Bahadur's tender face and imagines Guru's voice while stepping in Seeshganj Gurudwara. Her personal association with the Sikhs and liking for Sikhism makes her more empathetic towards them in the current political scenario. With "Operation Blue Star" in Punjab, the Sikhs have been increasingly becoming dissatisfied. "Times are bad" repeatedly rings in the narrator's ears. The happenings in Punjab cast its dark shadow on Delhi too. There is vigorous check on Sikhs; police is on prowl and Sikhs under surveillance.

Narrator is aware that all that is happening and going to happen will hurt Sikh sentiments badly. From Punjab Hindus are moving out

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and from Delhi Sikhs for fear of police. Narrator is continuously worried about a group of youngsters gone to Punjab for Guru Parab. She also notices Sikh Baba, who as usual roams around unaware of the world around him. Finally, when the news of the army capturing Golden Temple comes, its shadow looms large on Delhi too. Narrator herself goes out to make a note of the situation. With Akal Takht destroyed, dissatisfaction spreads among Sikhs. They close their shops and some Sikh drivers sit shock struck at the taxi stand. After all this when Santokh Singh down with the loss of Bhindrawale and the ill-treatment meant to Sikh three-wheeler drivers turns up to the narrator, she pours her empathy. A call from the Brigadier before leaving for Siachen, eases her worry for him. But the last straw that breaks the camel's back is the news of Indira Gandhi's assassination. It let loose the communal frenzy against Sikhs. Every Sikh in Delhi is seen as murderer and a "traitor." Narrator sees them being thrown out of buses and they and their homes being set on fire. This dance of death goes beyond her belief. While the narrator's landlord rescues some Sikhs, a local leader at the golchakkar instigates the crowd to kill the Sikhs. Narrator's heart cries for Santokh Singh, Balbir and Sikh Baba.

When the narrator goes out to see for herself, she finds all the small and big Sikh establishments to be looted not only by the goons but by the common people and the slum dwellers too. Many houses are destroyed. Her heart pains to see the clinic of Dr. Monga built with great love and sacrifice, razed to ground. Narrator, who always used to see police search operations wherever she went, could not find any police or army in view now but mere onlookers. She witnesses this tragedy of blood, "corpses of Sikhs fill the mortuary at Tees Hazari . . . After postmortem, the bodies are being put into gunny bags and then loaded onto trucks like sacks of potatoes . . . bodies are lying about in roads and gutters" (Pages 144). Moved by the horrible sights, narrator finds herself standing before the Singh Sabha Gurudwara in tears. Outside as crows caw at the sight of blood, she could see it on floor and her clothes even when there is no blood. Her head reels and she couldn't take Balbir and Santokh Singh out of her mind. She goes out to various places and refugee camps in search of Balbir and his family in order to return the cigar boxes, only to encounter more pain. She becomes witness to the pain of a father whose son is murdered, and the pain in the eyes of the widows made to see their husband burn alive. Her heart withers to see the shameless political game, where a whole block is destroyed sparing

a local MLA's house that stands untouched. Finally, she makes up to Balbir's family only to find Balbir missing. His wife refuses to take the boxes and his son's condition leaves the narrator gasping for breath. As the narrator tries to gather herself, the corpse of Santokh Singh brutally cut into pieces comes before her eyes at the golchakkar. Though Kaikus succeeds in finding some clues responsible for Santokh Singh's murder, the narrator remains inconsolable: "But the events of the past fifteen days eat into my heart, penetrating recesses I never knew existed . . . Lumps of flesh, hewn by swords hang before my eyes. No beard, no hair, only bloody lumps of human flesh . . ." (Pages 156). Narrator is distressed such that nothing could resurrect her to restart a normal life in Delhi again. As such she leaves for Guwahati.

The narrator hasn't given her personal point of view or taken any side, she only presents the incidents and events as she has seen with her eyes or read in newspapers, or known from television or radio. A review on this novel by The Hindustan Times says the same: "Indira Goswami's fiction is pure art unencumbered with social, political or religious ideology" (qtd. in "Pages Stained"). While the objectivity of the author is praiseworthy, at the same time the truth in the narration of this tragic cultural memory gives the novel a pessimistic side. Aruni Kashyap writes: "Her novel about the bloody anti-Sikh riots in Delhi, *Pages Stained with Blood*, haunts the reader long after it is read" ("Beloved Daughter"). In fact, as told by Indira Goswami to Aruni Kashyap in an interview, her novel is in the first person because, "I wrote exactly what I saw and most of it is true. It was so horrible and shocking that I couldn't exaggerate anything further. The novel is more of a documentation of what I saw." Looking at the other side of the novel, this "documentation" definitely questions humanity, where thousands of innocents in the name of religion are victimized with no fault of theirs. Because of the foul play of few people, one incidence of brutality leads to another, bringing in the scenes of frenzy and dance of death that seems unbelievable for the people like the narrator to be seen with naked eyes. For the homeless, injured, widows and other relatives of the dead the whole scenario is apocalyptic. It is correctly written: "*Pages Stained with Blood* is a thought-provoking and candid history of the 1984 riots" (qtd. in "Pages Stained"). By presenting this powerful tale of mindless violence and human frailties, Goswami warns of the consequences of disunity and intolerance and in a way preaches the lesson of unity in a multi-cultural and multi-religious country like India.

As such a Janus-face study of the novel is possible. The message of humanity comes both denotatively and connotatively along with the depiction of insane communalism in the novel. From time to time in the novel, the narrator in very clear words passes this message to the readers. Indira Goswami conveys the message of understanding and sympathy for the fellow human beings. As the narrator feels guilty of her inability to talk to the drunkard William who commits suicide, she thinks: "It is this bond of sympathy and understanding that keeps us alive. The more a human being withdraws from his fellow beings, the more this bond becomes invisible and gets smeared with blood" (Pages 24). And when the narrator mops the blood oozed out of the injured Sikhs rescued by her landlord, she feels a surge of strength that makes her think that such courage at the time of crises help people to resurrect: "I feel a surge of strength while washing away the blood. I think in times of such crisis, people rise to their full potential and regain courage and will" (Pages 140). While apologizing before Balbir for refusing to keep his wooden boxes full of currency, the narrator in a way intends to shake the conscience of the readers: "We are humans and yet we fail to help our fellow beings" (Pages 106). R. K. Sharma rightly sees Goswami's literature as her "attempt to engender social change. It is her means to address the socio-political violence directed against the oppressed and marginalized sections of society. She sheds light on the essence of cruelty in human nature that takes shape into various forms of violence every day."

In search of material narrator frequents various places in Delhi. But in this quest most of the time she encounters deteriorating state of the places of historical importance. One continuous theme in the novel is the poor maintenance of the places of historical importance. The heritage is maintained neither in the name of history, nor environment and beauty. There is no one to ask for the descendants of the legends. May it be the residence of Colonel Skinner or the tomb of Ghalib, the condition of these places is not more than ruins. The river Jamuna has lost its pristine look at most of the places in Delhi and looks like "a dirty drain. Or like the skeleton of some strange, prehistoric animal" (Pages 70). The places like Daryaganj, Paharganj and Chandini Chowk are buried under "walking human flesh" (Pages 92).

Corruption has a loud say in this country. It is rampant since the so called good old days of Shahjahan's time as told by Balbir to the narrator: "Gold used to glitter even in the iron caskets of the potbellied

inspector and that of the Nayyer Munshis" (Pages 31). Now in democratic India, people in power exploit the poor and the needy. Even a big institution like army is not an exception. Despite one's attainments, approach or money is required to ascend. In the novel, only with the intervention of the Brigadier, the narrator is able to help the boys from the slum to get selected in the army. The needy too want the job by all means. In order to strike a sympathetic chord of the narrator the boys from the slum bring an old man with them who acts as their father. Daisy Gohain very aptly comments: "Under the veil of religious groups targeted for communal riots, the novel also candidly portrays the nation robbed of its economic utilization as the entire economy and finance goes to the hands of the pot bellied ministers running the government. The penury of the nation is highlighted where the young energetic youths aspiring for a job throngs the narrators threshold helplessly" (30).

Then the excise inspector in the novel, after having drinks in the Tibetan Refugee camp fills the papers, declaring it to be "not injurious to health" (Pages 74). Santokh Singh's auto is confiscated by the police inspector to be returned only after gratifying him with five hundred rupees. In the G.B. Road when the narrator goes to house No. 50, she sees a minor mother feeding her baby. Hard to believe this, she couldn't help asking the woman washing the clothes that if the girl child was the mother of that baby. This makes the woman to make a sarcastic comment on the narrator that if the narrator was going to file an FIR against her and challenges the narrator in turn: "What do you think you can do? . . . I bribe the police for it. And I don't force anyone. She has herself told the magistrate on oath that she is eighteen. Now what do you have to say?" (Pages 119).

India is not free of religious intolerance till date, which makes the novel all the more important with a message consisting of the warning about the consequences for disunity. Thus, the novel is Janus-faced. It looks at the events that figured in the 80s in Delhi and it is relevant for modern India where still the problem of communalism threatens to disrupt the democratic, secular fabric of the country.

The following words by Gohain very correctly sum up the Janus-face character of this novel, Pages Stained with Blood: "brings the horrendous sight of religious marginality to notice. The Sikhs residing in Delhi were victimized . . . mercilessly killed . . . It also touches on the other forms of marginality like unemployment, prostitution, economic poverty etc. . . . The novel alarms the reader of the consequences of

disunity giving a recalcitrant call for unity, love and wellbeing for our neighbours and friends. It also forges the readers to think on the sensitive issues of our social institutions ethically rather than falling as a victim in their grip” (28).

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## Point of View and Time in R.K.Narayan’s *The Financial Expert: A Narratological Study*

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### Abstract

R.K.Narayan is regarded as one of India’s best and foremost writers of English fiction. He also has a small amount of Tamil writings to his credit, but he is mostly known for his well-crafted, engaging and appealing English language novels. The present paper proposes a narratological study of *The Financial Expert* written by R.K.Narayan and tries to analyze the elements of narrative time and point of view. Throughout the narrative the heterodiegetic narrator undertakes to perform the narrative function. There is subsequent narration as the events are told in past tense. The narrator being omniscient has unlimited access to the thoughts of the protagonist Margayya. Though the narrative seems linear, the close reading reveals that narrative is marked with memory, anachronies, delays and gaps. In sharp contrast to his early phase, Narayan uses all the sophisticated techniques of time and space, and models his novels on time and space patterns followed by the masters of Western fiction. During the course of narration, the author not only describes the external aspects of Margayya’s life but also gives us glimpses of the working of Margayya’s mind on all important occasions through the representation of consciousness.

Key Words: Anachronies, Analepsis, Prolepsis, Heterodiegetic narrator, Ellipsis, internal focalization.

The novel *The Financial Expert* opens with the eponymous protagonist Margayya, conducting his business under a banyan tree outside Malgudi’s Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank. Margayya is introduced for the first time in the novel under a banyan tree with his grey, discolored knobby tin trunk. His job is to advise the peasants of the area in financial matters. He helps the shareholders to borrow money at lower interest and then lend it to the needy at higher interest. Throughout the narrative the heterodiegetic narrator undertakes to perform the narrative function. There is subsequent narration as the events are told in past tense.

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The narrator being omniscient has unlimited access to the thoughts of the protagonist Margayya. By merging his point of view with that of the protagonist Narayan is able to comment on the socio-economic conditions of postcolonial India and those of war years.

The heterodiegetic narrator nowhere intervenes directly in the narrative, and helps the reader see his character's action using external focalization. But External focalization is not sufficient to reveal the mind and motive of a complex character like Margayya. To achieve this, internal focalization is used to ensure the sympathy and understanding of the readers to the protagonist's often disagreeable actions. The narrative employs a variety of devices through which we are given access to character's inner life. One such device is that of free indirect speech. For example, when Arul Doss threatens Margayya to leave his business under the banyan tree, the narration shifts from the omniscient narration to free indirect speech "What right had he (Arul Doss) or anyone to insult or browbeat him? What had he done that they themselves did not do?" (TFE 17) The narrator-focalizer gives an indirect account of Margayya's thought in his desire to possess more money to get all the good things to life:

In the narrative the focalization remains generally fixed on Margayya, and the narratee gets to realize his intense reactions to a life of deprivation and his intense desire to rise above his circumstances. There is, however, an occasional shift to another character Meenakshi also. The external focalizer makes us aware of the real emotions Margayya goes through in his life but Meenakshi, his wife, towards the end of the novel, serves another character-focalizer. Narayan makes us enter her consciousness through psycho-narration when there is a quarrel between her husband and her son. The more she saw him, the more she was reminded of her own father in the younger days; exactly the same features, the same gruffness and the same severity . . . She saw the same expression on the boy's face now. . . She understood that the best way to attain some peace of mind in life was to maintain silence . . . (TFE 137).

She watches the quarrel between them silently, as if it all happens "behind a glass screen." (TFE 138) But the silence of the woman is not a real silence; she is also going through some strong emotions against her husband who has ruined their chance of domestic happiness in his obsession with money. The third person omniscient narrator moves deftly in and out of the minds of his character and utilizes the technique to

further his thematic concerns and "allows the reader to penetrate his own inner self which is full of longings for acquiring affluence" (Dadich 165). But there is a failure on the part of R.K.Narayan that the narratee is nowhere given an access to another important character Dr. Pal, who is a tremendous force behind the narrative. The narrator either seems to give only limited information to the readers or there can be some ideological compulsions in concealing some information. Balu is also nowhere internally focalized and given an access to his mind. Simultaneous focalization is another feature which runs throughout the narrative, and the reader is given a glimpse behind the wall in the family of Margayya's brother. This strand runs throughout the novel like an undercurrent imparting an additional interest to this story of human relationships and also enhancing its realistic character.

Narayan presents the story of Margayya through a series of analepsis, prolepsis, ellipsis, gaps and delays. The first twenty pages in the novel describe the single day's event in the protagonist's life, which present before us a clear picture of the nature of his business and the technique of doing his job. In these pages we are also become aware of the protagonist's vast dreams, his obsession of money and his inadvertent villainies. The narrative opens with a heterodiegetic external analepsis which introduces us to the rise of co-operative movement in Malgudi through the colonial origins of Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank. This bank has been founded by a famous registrar of co-operative societies whose ghost is still believed to haunt the building. The story is again and again taken backward when Narayan takes the help of anachronies to present the events that had happened to the life of Margayya.

In sharp contrast to his early phase, Narayan uses all the sophisticated techniques of time and space, and models his novels on time and space patterns followed by the masters of Western fiction. The kind of manipulation of time and space---mingling of past and present, distorting the sequence of events through gaps and delays lend a strange complexity to the novels of middle phase. The Financial Expert explores the world of timelessness in a very subtle manner. Margayya, the protagonist lives in a self-created autonomous world. He is always obsessed with the thoughts of money. For him, "Money alone is important in this world. Everything will come to us naturally if we have money in our purse" (TFE 21). And at the same time he remains busy thinking his son obtaining degrees from America. Thus Margayya's world

is a world of fantasy which denies time, and to make it appear real, human time is super imposed by Narayan.

The narrative in *The Financial Expert* describes at length almost eighteen years of the life of Margayya, which covers two hundred and seventeen pages of the text. To adjust the narrative time to story time, Narayan takes the help of iterative narration and uses ellipsis frequently. For example "Balu progressed steadily from class to class and reached the Fourth Form" (TFE 111), ". . . he got the correct answer very soon, in less than eight weeks . . ." (TFE 136), "The tide rolled back in about three or four months" (TFE 217) are the references which suggest forward movement of time. Narayan frequently makes use of these devices in order to increase the readers' interest. The text delays the narration of the next event in the story, thus stimulates the interest, curiosity and suspense. An implicit ellipsis is used in the narrative on page 56 when the narratee is not told anything about the way how to perform puja told by the priest. But on page 59 the gap is filled by the homodiegetic internal analepsis and we are given a detailed description of his search for the Lotus. Dr. Pal, the major character is also introduced in this analepsis. Narayan resorts the technique of broken chronology to condition the emotional and moral responses of the reader. The reader is asked to be more alert and to participate more fully. So by withholding information through the technique of broken chronology Narayan is cautioning the reader not to read too hastily. Narayan throughout the text keeps on withdrawing the information, cleverly mingling the present with the past through anachronies. Only after the careful reading, one can have the clear understanding of the text. Though the narrative seems linear, the close reading reveals that narrative is marked with memory, anachronies, delays and gaps.

Another example of the use of analepsis is when Margayya is sad at the report of his son's death. Margayya remembers the time when he made a pilgrimage with his wife when she was having problems conceiving. He took all sorts of troubles in fond hope of being blessed with a son. As we enter Margayya's mind, we realize that he is connecting the present sad event with the happy memory of the past. And the more he escapes into the past, he shows more craze for money. He remembers how after the birth of his son, he offered the god the promised pledge, i.e. silver coins equivalent to the weight of the child (TFE 161). The analepsis used here is homodiegetic external analepsis the reach of which is eighteen years and the extent is one year. And the next moment Margayya is seen sitting in a Madras train to search his

dead son. Homodiegetic external analepsis is also used earlier in the novel when we are informed about the circumstances in which Margayya had been engaged to Meenakshi and had then got married to her. He recalls the time when he sat beside his wife on a flower-decked swing, surrounded by a lot of women-folk joking and swinging and teasing the newly-weds. The method of flashback is a kind of retrospective look at the past. It is certainly an interruption in the chronological order of the story but it is one of the popular devices of narration or presentation of the relevant facts. Through these homodiegetic external analepses, Narayan not only arouses our sympathy for the protagonist but also presents Margayya in his usual self, in his craze for money.

Discrepancy between the story time and narrative time also create temporary gaps in the narrative. In the narrative, time is altogether controlled by the author. For instance, the forty days' prayer of goddess Lakshmi is given one and a half page only because Narayan's aim is not to explain the rituals but to focus on Margayya's belief in supernatural powers. But the novelist indicates the passage of the time of forty days by showing its effect on Margayya. "When Margayya emerged from the little room, he had a beard and moustache and hair on his nape . . . He looked venerable. His voice became weak . . . He had lost ten pounds in weight . . ." (TFE 71). Again the narrative takes a lot of time when Margayya's thoughts regarding the book changed. He considers it immoral and decides to take himself out of this partnership. The pace is decelerated at the moment when six pages are given to the events of half day in Margayya's business dealings with Lal. This decelerated pace is intended to reveal the bargaining capacity, the art of persuasion and the business insight of Margayya. The story time again gets slow after the elopement of Balu. The narrative corresponds to zero story duration where the office arrangement of Margayya is described.

His office consisted of a medium-sized room with four mattresses spread out on the floor. At the other end of it there was a sloping desk where an accountant sat. He was a lean old man, with a fifteen-day-old silver beard encircling his face at any given time. . . (TFE 149)

Thus the narrative makes use of various narratological devices to achieve the desired result. The narrative seemingly linear is punctuated with memory, anachronies, ellipsis, gaps, pause, summary and scene. The choice of heterodiegetic narrator with subsequent narration, anachronies and psycho narration give the narrative a touch of cognitive narratological character of the narrative.

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## "Porphyria's Lover" : A Study of Power

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## Abstract

*The paper is a study of the violence depicted in Robert Browning's Porphyria's Lover The poem shows how violence is used by the dominant in order to curb the dominated.*

Porphyria's Lover is a poem by Robert Browning, first published in 1836 in the Monthly Repository. Outwardly, the poem is about a lover and his beloved who meet on a stormy night. The lover is forced to kill his beloved so that he can make her his own forever. A deeper understanding of the time period during which the poem was written reveals that Victorian England had a patriarchal setup. The men of Victorian England exerted power over the females who were considered to be docile, obedient and respectful. According to Richards, females were "regarded inferior intellectually, physically and emotionally" (94). The lover in the poem is also a product of this Victorian sensibility and as a result tries to dominate the beloved. This desire for power and control over a woman leads to the murder of Porphyria at her lover's hands.

Browning's skill as an artist is revealed through the subtle portrayal of the society through his characters which are prototypes of the Victorian Age. The first instance of this power relation can be seen in the title itself which is "Porphyria's Lover" and not "The Death of Porphyria" which could have been an equally apt title. By placing the male in the title of the poem, he is made the central character of the narrative and automatically made to attain control over the narrative.

The first five lines of the poem give a description of the violent weather which "tore the elm-tops" and vexed "the lake". Soon Porphyria is seen to come in shutting out both the cold and the storm. The violence in the weather can be equated to the violence of inequality that existed in the Victorian society which tore down the status and independence of the women. Porphyria in the poem is seen to deny the stereotypes that were associated with women then. She comes to meet her lover during the night despite the storm. In contrast to her lover who is sitting still, Porphyria is seen as the active performer of a number of actions. She "kneeled... made the cheerless grate blaze up...she rose...withdrew

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the dripping cloak and shawl...laid her soiled gloves by." These physical actions refute the stereotypical notions of female inferiority as she is the actor of all these physical and material actions while the lover is merely a silent spectator. Further, she is not coy but is the one who initiates sexual advances by putting the lover's arm about her waist, by baring her white shoulder and by making the lover's cheek lie on her bare shoulder. Not only this, she is emotionally stronger than her lover as it is she who cannot be his "forever" because of "pride and vainer ties". Thus Porphyria disregards the notion of a Victorian woman by being physically, sexually and emotionally stronger than her lover; that is precisely why she is said to have "shut the cold out and the storm" hinting to her ability to topple the gender stereotypes that existed during her time.

Violence is ingrained in the lover who is a product of the Victorian male-dominated society. His intolerance to the acceptance of Porphyria's powerful image is evident in his attempt to overthrow that image and create one that is accordance with socially sanctioned norms. So, he defines his beloved as possessing all the traits that a Victorian woman must have. He defines her as a weak woman who cannot go against society to marry him. Also the Victorian idea of a male being a God is projected. He sees Porphyria as a typical Victorian female who worships her lover like a God. This love he believes that Porphoria felt for him gave the lover the right to own her. Also he destroys the promiscuous image that Porphoria had created upon arriving in the cottage and replaces it with a Victorian description of her which is "perfectly pure and good". In doing so he commits violence by taking away the power that Porphyria exercised materially, physically and mentally at the outset and makes her a common woman who is weak and pure.

Physical violence that occurs towards the end is a product of her lover's insecurity at seeing Porphyria's authoritative existence in the world. To him he is a man and has every right to own, possess and destroy. This conditioning of his led the lover to the most disturbing act of violence i.e. murder of Porphyria. The idea of men being the dominant and powerful members of the society is so ingrained in him that he believes his own will to be hers as well.

"I warily oped her lids: again

Laugh'd the blue eyes without stain."

As a member of the patriarchal society he believes his action in

killing the woman who is a threat to his power is acceptable as he concludes in "yet God has not said a word."

It is also noteworthy that during the second half of the poem when the lover begins to assert his own power and authority and attempts to reject the power of Porphyria, most actions are concentrated around the lover and Porphyria is the mere goal of his actions. For eg:

"I warily oped her lids: again....

I untighten'd next the tress...

I propped her head up"

This reveals the reversal of power roles. Porphyria from being in a place of power becomes the object on which power is exercised.

Thus the poem unravels as a source depicting the violence carried out by means of unequal relations in a social setup. The moment the weak try to assert power in certain situations they are silenced by the dominant through other forms of violence particularly physical violence in this context. Thus, Browning in this poem not only describes a single instance of violence but his work becomes a picture of the Victorian society in general.

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## Stylistics and Linguistics in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

Gajendra Kumar\*

Chinua Achebe burst upon the literary scene with his maiden novel, *Things Fall Apart*. The popularity of this novel rests on the manner of Achebe's presentation of the direct confrontation between two cultures. He shows the conflict between the indigenous Igbo society and the cognizable onslaughts of the British on the Igbo tribals. Achebe employs a variety of narrative methods to unfurl the picture of his traditional Igbo society. It is in the fitness of things that he has used a distinct narrative method. This distinctive narrative method becomes an integral part of his style and his use of figures of speech, proverbs, folk stories makes his language highly communicative. The harmony of stylistics and linguistics is seen at its very best in the novel.

In one of his writings, Achebe was all praises for the African society of the past that had a great philosophy and value system. He extolled the Africans of the pre-colonial generation for their dignity and nobility. In his essay, *African Writers on African Writing* he opines thus:

This theme put quite simply is that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry, and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this that they must now regain. (*African Writers on African Writing* 8)

The plot of the novel is simple but it admits of some sensationalism. *Things Fall Apart*, is a tale told "from the inside" about the destructive impact of European Christianity on pre-colonial Igbo culture. Okonkwo, the stubborn hero of this novel, goes to great lengths to defend the native Igbo culture. He kills the court messenger, a fellow blackman who is an agent of the colonial intruders. Okonkwo expects his clan to fight to uphold the existing order of things. His clan disappoints him and he commits suicide.

Achebe's linguistic skill is evinced in the way he follows the oral tradition of telling a story which is a part and parcel of Igbo culture. The story is supposed to have begun in 1890 and we are all ears to the

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story which he speaks loud and bold: Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. (*Things Fall Apart* 3). Achebe's particularization of the number nine lends verisimilitude to his story.

With this sentence he engages our attention into the story and his deft use of superlative adds spice to his story. The masculine strength of Okonkwo is reinforced into the story when Achebe speaks of the manner in which he vanquished Amalinze the cat in a wrestling bout when he was barely eighteen: It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old man agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights. (*Things Fall Apart* 3) A dramatist or a writer of fiction uses figures of speech to enhance his stylistic effects and Achebe is no exception. We admire his deft use of similes in his contrasted pictures of Okonkwo and Amalinze in the wrestling match: Amalinze was a wily craftsman, but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water. (*Things Fall Apart* 3) The meteoric rise of Okonkwo's fame in the rustic society of Umuofia is likened to a conflagration in a bush: That was many years ago, twenty years or more, and during this time Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bushfire in the harmattan. (*Things Fall Apart* 3)

Okonkwo's habit of snoring, his habit of walking tip-toe and his habit of stammering has been made much of by the novelist. The narrator creates humour of situation by highlighting his habitual weaknesses:

He was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a very severe look. He breathed heavily, and it was said that, when he slept, his wives and children in their out-houses could hear him breathe, when he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists. He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had no patience with his father. (*Things Fall Apart* 3-4)

The story is told by a sympathetic elder of the Igbo tribe. Small wonder, the narrative voice is highly controlled. David Carroll is point devise in commenting:

The novel is narrated in the third person, but there is no suggestion of an omniscient observer scrutinizing and analyzing the customs and

habits of this Igbo community. (Chinua Achebe 33) The elders of the Igbo community display their love for proverbs and Achebe displays this predilection of the villagers as sincerely as possible: Among the Ibo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten. (Things Fall Apart 6) When the friend of Unoka, Okoye comes to demand his cowries Unoka's proverb hits the nail on the head, Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them. (Things Fall Apart 7)

Some of the proverbs are replete with images derived from the world of ornithology and corn harvesting. Okonkwo approaches Nwakibie, an affluent farmer for seed yams. Nwakibie's analogy of the kite and egret hits the mark: Let the kite perch and let the egret perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break. (Things Fall Apart 18) Achebe's use of the imperative 'let' is really point devise.

Nwakibie is all praises for man's ability to fly without any perching. He brings a clinching finality to his ideas by relying on an image from corn harvesting but he presents it in his matter of fact style: As our fathers said, "you can tell a ripe corn by its look". (Things Fall Apart 20) By using such proverbs, Achebe brings out the complexities in the nature of Okonkwo.

The adamant nature of Okonkwo is hinted by Achebe in more than one occasion. He labels an untitled man a woman. Okonkwo is asked to tender an apology but he commits one mistake after another on account of his overvaulting 'pride' but the village elder intervenes to mention that palm kernels did not crack easily for Okonkwo. The narrator adopts a sympathetic stance towards Okonkwo. Here we see evidence of the authorial voice of Achebe taking sides with Okonkwo. He hammers the fact of Okonkwo's success before his readers and attributes his victory in wrestling to his hard labour and not to his luck. Underscoring the proverb of the Ibo people, he calls a spade a spade: But the Ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his chi says yes also. (Things Fall Apart 25) Achebe uses parallelisms and contrasts in delineating the characters of Okonkwo, Obierika, Nwoye and Ikemefuna. Okonkwo is contrasted with Obierika whereas Nwoye and Ikemefuna run on parallel lines. Okonkwo is rigid and thoughtless whereas his friend Obierika is flexible to a remarkable degree and rational to a fault. The narrator depicts the sprightly spirit of Ikemefuna which has made him the cynosure of all eyes in the Okonkwo family. Nwoye

considers Ikemefuna to be a man of absolute knowledge. Even Okonkwo who has brought him from Mbaino is fond of the boy but he does not display any emotion save anger.

Achebe speaks of the Week of Peace and the manner in which Okonkwo breaks the atmosphere of peace by beating his third wife for her failing to cook food for him. Even while narrating this act of Okonkwo the narrator's sympathy for Okonkwo never flags: Okonkwo was provoked to justifiable anger by his youngest wife. (Things Fall Apart 26)

Ogbuefi Ezeudo, the patriarch of the village underscores the previous custom of the village by stating that the man who violated the peace of the village was dragged along the ground through the village until he was declared dead. Besides such a person had to face the ire of the village goddess. But after a big passage of time the people of the village put a brake to this custom: But after a while this custom was stopped because it spoiled the peace which it was meant to preserve. (Things Fall Apart 29) It was a clear indicator that the process of change had begun in the Ibo community.

Achebe uses symbols to show the impact of the foreign inroads in Nigeria. The symbol that he uses to show the uncognizable onslaughts of the British is brought home brilliantly by the vagaries of the weather and the inability of the Ibo people to counter the forces of change. Initially, the narrator speaks of the relentless rain that unites the earth and the sky and then he speaks of the total lack of personal dynamism to counter the inclement weather (the British): The personal dynamism required to counter the forces of these extremes of weather would be far too great for the human frame. (Things Fall Apart 31)

The narrator's describes the celebration of the Feast of the New Yam with much fanfare. The people of Umuofia offer new Yam first to the Earth goddess, Ani, as a token of thanks giving and gratitude to the goddess. The whole of Umuofia reverberates with joy on such a pious occasion: And every man whose arm was strong, as the Ibo people say was expected to invite large number of guests from far and wide. (Things Fall Apart 34)

After the incident with the locust Ezeudu comes to announce the pathetic news that the Oracle has decided that Ikemefuna shall be sacrificed. Ezeudu forbids him from involving himself in such a hideous act because he is more of a father to Ikemefuna who he treats with affection in as much as his son, Nowye. The narrative technique which

Achebe uses to describe the killing of Ikemefuna is admirable. The voice of the narrator becomes dim and slow and is congruous with the slow movement of the objects and creatures of nature about him. In this way, the language of the narrator becomes a highly effective medium in exploring the relationship between the individual and the community: The sun rose slowly to the centre of the sky, and the dry, sandy foot way began to throw up the heat that lay buried in it. Some birds chirruped in the forests around. (Things Fall Apart 53) The execution of Ikemefuna brings in its wake a host of tragic catastrophes in the life of Okonkwo which terminates in his death. The narrator uses a trenchant image to describe the reaction of Nowye on the death of Ikemefuna. Nowye feels as though a tightened bow inside his body had suddenly snapped after the boy's death. His mind starts revolving on the evil practice of the Ibo people who threw the newly born twins in the evil forest.

Nothing can surpass the narrator's recounting of the reaction of the killing of Ikemefuna on the mind of Okonkwo. The writer employs bathos to drive home his contention: Okonkwo does not taste any food for two days after the death of Ikemefuna. He drank palm-wine from morning till night, and his eyes were red and fierce like the eyes of a rat when it was caught by the tail and dashed against the floor.... He felt like a drunken giant walking with limbs of a mosquito. (Things Fall Apart 57) The narrator who introspects Okonkwo closely berates his lack of masculinity. The reiterative interrogative statements hurled by the narrator to Okonkwo are replete with sardonic mockery: When did you become a shivering old woman? You, who are known in all the nine villages for your valour in war. (Things Fall Apart 59) Achebe shows his wonderful economy of language while referring to rituals and conventions. Every ritual which he describes symbolizes that particular society. The masked spirits, Egwugwu are actually the spirits of the ancestors of the village. The nine villages of Umufia are represented by the nine Egwugwu.

The voice of the author can be traced in passages such as these: The night was impenetrably dark the moon has been rising later and later every night until now it was seen only at dawn. And whenever the moon forsook evening and rose at cockcrow the nights were as black as charcoal. (Things Fall Apart 86) At such moments the artist in Achebe needs to employ the lyric metre to make these lines sound poetic.

As in Fielding's Tom Jones, Achebe uses a group of stories (intratext) within the story (metatext) in his novel, Things Fall Apart

The folk story of tortoise is narrated by Ekwefi. The strange device of Achebe is that the characters in Ekwefi's story are fully involved in conversation.

Achebe is a master of onomatopoeia. We see proof of his onomatopoeic skill when the narrator announces the death of Ezeudu: The cannon seemed to rend the sky. Di-go-go-di-go-di-go-go floated in the message laden night air. The faint and distant wailing of women settled like a sediment of sorrow on the earth. (Things Fall Apart 109)

In the second part of the novel, Achebe describes Okonkwo's seven year exile in Mbanta with a kinsmen of his mother. He does not occupy the central stage in the clan though he is at the focal point of attention. In this part of Africa, Achebe shows the advent of Christianity. Achebe's method is different from that of Aluko who shows a dramatic confrontation between the native Africans and their Christian proselytizers in One Man One Wife and One Man One Matchet. The Christian religion appeals to Nwoye: It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him .... It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow. (Things Fall Apart 134)

Things Fall Apart is a unique novel of Achebe in which he combines songs, folk-tales, proverbs and myths to make his linguistics and stylistics highly efficacious.

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## ‘The Chimney Sweeper’ : Studying Violence Through Language

*Navkiran Kaur Bedi\**

### *Abstract*

*The present paper makes an attempt to understand The Chimney Sweeper by William Blake as a piece of literature depicting violence. At the outset an attempt has been made to define the term violence. In light of the definition, the poem has been studied both for its content and language.*

Denotative definitions of violence revolve around the physical implications of an act or behaviour. For example, Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines violence as ‘behaviour which is intended to hurt, injure or kill people’. According to Merriam Webster Dictionary violence is ‘exertion of physical force so as to injure or abuse.’ The Compact Edition of Oxford English Dictionary adds an additional clause defining violence as ‘treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom.’ In addition to the areas covered by the above definitions there is much more that the term violence encompasses in a particular society and the world in general. Violence includes the application of both physical force and power (interpersonal roles and/or through ideological practices) to harm (physically, emotionally and psychologically) an individual or to intrude in any way that stuns their physical, social, cultural and/or economic growth. In a study conducted by UNESCO for the youth, violence has been defined as “a perception, an expression, a way to be seen or heard, a form of domination, a mode of discrimination, a lack absence or decline of communication...a process that prevents young from developing their full potential as it impacts negatively on their development and involvement in society.” In light of the above discussion on violence, The Chimney Sweeper by William Blake has been studied as a poem which puts into words the violence that was meted out on the young children forced into the profession of chimney sweeping by parents or by apprentices. This six-stanza poem was written in 1789 when economically deprived parents in England were known to sell their children to master sweeps for as little as seven shillings. The interlocutor of the poem is a young chimney sweeper who narrates the tale of himself and his fellow chimney sweeps.

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The first stanza of the poem introduces the narrator, a young chimney sweep who presents the reason for why he sweeps chimneys and sleeps in soot. Apparently, his pathetic condition is not due to his own will or actions but because his mother died and his father sold him when he was very young. The opening lines of the stanza show concrete actions of dying and selling both done by people besides the chimney sweep. In contrast, when the stanza ends, the responsibility of performing shifts to the young boy whose actions are merely those of sweeping and sleeping which have no power or authority of impacting anyone in any way. Thus, clearly the actions of someone else led the young boy to this terrible fate. The usage of the verb ‘sold’ in line 2 immediately brings to mind the concept of slavery which is a form of violence practiced on these young children. Slavery means bondage which out rightly rejects the notion of personal freedom, interference into or denial of which is a form of violence.

The second stanza of the poem introduces a new character, another young chimney sweep, named Tom Dacre who cries when his head is shaved. Crying here is an indication of unwillingness and in turn of force. His head is shaved not because he wanted it to happen but because someone else wanted it that way which is a form of domination and hence violence. Further Tom Dacre is compared to a lamb hinting innocence yet exploitation meted out on lambs for wool and meat. Here Tom Dacre is an innocent child being exploited by the master sweeper for his own profit. This is another instance of violence. It is noteworthy that in this stanza, Tom Dacre is seen as the performer of only one action which is in nature emotional i.e. crying. However, he is seen as a goal of two actions one passivized without mentioning an external actor “his head that curled like a lamb’s back was shaved” and in the second he is acted upon by a non-living entity “soot” which is known to “spoil white hair”. Spoiling involves preventing someone or something from being successful or satisfactory (Collins Cobuild). Thus, soot has the power to prevent these children from being successful and satisfactory which is closely associated with the definition of violence given by UNESCO. The physical dimension of violence shows its ugly face as white hair can be seen as a metaphor of good health which is spoiled by working in soot, prolonged exposure to which is known to cause deadly diseases like cancer.

The next three stanzas of the poem present a picture of life as seen through the eyes of the young chimney sweeps. These show a contrast

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between what life is and what it should be for these innocent children. Tom Dacre sees a dream in which there are thousands of sweepers like Dick, Joe, Ned and Jack, all locked up in a coffin. The use of commonplace names like Dick, Joe, Jack, Ned and even Tom shows the negligible existence these young children are forced into. It relates the fact that the right of these young children to become someone special has been snatched away from them. The coffin and the colour black show the psychological as well as physical degradation of these young chimney sweeps. The coffin is a symbol of death and mourning and the colour black is associated with evil. The psychological impact is such that for these children the evil profession of chimney sweeping has resulted in the death of their dreams. The physical aspect of it is the bodily death of these children due to various diseases caused by their work. Violence is caused by the denial of rights of these young children. In their dream these children associate themselves as the actors of actions like laughing, running, leaping, washing in a river, shining in the sun, rising up in the clouds, sporting in the wind. They see themselves as the masters and controllers of their life. Their dream is nothing extraordinary as all the children of their age are seen to lead a carefree existence. However, to these children this is a mere dream. As they return back to the real life, the only action they are master of is sweeping which is an imposition in itself. Thus, forceful child labour resulting in the denial of individual freedom is most acute form of violence that these children suffer.

The poem ends with Tom being happy and warm which is ironic considering his condition. However, on a deeper level it is a symbol of acceptance of mental and physical suffering as coping mechanism. Being young and innocent children sold by their parents and not knowing the ways of life, they are unable to assert revolt or resist. Their only emancipation is acceptance of the fact that “if all do their duty they need not fear harm” when the only thing these children go through the whole day is harm. This can be called the most brutal form of violence which leaves innocent minds with a “happy” and “warm” acceptance of their fate.

It can thus be seen that violence and power in the poem are represented through metaphors and through the roles assigned to the participants in the poem. Metaphors of the weak are associated with the ones being dominated and those on whom violence is propagated. Metaphors of dark and evil are associated with the perpetrators of violence. As participants, the actions of the weak can be divided into

two: “the real” and “the ideal”. In real life they are hardly given any material actions besides sweeping and sleeping. The only time they receive material actions are in their dream and even those material actions are not done on any other participant e.g. leaping, laughing, running, washing etc. However, the violent agency (even if it is non-living) is given material roles which affect other living participants like selling a child, shaving the child’s head, spoiling the child’s hair, locking the children etc. This clearly shows how language portrays power relations.

Even though these young chimney sweeps did not have the power to resist their fate, yet literature for them became “an angel who had a bright key”. William Blake wrote this and many other poems against the evil of child labour in his collection “Songs of Innocence and Experience”. Even if a few poems by a poet weren’t solely responsible for the emancipation of young chimney sweeps they surely must have had some role to play as the year 1789 which saw the publication of the poem also saw The Chimney Sweeps act to limit the master sweepers to 6 apprentices who were at least 8 years old. Later in 1840 anyone less than the age of 21 was banned from entering into this profession securing the innocence and future of young children.

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## Young Adults Fiction, a Vision on Human Reality

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This paper seeks to examine fictional works intended for the young adults (YA) fiction over the time since its emergence marked in 1960s. It is generally agreed among scholars that the term 'young adult' denotes those who are in the process of passing from childhood to adulthood. A specific genre of fiction has evolved focusing on such a class of adolescents, seeking to portray their problems. The paper further includes the special role the young adult fiction performs in reflecting the experience of those people who are still children but act as if they are adults. By implication, it also examines the realities of societies, location of young adults in the societies and the portrayal of interaction between them in the fictional works. Scholars describe young adults as those between ages 9 to 21, sometimes the upper limit is put at 18 years. To quote Michael Cart, . . . adolescents, teenagers or young adults were at least until late 1930s—still widely regarded as children (even if the boys have mustaches and the girls breasts!) there was no separate category of literature specially targeted at them. However, as over the first four decades of twentieth century (1900-1940)—opinion began coalescing around the viability of recognizing a new category of human being with its own distinct life needs, books aimed at these “new” humans began to emerge. (8)

Literature mirrors social as well as individual life and concerns, broadly speaking, the intense drama which unfolds from the perpetual interactions between them resulting in individual's realization about the values of life belong to different paradigms. Fictional works which are specially written for children and what today has come to be termed as 'young adults' are easy to identify in our times; but their status and existence as a distinct category centuries ago is difficult to locate with any degree of precision and certainty. The phrase 'Young Adult Literature' consists of two dynamic terms 'young adult' and 'literature'. The initial composite term refers to 'young adults—the adolescent human beings who are in their most formative and active phase of life. Its significance lies in the fact that it is a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood when the incumbents do not have life-experience like adults but seek to look towards the world with adult's perspectives. The genre continued to be questioned years after it received wide recognition. Even

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after many years of the publication of S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* (1967), Jill Paton Walsh, in his essay "The Rainbow Surface", raised this pertinent question, "Is there anything as a children book?", (quoted Indira Kulshertha in her *Children's Literature in India*). Many opine that Hinton's *The Outsiders* (1967) is the first Young adult novel in true sense though another great English fiction writer J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) also portrays young adult experiences. Salinger's novel became so popular among the young reader's circle that some literary historians do not hesitate to call its publication as the true beginning of young adult writings in the first year of the second half of the last century. However Susan Eloise Hinton picked up the credential. Hinton wrote this novel as a high school girl at the age of fifteen. With all main characters as adolescents and their problems and issues the novel stands as the pioneer of the young adult genre. On this Kalpan remarks:

It must be pointed out here that although literature, especially fiction with a strong appeal to children came into existence much earlier (we can single out Dickens's *Ghost Stories* and *Christmas Carol* tales), the proliferation of young adult works was specially a phenomenon of the last five to six decades. It has been seen that over the last twenty five years or so particularly concentrated energy was directed towards consciously promoting young adult fiction with a number of notable works making their mark. However, it must be made clear that not everything read by young adult can be termed as young adult literature. Children's literature has a relatively older and richer history, consumed by a wider range of ages of readers. Thus, certain European countries including the erstwhile Soviet Union have been producing an impressive array of books for children written by Leo Tolstoy, Oscar Wilde, Maxim Gorky, O. Henry, etc. Enid Blyton in UK has been catering to the tastes of readers from year 8 to late teens. Similarly, romantic fiction for women is dominated by escapist novels of Mills and Boon publication whose novels sell in huge numbers. They are the stories of formulaic fictional structure, where a rich man falls in love with an unresponsive young woman, pursues her through half of the novel and finally achieves her through trying circumstances. These are also read extensively by young adult readers, but cannot be labeled as young adult fiction.

Young adult novels/stories are those that deal with specific question of a young adult, his/her ambitions, struggle to achieve his/her goal and the vicissitudes through which s/he goes. The 1951 classic *The Catcher in the Rye* is to be classed as young adult novel because

its theme concerns the teenage angst and alienation, its annoyance at being treated unjustly by different people at different levels and exposed to situations of the most squalid nature. From 1951 to 1967 (the year of *The Outsiders*' publication) this literature has traveled a long way and covered plenty of ground. There has grown a number of sub-genres, such as dystopic, historical, feminist, and so on and shows far more variety than it did before. In a short essay "No, You Do Not have to be Ashamed of Reading Young Adult Fiction" published in *The Washington Post* Alyssa Rosenberg observes that there is a substantial class of adult readers of young adult novels "[A]s teenagers emerged as a discrete phase of childhood, writers started to tell stories for them, and the term 'young adult' came into use by the Young Adult Library Series of Association in 1960s. Since that time, writers have produced any number of novels for young readers that eschew the supposed naiveté of childhood, refuse to give these readers conventional happy endings and regard the achievement of maturity as an enormous accomplishment" (June 6, 2014). To get an idea of the surprising rate at which young adult novels are showing diversity of concerns we can name such novels *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962) by Madeleine L'Engle, C.S. Lewis's *Narnia* series (both dealing with Christian ideals), Madeleine L'Engle's *A Ring of Endless Light* (a series of work portraying mental 'illness with experimental passages and fantastical elements grounded in scientific concepts'. In the novel, 'the main character's adolescence consists less of the illusion that love lasts forever than encounters with death and an alcoholic, self-distinctive boyfriend'). Tamora Pierce's *Tortall* novels seriously explore the questions of slavery, women's rights and anti-colonial rebellions. The list can be extended further. But what we need to understand here is that in the last two decades young adult fiction has ramified into many subjects and it is not just the young person's 'frustration' or 'angst' or 'tragic' questions of maladjustment with society, but various modes and styles of treatment make the entire output as interesting and serious a corpus as the mature person's work for adult that demand a serious attention. Jaya Bhattacharya points out that,

J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* (1996-) series blurs the border of the children and adult world, present an idiosyncratic, writing which thrives on the tricks of magic realism where the distinction between probable and improbable become fuzzy. Magic is a major tool throughout these novels with winning simplicity of Harry as another chief attraction. During the last four decades till 2010 dozens of prolific writers added their literary works in the repertoire of Young Adult literature. Apart from

Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Hinton's epoch making *The Outsiders*, Paul Zindel's remarkable works *The Pigman*, Judy Blume's *It's not the End of the World, Forever, Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*; R. Cormier's *Chocolate War*, J. Green's *Paper Towns*, F. Pascals *Secret Valley* series, Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* series, *Secret Seven* series; Sara Dessan's *That Summer*, J. Wilson's *Love Lesson*, Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea*, Ruskin Bond's *Blue Umbrella*, *Rusty stories* and other children's stories and last but not the least the block buster *Harry Potter* of J.K. Rowling series are the few that come to mind which have left mesmerizing effect upon the children's minds over the decades. Children have the choice to read their own favourites as one may "choose *Night* by Elie Wiesel while another may choose *Bette Green's Summer of my German Soldier*" (173), says Andrea G. Trivisonno .

In the Indian context, children's literature in English has not been considered seriously in the literary culture of independent India. It appears that young adult fiction as an independent category is yet to emerge in our country. Of course we have had classics (adult fiction) figuring adolescent persons like Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie*, and Tagore's *Kabuliwala* but there hardly exists a young adult fiction. Writings for children have had a rich and long tradition in our country which covers themes of children of all age groups. There are plenty of children books, periodicals, comics and cartoon series available in all major languages like Hindi, Bengali, Malayalam, Telegu, Marathi and Tamil; only a few children's books and periodicals of some vernaculars have been translated into English. Notable comic book series came into being in early 60's such as *Amar Chitra Katha*; *Diamond* comic figuring popular heroes like *Chacha Choudhary*, etc., magazines like *Chadamama*, *Nandan*, *Parag*, *Balak*, etc, have dominated the mind of the children. Those magazines and books have been entertaining children over the years as the representatives of children's literature. Children's tales of Ruskin Bond are a popular addition to the mainstream children writings and dominated the scene for a long time. In Bengali, Upendra Kishore Roychowdhury, Sukumar Roy, Narayan Debnath, Satyajit Ray have contributed a lot to the writings for children with illustrated cartoons. Sukumar Roy's *Abol Tabol*, Satyajit Rays *Bonku* and Narayan Debnatha's *Bantul the Great*, *Nonte Fonte* are some of the notable cartoon series in Bengali. A significant part of the writings for the young goes back to reviving old tales of *Panchatantra*, *Jataka*, *Betal Pachisee*, *Katha Saritsagar*, etc.

Use of pictures to communicate the idea and advance or explain events has been maintaining its importance since the ancient times. Egypt and Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium BC, first explored graphically represented language. (Woods:15). Some artists and writers took the initiative to include illustration in the writings to make those writings easily understandable to the readers. In the earlier days, among many other mediums people wrote on parchment papyrus and tree bark and leaves, and painted on it with bone charcoal. Seth Lerer mentions, "The little figment of papyrus from Byzantine Egypt that recounts the labors of Hercules survives with an illustration of the hero and the lion just barely intact" (320). In the middle ages, in the plays of Terence, there was plentiful use of illustrations along with the texts. Highly decorated first letter representation was a popular medieval trend. Western world pioneered the use of illustrations in the printed books for making them more attractive and easy-to-understand for its readers especially for children. In the beginning of the printing age illustrations in children's stories comprised the woodcut impressions.

The time for the first use of woodcut illustration can be traced to the 15th century (Web) during the time of Gutenberg. The primary feature of those printed books of the time was that they were illustrated with imaginative pictures. It was Thomas Boreman who can be remembered for his miniature in this regard, he used woodcut illustrations for his books entitled Gigantick Histories published during 1740-43. Another Englishman who can be remembered for his controversial talent as an illustration artist was Aubrey Beardsley. Among several books Beardsley illustrated Malory's Morte D'arthur (1485) was the most famous one. He shocked the traditional Englishmen by sketching nudes in some of his illustrations. In addition, though he frequently designed opening chapter blocks, he rarely depicted the story with any accuracy. Well read, musically talented, Beardsley purposely designed his books as a mockery of Victorian standards. Often he grew tired of his subject before the illustrations were finished. Cupids, satyrs and repetitious motifs are used without any consideration of the manuscript. Beardsley died at age of 25, and left books behind that stressed art innovation rather than literary interpretation. A discussion of illustrated book cannot be completed without mentioning Orbis Pictus or Orbis Sensualium Pictus (1658). The Masterpiece Encyclopedia of children picture book was brought forward by the great Czech educator John Amos Comenius. The book published then contained crude wood-block illustration.

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It was only in the nineteenth century with revolutionary development in the printing technology that golden age of full colour printing of illustration started. The earliest available colourfully illustrated children's book was the first English translation of Grimm's Fairy Tale by the great English illustrator George Cruikshank in 1823.

Twentieth century versatile illustration artist like Rackham illustrated and re-illustrated many children's books including Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm (1900), Alice's Adventure in Wonderland (1907), Aesop (1912), Mother Goose (1913) and the posthumous publication of Graham's The Wind in the Willow (1940). In the nineteenth century with the advent of new technology in printing illustrated books for children attained the momentum. Examples are a plenty, out of which E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Earnest Hemingway were the few great names whose books were published with attractive illustrations. In the beginning of the twentieth century Beatrix Potter's The Tale of Peter Rabbit and Jerome K. Jerome's Three Men in a Boat came into being with another dimension of illustrative presentation in which sketches closely paralleled the text sharing storytelling process.

Cartoons can also be regarded as graphic literature and form a genre. They are a great source of pleasure and amusement for both adult and child readers. Western human cartoon characters like Tintin, Spiderman, Superman, Homer Simpson, Fred Flintstone, Goku, Eric Kartman, Stewie Griffin and animal characters like Bug Bunny, Scooby Doo, Tom and Jerry (and series of Walt Disney creations), Wily E. Coyote as loveable characters have won a large number of admirers the world over. Walt Disney's contribution in refining the cartoon portrayals and their conversions into animated movies have increased the impact of illustrated stories in a big cartoon industry which is today one of the most flourishing and profit earning ones. In the recent times Japanese Chin Chang, Indian Chhota Bhim, Hanuman and Ganesha have earned a great popularity among the children.

As far as presentation in today's fiction is concerned, it encompasses the portrayal of all sorts of human experiences in the day to day development of changing times and incorporates them in the children's literature for entertaining young readers and making them prepared for facing adult life. They together create a new world—'young adult' world.

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## The Descriptive Turn : Reading Franco Moretti's Quantitative Analysis of Literature

*Harpreet Kaur\**

Initially used by French intellectual historian Francois Dosse, the 'Descriptive Turn' refers to the practices of 'flat reading' in the social sciences, practices that reject the traditional humanist categories of experience, consciousness, depth, and motivation in favour of close observation of human subjects and attention to description rather than interpretation. As Bruno Latour puts it in *Reassembling the social*, No scholar should find humiliating the task of sticking to description.(137) At issue is a question of responsibility: of doing justice to human subjects by refusing to impose on them the interpretation of the critic.

So, descriptive approach primarily aims at gathering knowledge (description and explanations) about the object of study. It does not wish to modify the object. The target is to find out how things are or have been. Descriptive turn tends to look at the journey of things which brings out a 'thick description' (Geertz).

Franco Moretti, Professor at Stanford University and founder of the 'Centre for The Study of the Novel', has based his research on describing the journey of novel through importing quantitative methods from social sciences into the domain of literature. He has become increasingly focused on the question of how literary history can be written effectively, and how dominant strands and modes of evolution should be found when there is so much raw material available which is impossible for one to read. Moretti has stressed the fact that traditional method of close reading will not work because it depends on extremely small canon which is very selectively chosen. In his essay, *Conjectures On World Literature* he gives his idea of 'Distant Reading', We know how to read the texts, now let's learn how not to read them. Distant reading: where distance is a condition of knowledge. It allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems."(57)

Here less is more. In order to understand the system in its entirety, we must accept losing something. In his another pamphlet, *Network Theory, Plot Analysis*, Moretti has introduced his concept of 'Network

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Theory' whereby he tries to quantify the plot as well as the style of plays and novels. This theory studies connections (called edges) within large groups of objects (called vertices). The analysis of how vertices are linked by edges has brought out many unexpected and surprising features of large systems such as 'small world property', or 'six degrees of separation': the uncanny rapidity where one can reach any vertex from any other vertex in the network.

In *Graphs, Maps and Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History-1*, Moretti proposes a paradigmatic shift in the study of literature: from close reading of individual literary texts to the construction of abstract models i.e. graphs, maps and trees drawn from quantitative history, geography and evolutionary theory respectively.

He starts his essay by quoting Pomian who says that traditionally, the historians used to gather information about the extraordinary events neglecting everything banal and normal. However, the situation altered when the Annales School introduced the 'shift from exceptional events to the large mass of facts'. Moretti suggests a similar kind of study for literary history by 'shifting focus from individual and exceptional texts to the large mass of literary facts'. He points out that by paying attention to a minimal fraction of literary field, we tend to ignore a large part of it. Moreover, a rational literary history cannot be produced by stitching together separate bits of knowledge about individual works, but by grasping the system as a whole.

Moretti indicates that he has limited himself to book history, assembling his data from work originally done by McBurney, Beasley, Raven, Garside and Block for Britain; Angus, Mylne and Frautschi for France; Zwicker for Japan; Petersen for Denmark; Ragone for Italy; Marti-Lopez and Santana for Spain; Joshi for India; and Griswold for Nigeria. He maintains that quantitative work is truly co-operation, realistically it takes a long time to collect data and ideally, it is independent from any individual researcher, to be combined in more than one way and thus be shared by others. Figure 1, represents the take-off of the novel in Britain, Japan, Italy, Spain and Nigeria. Interestingly, when the date is presented in a figure, it reveals the similarity of the rise of the novel in five countries, three continents and over two centuries apart. In twenty years or so (in Britain, 1720-1740; Japan, 1745-65; Italy, 1820-1840; Spain, 1845 to early 1860s; Nigeria, 1965-80) the graph rises from five-ten new titles per year to one new novel per week, which explains the response of the people to the publication of novels. Initially, novel

was more a fashion than a literary genre but with its coming more frequently, it started to command the loyalty of the public and became a necessity of life.

Figure 2 shows the publication of novels in Britain from 1710 to 1850. As we look at the graph closely, we witness the three subsequent phases of the rise of novel. The first phase (1720-1740) is the one discussed above when novel becomes a necessity of life. The second phase (1770-1820) shows more and more novels emerging and people turning their attention drastically towards the contemporary, unlike in the past when they had to re-read the novels because of more reading and less frequent publishing. However, internal composition of the market changes in the third phase, around 1820 onwards. The growth of the market created all kinds of niches in accordance with the taste of the readers such as detective fiction, science fiction etc. Though quantitative data provides a lot of information about hidden patterns, yet it does not interpret. It can tell us when Britain produced one novel per month, per week or per month for that matter, but where do the significant points lie along the line-and-why- is something that must be decided on a different basis.

In the case of Japan, in figure 3, there is rapid growth of novel from 1750 to 1820 approximately, but several equally rapid downturns occur in 1780-90, 1810-30, and 1860-70. The reason of the downfall of novel is to be found in the political history of Japan of the time. Censorship during the Kansei and Tempo period, disparity between the rhythm of politics and the writing of novels during the period leading upto the Meiji Restoration. The case is similar in the case of Denmark, France and Italy during Napoleonic wars. (figures 4 and 5)

However, Moretti discerns the view that politics can not be the sole cause of the downfall of the novel. Here he quotes Raven and Garside, who are of the view that the American and Napoleonic Wars may be behind the slumps of 1775-83 and 1810-17 (notice figure 2) but there are non-political reasons as well, such as a decade of poorly produced novels, reprints, a possible greater relative popularity of other fictional forms etc. But however numerous the causes be, Moretti opines that we are not supposed to figure out individual phases but the pattern as a whole.

He takes up Braudel's model of tripartition of three time frames: event, cycle and long duree, and feels that most critics prefer to stay in

the restricted domain of the event or the short span, while others are interested in the very long span of nearly unchanging structures, i.e. the long duree. The middle domain remains less traversed. But it is in fact the cycles which constitute temporary structures within the historical flow. Moretti explains, The short span is all flow and no structure, the long duree all structure and no flow, and cycles are the-unstable-border country between them. (76)

Cycles are structures because they introduce repetition in history, hence regularity and pattern; they are temporary as they are short. Hence, 'Temporary Structures' also describe the genres for they are also morphological arrangements that last in time, but only for some time.

In figure 7 and 8 are shown three waves of the three dominant genres of mid eighteenth century. The pattern displays that each wave produces almost same number of novels per year and lasts for approximately 25-30 years. Each wave makes its way only after the previous one retires from the scene i.e. Epistolary novels from 1760-1790, then Gothic novels from 1790-1815, and then historical novels from 1815-1840. Moretti quotes Shklovsky for whom the reason of it is the inner dialectic of art. Shklovsky remarks, Each art form travels down the inevitable road from birth to death; from seeing and sensory perception to, when every detail in the object is savoured and relished, to mere recognition, when form becomes a dull epigone which our senses register mechanically...

Pamela (1740) and The Castle of Otranto (1764) are exceptional texts which appeared long before their genre gained currency but exceptions do not change the system. They start from individual cases, grow in number to make series and then develop in the form of a genre. Thus, establishes Moretti, that genres follow a regular life-cycle.

Figure 9 provides a study of British novelistic genres from 1740 to 1900. The graph demonstrates that there emerged 44 genres over 160 years. The interesting discovery is that instead of finding one new genre every four years or so, over two-thirds of them cluster in just 30 years, divided in six major periods- late 1760s, early 1790s, late 1820s, 1850, early 1870s and mid-late 1880s. The genres also tend to disappear in groups. Moretti comments, Instead of changing all the time and a little at a time, then, the system stands still for decades, and is then punctuated by brief bursts of invention: forms change once, rapidly, across the board, and then repeat themselves for two- three decades: 'normal literature', we could call it.(80)

Moretti struggles with the idea that where does this rhythm of normal literature come from. Initially, he contends that 'simultaneity of the turnover' could be the key to the solution, but, then he says that when one genre takes over another, the cause can be internal to the two genres and historically specific: for example, Epistolary novels unable to capture the trauma of revolutionary years and Gothic fiction being particularly good at it. But this cannot be possible when an entire family of genres vanish together. Then the problem must be external to the genres and common to all: like a sudden change in their eco-system i.e. a change of their audience. Moreover, books sustain if they are read, and disappear when they are not read, when many genres disappear at once, the likeliest example is that the readers vanished at once. There he brings in the concept of 'generations', introduced by Karl Mannheim in his essay The Problem of Generations, whereby he argues, We shall therefore speak of a generation as an actuality only where a concrete bond is created between the members of a generation by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic destabilization.(303,310)

But Moretti feels that even this does not explain the regularity of the generational replacement. Nonetheless, he admits that some kind of 'generational mechanism' seems the best way to account for the regularity of the novelistic cycle, though, generation itself is a questionable concept.

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Figure 10 represents the graphic arrangement of genres according to their duration. Now, Moretti moves his focus from normal literature to the short lived genres.( left end of the figure). He opines that politics again is the root cause of the short life of those genres: Jacobin, Anti-Jacobin, Evangelical novels at the turn of the century, Chartist and Religious novels in 1840s, New Woman novels in 1890s etc. This explains Braudel's 'dramatic rush of the event'. But the combination works both ways, to quote Moretti, If what most attracts readers is the drama of the day, then, once the day is over, so is the novel. (84)

The real problem according to Moretti is however, not the specific answer but the 'total heterogeneity of the problem and solution'. To make sense of quantitative data, he abandons the quantitative universe and turns to morphology: evokes form to explain figures. Quantification poses the problem, form offers the solution

Franco Moretti makes the most important point of the essay when he says that problem without solution is exactly what we need in a field

like ours, where we have become used to of asking those questions for which we already have readymade answers.

As Moretti moves towards the end of the essays, he suggests two central arguments of the essay. Firstly, he again stresses the importance of cycles as hidden threads of literary history. From the mid-eighteenth century till the late 19th century, there occur many gender shifts in novels writing in Britain. After 1740s, there occurred male author's invasion and women writing receded till 1780, in late 1780s, a second shift reversed the gender ratio, around 1820, the third shift again brought male writing of novels to the forefront to be followed by a fourth shift back to women in mid 19th century, and then a fifth one which again brought on the scene (Figure 12). Similar data can be obtained from U.S, France and Spain etc. The fascinating thing is that the researchers are convinced that they are all describing something new and unique, whereas they are all observing the same comet that keeps crossing and re-crossing the sky: the same literary cycle.

It is this oscillation which allows the novel to use a double pool of talents and of forms, thereby boosting its productivity and making it superior to other forms. This thing is visible at the level of cycle only, individual text reading cannot bring this to notice, only abstract patterns can.

Secondly, Moretti admits that although cycles and genres do not explain the entire history of the novel, yet they shed light on its invisible speed. Most literary historians assume a categorical difference between 'the novel' and its (sub)genres: the novel for them is the substance of the form whereas genres are more like accidents, occurring by chance. The forty-four genres of the novel, however represent a different view of the picture. Some genres are more important morphologically, but it does not mean that the others do not exist.

Thus Moretti's main argument of the essay is that close reading of literary texts, by privileging them, negates a significant part of the novelistic production. Moretti's approach to various novelistic genres seems to be Marxist. He criticizes the previous literary criticism and history for favouring a few over a majority and tries to present the picture in its full form. He is hard against the notion of bringing some texts as representatives, as 'self' while pushing the rest to the backstage as 'others'. Through his new mode of quantitative analysis of literary history, Moretti advocates 'fair criticism'.

Another crucial aspect of his work is that he advises the critics to ask those questions which do not have readymade answers. This attitude opens up a possibility of dialogue and negotiations which is the need of the hour. It is these associations and negotiations which can combat extremism and bridge the gap between pre-modern objectivity and post-modern subjectivity.

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## Childhood Trauma: A Study of Meena Alexander's *Fault Lines: A Memoir*

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### Abstracts

*Childhood trauma is an important theme which Meena Alexander discusses in her memoir *Fault Lines: A Memoir*. Childhood trauma or child sexual abuse is a topic which was not discussed in public in the early twenties. Alexander discusses her traumatic personal memories; long-buried trauma of sexual abuse, suffering of migration at the very early age of five, and the burden of learning a different language. She was born in India but brought up in many countries. All her literary outputs are loaded with an autobiographical touch. Alexander is an easy prey because she is a child and has no power over her adults. She is a female and has never been taught to oppose any oppression. Physical abuse results in psychological abuse.*

**Key Words:** Trauma, Childhood Abuse, Emotional, Loneliness, Psychoanalysis.

Meena Alexander, born as Mary Elizabeth Alexander is one of the most significant contemporary South Asian American writers. She is internationally known as a poet, writer and scholar. She was born on February 17, 1951 in Allahabad, India, to George and Mary Alexander. She is the eldest among her young sister, Anna and Elsa. She lived in Allahabad and Kerala until she was almost five where her father worked as a scientist for the Indian government. At the age of five, she and her family moved to the Sudan, leaving behind the radiant love of Alexander's grandparents in Kerala. There she attended a school in Khartoum, Sudan and learned to read and write. In 1964, when she was only thirteen, she enrolled in Khartoum University and studied English and French literature. She was a curious and intelligent child and by the time she was fifteen, she wrote her first poem, which was translated into Arabic language and published in Sudanese newspapers. "My first publications were these poems printed in the Arabic newspapers in Khartoum" (Alexander, FL 119). After graduating with B.A. (Hons) from Khartoum University in 1969, The University of Nottingham, England awarded her a scholarship to get her Ph.D. At the age of twenty two, Alexander finished her doctoral thesis on "Construction of Self Identity in the Early English Romantic Poets" that she later developed and published as *The Poetic Self*. Alexander returned to India in 1974 and joined teaching at

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Miranda House in Delhi and lectured in various Indian universities. In 1975, she worked as a CSIR Fellow at Jawaharlal Nehru University and then moved to Hyderabad, first to Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages and then to the University of Hyderabad where she could deal with the questions of poetry. In Hyderabad she met with David Lelyveld who was a historian doing research there.

Alexander's biography, intimately connected with her literary output, has spanned four continents and marked by myriad passages across the oceans and the borders. Her literary world consist many collections of poetry, fiction and non-fictional, besides a large number of newspapers and magazine articles. During these years (1974-79), she lived in India and published her first three books of poetry: *The Bird's Bright Ring* (1976), *I Root My Name* (1977), and *Without Place* (1978). In Hyderabad, she fell in love with David Lelyveld and married him in 1979. After being married she and her husband moved to New York City. They have two children, Adam Kuruvilla Lelyveld was born in 1980 and Svati Mariam Lelyveld was born in 1986. Since moving to New York, Alexander has grown into a prolific author, and her writing spans a variety of literary genres, though her poetry might be considered her best known work. Her literary career had begun early and crossed over four decades. Her first book, a single lengthy poem, entitled *The Bird's Bright Ring* was published in 1976 in Kolkata. Since then, Alexander has published more than ten collections of poems, including prose pieces, two novels, two non-fictions, a critical work on Romanticism and many more. Her first autobiographical book *Fault Lines: A Memoir* published in 1993, and ten years later in 2003 Alexander returned to it, adding several new chapters in an effort to deal with childhood traumas and painful material that was only partially explored in the first version. Some of the new chapters have the same names as previous chapters, as she revisited certain memories. This memoir is full of details associated with her private life, devoted to introspection and self-assessment. The Alexander's physical and mentally trauma during her childhood days will be traceable trauma psychoanalytical point of view.

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Sigmund Freud, a psychoanalytic, reveals the hidden desires which would correspond to real people, situations, and events in the author's life. His seduction theory provides the solution to the problem of the origins of hysteria and obsessional neurosis. In this

theory, a repressed memory of an early childhood's sexual abuse or molestation experience was the essential precondition for hysterical or obsessional symptoms, with the addition of an active sexual experience up to the age of eight for the latter. Freud examined the concept of psychological trauma throughout his career. Jean Laplanche has given a general description of Freud's understanding of trauma, which varied significantly over the course of Freud's career: "An event in the subject's life, defined by its intensity, by the subject's incapacity to respond adequately to it and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organization" (Laplanche and Pontalis 466).

Literature supports the fact that childhood trauma or childhood sexual abuse impacts negatively on many women's behaviours. Many victims of childhood traumas often have associations, flashbacks and memories related to the specific aspects of the sexual abuse. This can be reflected in both psychological and physiological responses. Childhood sexual abuse is an important theme in Meena Alexander's autobiographical book. Traditionally, Child sexual abuse was a topic which was not discussed in public but after 1970s it became legally punishable.

Fault Lines is divided into two parts. In the second part, Alexander significantly composed the memory of sexual abuse. The traumatic events of 9/11 in the public sphere unsettle some of Alexander's traumatic personal memories – long-buried trauma of sexual abuse by her grandfather, regular border crossing in the very early age of five, and the burden of learning a different language during the border crossing describes how she dealt with, and eventually forgets the abuse that plagued her childhood. In Fault Lines we find a confused narrator (Alexander) while trying to figure out what angle of vision about herself, about her life to present before the world, asking herself some questions: "multiple beings locked into the journeys of one body" (FL 1).

In the first part of the memoir, Alexander frequently discusses her grandfather's role in the development of her literary career. He was a great idealist for her who really believed that there was a new India, a new world, and new issues of equality for all people are waiting for her. He was most important person in her life who taught Alexander to read. Ironically it was he who was responsible for much of her feminism that influences her writing. But in the second part named "Book of childhood" she uncovers a long-suppressed trauma from her early life. The trauma of sexual abuse she suffered at the hands of her grandfather which unconsciously deep buried in her psyche whom she had depicted

as a loving and enabling presence in the first part of her autobiography. It brings a shocking discovery about her life. Her beloved grandfather, of whom she speaks so dearly in the first part of her memoir, sexually abused her when she was a child. She reflects on how in the period when she was dealing with her childhood trauma by the hands of her beloved grandfather whom she called Ilya.

As a child, she lived with the trauma of childhood sexual abuse because of her grandfather, and it has followed and haunted her for most of her life. At the centre of this trauma is the door that led to her grandfather's library, where the abuse took place, "There was a dark door to grandfather's library. ... Breath stops when I think of that door" (301). As a child Alexander worked diligently to shove the memories of abuse deep into her subconscious. As an adult, these repressed memories are coming back into her consciousness in bits and pieces. Furthermore, when recollecting what happened inside her grandfather's library, she remembers how her mother became her only escape from the pain and fear provoked by the episode: "I wanted to hide inside your sari, Amma, let the soft pleats drape about me, make me vanish. Deep inside your sari, no one could touch me" (302). Sigmund Freud in his book Study in Hysteria discusses the connection between traumatised female patients and the experience of sexual abuse.

Sigmund Freud's and Josef Breuer's classic studies of hysteria describe that one could not explicitly remember childhood sexual abuse, but experienced disabling fears, nagging anxieties, intrusive thoughts, or disturbing images that reflected implicit memory for the trauma. However, these cases proved difficult to interpret because independent corroboration was often lacking. Phil Mollon discussed about it in his article "Freud's Theories of Repression and Memory." Similarly, Alexander always faces her fear of the door rather than to think of the actions that happened beyond that door. She uses repetition while she is telling the story of her grandfather's violence against her. This is seen in the following paragraphs when she says:

A child in a white dress walked in the door, a while later a child walked out. Her eyes were burnt holes for the sun to shine through. I do not like to say I. I do not like to say I picked up my skirts and skipped into that doorway. For then I would be forced to say: sometime later I came out. Memory knows but knowing cannot remember. She not I. Not I, not I. (301)

In her poem “Dark Door” Alexander once again harks back to unpleasant memories associated with her grandfather:

A child went through a dark door into her grandfather’s library  
The door was cut in jackfruit wood,  
Varnished the color of burnt leaf.  
Breath stops when I think of that door.

(Quickly changing River, 41)

In the memoir, Alexander discusses her feelings when she first began to remember the details of the abuse she says, “What foundations did my house stand on? What sort of architect was I if the lowest beams were shredded? If the stones were mouldering, fit to fall apart. What was the worth of words?” (241). In an interview with Alexander, Ruth Maxey concludes that Alexander uncovered a long-suppressed trauma from her early life: the sexual abuse she suffered from her maternal grandfather.

Another traumatic event in her childhood days, she has to face is the challenge of the border crossing that haunted her for most of her life. Freud always lays stress on biological factors being primary reasons for neurosis in woman’s life. In *Fault Lines*, Alexander mentions many locations about her identity and belongingness: Allahabad, Tiruvella, Kozencheri, Pune, Delhi, Hyderabad, Khartoum, Cairo, Beirut, Jerusalem, Dubai, London, New York, Minneapolis, Saint Paul, New Delhi, Trivandrum (30). These places are memorable for its evocative representation of a Kerala childhood, adolescence in the Sudan and India, a professional life as a University Professor in Delhi and Hyderabad in India, and a life as an academic in the United States. Her behaviour is determined by a large number of places and tensions resulting from the incidents that occurred in the early life. A traumatic sense of alienation, loss and isolation in Alexander’s life is due to social and environmental factors. She says, “Night after night, I ask myself the question. What might it mean to look at myself straight, see myself?” ... Where did I come from? How did I become what I am? How shall I start to write myself, configured my “I” as Other.” (1-2). In this memoir we find a confused narrator because she is asking herself many questions and trying to figure out what angle of vision about herself and about her life to present before the world.

During these border crossings she had to learn many languages and each language comprises a piece of her fractured identity. Although her works are written in English but she grew up speaking Malayalam,

a Dravidian language of southwest India, and Arabic, the language of her Syrian Christian heritage, spoken in North Africa. She also repeatedly struggles with the multiple linguistic pulls in her life in order to find a language which she can inhabit:

And what of all the languages compacted in my brain: Malayalam, my mother tongue, the language of first speech; Hindi, which I learnt as a child; Arabic from my years in the Sudan – odd shards survive; French; English? How would I map all this in a book of days? (FL 1)

The languages with which she chooses to write has powerful implications for the ethnicity she chooses to represent. These questions have clear challenges on Alexander who cannot call just one place her home.

She unconsciously talks about the difficulty when she looks her disfigured face in a mirror. She doesn’t know how many gazes she would take to see her straight and what she would do of her disfigured face. It is only an exaggeration of her sorrow that she paints a picture of her having a disfigured face. Her disfigured face shows the slanted life she leads, lacking background and culture. “my life did not fall into the narratives I had been taught to honour, tales that closed back on themselves, as a snake might, swallowing its own ending” (FL 1). Her slanted life, her conflicting thoughts, whispering cadences, shouts, moans, the quick delight of bodily pleasure, are released as if they had freed themselves. She describes those feelings as multiple beings locked in the journey of her body. The trapped feelings are represented as existing beings, representing her identity as separate entities, thus taking her individualism away. It makes her individuality seem fractured and divided.

A psychoanalytic approach thus helps us with a better appreciation of the Alexander’s traumas; sexual abuse by maternal grandfather, fear and loneliness due to regular migrancy, burden of many languages, all these reveal the depth in mind and essential loneliness due to these childhood traumas. Kamala Markandaya believes that “the process of creative writing reveals depth in the mind which are of universal application,” and NergisDalal incorporates “the essential loneliness of every human being and a sense of compassion” (Rajeshwar 7).

After examining childhood traumas in Alexander’s *Fault Lines* we find that her childhood events and experiences were fished out of the dark and deep crevices of childhood traumatic memory. It seemed that these memories take on flesh and bones and became live experiences

for us too. This memoir seemed to be obsessed with memory and the Alexander never misses a chance to rewind all that is stored in her own. She was actually experimenting with memory and examining both its lighter and darker manifestations. It was a painful remembering that put together the dismembered past to make sense of the childhood trauma of the present.

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