

Tragic Realities of Human Ambitions in Ramesh K. Srivastava's *Coils of the Serpent*

Dr. Barinder Kumar *

Coils of the Serpent by Ramesh K. Srivastava is an extremely tragic and philosophical novel which delineates the theme of human follies and disproportionate punishments emanating either from the consequences of 'Human Karma' or from the revengeful nature of sufferers or victims. The novel exhorts the readers to ponder over the basic human weaknesses which lead fallible human beings to the catastrophic situations from where the return proves to be an impossible possibility. Every person is bound to make mistakes –sometimes wittingly and unwittingly and many times just out of egoistic temperament, romantic visualizations, foolhardy behavior etc. that put him trapped in such an irreversible chasms that the mental, spiritual and psychological conflagration and the tragic end remain the only facing wall. Being spiritual moralistic and didactic in story and style, Srivastava's *Coils of the Serpent* portrays the characters suffering not only because of external reasons but because of their own follies also which like Greek Plays bring the feelings of purgation of fear and pity for the sufferers as described in Aristotle's "Hamarsia". It seems difficult to distinguish whether the characters suffer because of their inherent "tragic flaws" or it is the divine omnipresence that plays like Hardy's *Tess*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* own game with humans on earth. Is man capable of shaping its fate or does he possess the potentials continue to prick the minds of the novelist and the readers during the long journey of the novel.

Srivastava's *Coils of the Serpent* is basically a pathetic travail of three families; headed by Chandan Mohan, Nawab Hashmi and Haseena. The story starts with the description of very distantly remote village named Danpur. It is a backward and traditional location in many ways and is quite far away from the urban phenomenon. Chandan Mohan and Nawab Hashmi are intimate friends though the latter belongs to high strata of society and is financially well off. Chandan Mohan enjoys working in his orchard as a labour. In the village, their friendship is solidly established and well recognized. Nawab Hashmi owns a large tract of land and old grand traditional "havelli" in Nanitpur which

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has come to him in legacy. Chandan Mohan's loyalty towards him proves costly as at many occasions of his life he performs certain activities that prove fatal for him and his family. Haseena, a widow and mother of two young daughters, is the most pathetic soul as she is an embodiment of sufferings. Her whole family gets destroyed, partly because of the sins performed by villains of the society and partly because of the cruel destiny. The novel is a replica of 'classical melodrama' of revenge as majority of characters seem either committing suicides, dying in accidents and murdering and falling into dungeon from where extrication is difficult or helplessly cursing the thunderbolts of cruel and invisible supernatural prevalence and irony of situation as seen in Greek Tragedies.

In Indian culture, since time immemorial the deliverance of "blessing or a curse" has always reflected a tremendous impression on the prosperity or destruction of the blessed or cursed ones. Lord Shiva is most popular for giving blessing though His blessings and boons would create problems for himself and for the mankind as many of blessing were grabbed by Rakshasas and devils. The examples of Bhasmasura and Harnakasya are appropriate to be mentioned in this context. But the examples of curses are many to cite which brought the fall of the devils. Such a curse too runs through *Coils of the Serpent* and the fear of something sinister or malicious happening looms large on the minds of the Chandan Mohan and his wife Dularia.

Like the curse of S.T. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariners*, *Coils of the Serpent* too moves around one curse that proves so potent that the course of life of three families gets a complete divergence and things go out of the control of all concerned persons. Human lust and revengeful actions completely blind the sane thinking and the overwhelming idea of destruction of the target overrules the actions. One incident that turns tragic is stage managed by two friends completely shatters the peaceful life in Danpur where all were enjoying peaceful saving communal hostilities. The incident is the product of devilish and revengeful thinking. Nawab Hashmi, in late thirties, a symbol of fading feudalism when fails to conquer Shabana, a young daughter of Haseena and Nurul Ahmed, plays a cruel game that ultimately unfolds itself to the catastrophic and humiliating situation. Nawab along with his friend Chandan Mohan create a very embarrassing scene for a family headed by Narul Hassan by alerting the people of the village when Narul's younger daughter

Shabana is having physical proximity with a young boy of the village. Nawab Hashmi posts guards there and yells at Shabana's father, "Narul Ahmed now be prepared for a donkey –ride with your daughter Shabana and her paramour Ishraq as you had promised in the panchayat last month. Her lover is inside and cannot escape..... The Nawab Hashmi with his men searched the room and pulled Ishraq out from under the cot to parade him before everyone present. On the Nawab's instructions and on being encouraged by most people of the village, Chandan Mohan had smeared the faces of Shabana, her father Narul Ahmed and her lover Ishraq with colour, placed them on three different donkeys and paraded them around the village."1(pp. 15-16). Such disgraceful event left no option to Shabana's father than to commit a suicide by hanging. Feeling extensively miserable as people of the village stopped talking to them, Haseena left the village for settling in an unknown place but before that she cursed.... "I pray to Allah and curse Nawab Hashmi and Chandan Mohan to have the same fate as they have done to us!"(pp. 21).

The curse delivered on Nawab Hashmi and Chandan Mohan by Haseena is justified because the punishment perpetrated on Haseena and family by the villagers on the provocation exhorted by the Nawab and his friend had, in fact, resulted from vested interests and revengeful feelings. The offence made by Haseena was that she had refused to entertain Nawab Hashmi's expression of love and proposal for marriage and she had not thought of revengeful actions that might ruin her life. The folly of furtive meetings between Shabana and her paramour is a very common mistake made by the young and the adolescents. But shrewd trick played by the hypocritical and shrewd persons puts the whole family into quandary. A very inhuman punishment was delivered by the village people. The unfortunate and disgraceful 'donkey ride' and consequent suicide by Narul Ahmed marked the beginning of struggling life of widow Haseena and her two young daughters in a new world of Agra. The punishment for small folly committed by juveniles to the whole family is quite disproportionate and far beyond the legal framework. Srivastava, quite candidly and objectively, pictures the plight of young and innocent lovers in rural framework which not only crushes the lovers but attaches the parents who are considered fallen in the established setup of Indian social system.

Nawab Hashmi's life style is responsible for the punishment he

receives from Nagina. Fascination for lavish spending on eating and drinking with friends and sycophants and pride in his long ancestry are the main factors for bringing to rags from riches. His deep in having dance parties at his haveli and his philosophy of enjoying this life with man is blessed for once only and one should make maximum use of it .In his own words as he advises to Chandan Mohan, "what kind of life do you lead? You take no betel leaf, no liquor, no wine and no good food other than dalia. Why do you waste this life so blessedly given by God? If you were to be born an animal in another life, this dalia you can eat even as an animal but these pleasures are meant only for the human race."(pp.104) He asks Chandan Mohan to stay for Saturday night because on Saturday night he arranges a troupe of dancing women for the merriment for him and his friends. His views for women are very conservative and disrespectful. In one of the dancing and drinking meeting, when all were expressing their philosophical views on women, Nawab Hashmi quite oblivious of the fact that his wife Nagina is present there, he blurts, "I don't agree with all of you. A woman is a pair of slippers to be kept under your feet for your comfort and to change or throw them away when they hurt, cause inconvenience or have outlived their use".(pp.165). Such nasty views about women become the cause of his financial, physical and psychological upheavals.

Unmindful of his age, Nawab Hashmi dares wedlock with a very young lady without making many searches into her family background as he gets infatuated by her gorgeous attractive eyes and physical charms. Little does he know that the lady can overpower him with the passage of time as he is on the verge of decline and she is a rising star in health and beauty. His failure to foresee her strategies as she immediately after the marriage starts spending money and financial resources extravagantly is the real cause of the sufferings he faces day by day till he breathes his last. He deserves the punishment and treatment he gets at the hands of Nagina. The financial resources of his coffers dwindle because his over infatuation for his young wife blind his eyes and he remains silent on many of the decisions taken by Nagina. The idea of disposing of the house in Danpur is the first step in the bad direction. Nagina implemented her game of taking revenge against him by disconnecting him from his roots. She knows fully that as long as he continues his train of village folk with him, it will be difficult to make him rot. She also comprehends that his infatuation for her has

grown manifold and it needs to be exploited to the maximum and in lesser span of time. Therefore, after one step being implemented she moves to the next. Next punishment she gives Nawab Hashmi is the selling of the old and ancestral havelli. First a large amount of money is spent on its renovation and then she shows her interest in buying new house, and that too in her name. It takes a long time that the realization of his several follies dawns upon Nawab Hashmi. By the time, he could react it was too late.

Not only economic losses that Nawab Hashmi suffers but his social image is also tarnished. Nagina's closeness with Chandan Mohan and her inhibited visits to the markets for shopping give Hashmi a tremendous psychological pain. Their intimacy becomes a talk of the town. But his faith in goodness of Chandan Mohan stops him from raising any objection. But biggest shock that makes him almost dead is the revelation made by the waiter in the hotel lounge:—Huzoor, why bother about her name?"the bartender said. "She is nagin—a rose-coloured serpent with a deadly sting. Sir, you may kiss me for saying so, because I'm overstepping my limits, but I have eaten you salt and would not betray you. Please don't see her. I have seen with my own eyes what she does to the people."

Nawab Hashmi laughed, asking, "If you tell so strongly, I'll keep away from her but how can I do that unless you tell me who she is and what her name is."

"Nagina."

"What?"

"Her name is Nagina."

Nawab Hashmi's face turned pale and his eyes widened as it he had seen a long-feared ghost. The cheerful spirit that he had donned temporarily in the company of the club menials disappeared fast. Her frequent outings and shopping sprees, her ever-widening circle of new acquaintances and busy schedules of ladies' club meetings began to assume new meanings now. A cloud of revulsion arose within him which triggered a bout of cough. Suppressing his bitter feelings, allowing a faint smile over his face, he patted the bartender, twitched his lips but the intense feelings failed to be formulated into words and yet by the touch of Nawab Hashmi's hand, the bartender knew that his advice was taken in good spirits." (pp.224-225) .Such a disclosure about his wife having intimate relations with his friends is a bolt from the blue for him. Out of

anger, he abuses her, "You are an ungrateful witch...Whose turn is it now my dear, deadly charming Ichchhadhari Nagin? You did not even Balwant Roy and Police Officer Kamaleshwar....I am ruined ..." (p.226).Immediately after this shocking revelation and feeling completely helpless, Nawab Hashmi leaves this world.

On the other hand, the punishment that is delivered to Chandan Mohan by Nagina (Najama in disguise) cannot be termed truly justified and appropriate because he is victim of innocent folly and perfect deceit. It is fact that he was an accomplice in Shabana-paramour affair that brought not only disgrace to Narul Amhed –Haseena family but a long series of misfortunes .The feeling of guilt and repentance remained quite visible on Chandan Mohan's conscience. He never objected to or contradicted the frequent comments coming from people in the village on his involvement in cruelty on Shabana and her family. When in the conflict of religious procession that erupted between Hindus and Muslims because of the passage ' Tazia', Chandan Mohan dares to bring amiable reconciliation but he has to digest a very sarcastic comment from his neighbor Bharadwaj who whispered in his ear, "This is a place where you and your friend Nawab Hashmi had begun a donkey parade of Shabana and her father. You said many times that you had erroneously done gross injustice to Shabana. Do you want to ease your conscience by harming our cause and appeasing the Muslims?"(p.07) It is true that Chandan Mohan has committed a blunder the realization of which dawned on his mind much later as he occasionally broods over the incident, the novelist describes his state of mind, "Chandan Mohan because silent. Bhardwaj had touched his weak nerve. Chandan Mohan himself had nothing to do with the Shabana affair. He simply wanted to help his friend Nawab Hashmi to get married to Shabana but he had never imagined that the entire episode would turn into a tragedy. He felt unhappy that Nawab Hashmi too had kept him in dark about the entire episode."(p.07)But in the eyes of Haseena and her family and the entire community, Chandan Mohan had shown his active involvement in the suffering of the family. Therefore, Najama decides to take serpentine revenge from Chandan Mohan.

Mansoor Alam is another character who brings tremendous sufferings to Haseena and her family. Making use of his old age postures and a very soft language, he succeeds in grabbing fifty thousand rupees from Shabana money which got from the bank after the death

of her husband. In spite of Punit's (Shabana's husband's colleague), Shabana falls prey to Mansoor's catchy words. But Mansoor Alam's plan to grab money does not materialize as first Shabana and later Najama drag him to court, it is a very long and painful route to retrieve money. The bad wishes from Haseena, Shabana and Najama become the cause of his accident and before death he returns the money, though Shabana had left this world before seeing her money back. His death gives Najama a feeling of jubilation as she expresses her elation, "The news of Mansoor Alam's death I feel relieved that one of the assignments I had on my hands is over. But I feel cheated because he escaped with so little punishment". (p.126)

Shabana committed a large number of follies for which she had to suffer in the same proportion. As a young girl, her meeting her paramour in the house which brought the whole family to a very embarrassing and disgraceful was the biggest folly that she committed without foreseeing the consequences. Her that mistake began the series of misfortunes that ultimately force her father to commit suicide and leaving the villager refusal to join the bank after the death of her husband was another mistake that she made again without weighing pros and cons carefully. And next blunder that she committed was giving fifty thousand rupees from the compensatory amount she received in lieu of her husband's death in accident. She was flabbergasted when she learnt that Mansoor Alam had actually deceived her and was not returning money easily. Her going to the court to file a petition to retrieve money from Mansoor proved fatal as she found it difficult to meet the court dates and related expenses. Her own follies brought her to prostitution and committing suicide along with her two daughters. Ramesh K. Srivastava shows that one mistake leads to other mistakes and endless sufferings and punishments. But she left a suicide letter for sister to avenge her death.

As per Najama's personal revenge is concerned, she seems justified in her pursuit as the legal system of India lacks in many ways to deliver timely justice. Postponement of court dates and legal formalities frustrate Shabana so much that she ends her life before getting the justice. Najama's course of action at personal level seems timely and natural. Had she waited like her elder sister, she would not have seen her culprits meeting their fate. On the question of sexual relationship, in war one has to lose certain things as George Bernard Shaw has rightly

said that everything is fair in love and war. In response to a question of morality, culture and religion, nervously posed by her mother Haseena, Najama answers, "In a way, mother. But don't get irritated by this phrase, "Both of us—I mean Nagina and I—believe that sex is a physical activity which is altogether different from one's soul. It is a natural requirement of a body in the same way as food or water. When we eat chicken or meat or even take milk, do we ever realize how immoral is it?" (306) On the question of punishment to Chandan Mohan, Najama too had solid argument as contradicts her mother when the latter says that Chandan Mohan did not deserve the punishment he got, Najama says, "It was his fault, mother. "Without Chandan Mohan's support, the Nawab could have done nothing. It was his support that had emboldened the Nawab. A man who acts as a contract killer is as much guilty as the one who tempts him to. I learnt this and many more things in the court when I used to attend it in Shabana's place. People, while waiting for their names to be called out, used to discuss all these things." (304) Is Najama guilty in the eyes of law as while punishing Chandan Mohan she did injustice to Dularia and Aditya? Srivastava ends the novel without answering or discussing such questions. If Najama suffered because to injustice done to Shabana and her father, in the same way Dularia and Aditya's future prospects got spoiled by Najama's actions. Therefore, it will not be impertinent to say that some of the questions remained either overlooked or conveniently unanswered by the novelist. On the question of *KARMA THEORY*, the reader remains inquisitive to find the answer, "For what wrong doings, Dularia and Aditya have to suffer?"

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Homelessness: A Thematic Study of V. S. Naipaul's *Half a Life*

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Theme of homelessness and consequent loss of identity has been a recurring one in the literature of Diaspora. Naipaul seems to be a champion of this issue. The literature of Diaspora focuses on the dislocation of an individual or race and consequent alienation. Alienation leads to a sense of loss and homelessness, but life consists not in losing but in the rediscovery of self. Naipaul the 'literary circumnavigator' of contemporary times has this sense of homelessness as his recurrent theme. Critics have spoken of his feeling of congenital homelessness of having been born a foreigner, a citizen of an exiled community on a colonized island, without a natural home except for an India to which he often returns, only to be reminded of his distance from his roots.

Naipaul's work is of utmost relevance in a world in which we are all in a sense of exile. He has explored with a great sensitivity the predicament of exiles ? the pain of homelessness, displacement and loss of roots. His ruthless adherence to his own dark vision, his refusal to pretend to an optimism he cannot feel gives a compelling persuasive power to his depressing fictional world. As Iyer says, "He has no comforting message only the bleak knowledge that in today's rapidly changing world the yearning for permanence can never be more than an unfulfilled ache ? everyone is far from home" (38).

The impetus behind Naipaul's writing has been a kind of compulsion to understand his own situation, it is through his writing that he arrives at a vision of modern homelessness as a product of historical forces, to an acceptance of his own homelessness as final, and to a perception that his own plight was not singular but typical of post colonial world. Naipaul's perception of and anguish at his own homelessness and rootlessness is central to his creative talent. It has been the stimulus as well as subject of his work. Naipaul in most of his works describes the particular suffering and identity confusion of immigrants. Naipaul's study of Caribbean homelessness and insecurity is constant and authentic and is increasingly accepted as a perceptive

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examination of the central preoccupation of our time.

Naipaul, in *Half a Life*, tries to present the ironical existence of Willie Chandran. The novel opens with Willie Chandran, the main protagonist's search for his roots in the rootless world. Willie asks his father, "why is my middle name Somerset? The boys at school have just found out, and they are mocking me" (Naipaul 1). His father replies that his middle name is after the name of famous English writer Somerset Maugham, who came to India to collect material for a novel about spirituality. His father's replies instils a feeling of grief that even his name is not his own and it is borrowed from someone else. It also prepares the background that the life and name with which Willie is living is not complete but only half. Every human being has a name, which is considered his identity, but this thing doesn't happen with Willie Somerset Chandran. His middle name is borrowed. His first name suggests his identity as a Christian and the last name signifies his mixed ancestry. Willie is living a half borrowed life.

Half a Life is the story set in pre-independence India, then in London and then to a pre-independence African country, which is closely modelled on Mozambique and then for a brief period in Berlin. Willie is the offspring of a Brahmin father and a low-caste mother. Willie is the most fitting example of the halfness of life. The son of an ill-matched couple, he has never known anything like parental love. The bitterness of the whole affair keeps seeping into his life time and again. His Brahmin father had neither love nor regard for his low-caste mother. It was just to follow Mahatma's political ideal, to live out a life of sacrifice that he had opted for her. His marriage with this girl is, "as a supreme gesture of sacrifice, not an empty sacrifice" (Nayak 254). Willie's father is not happy with the birth of Willie. After his birth he lives mostly in a melancholy mood, and whenever he gets a chance to look at Willie, "was to see how much of the backward could be read in his features" (Naipaul 33). The act of learning all about his father, and the fact that his father was a mendicant, caused Willie's embarrassment. Willie exemplifies the assumption because his past, his ancestors, ignited the shame he was experimenting.

His humiliation grows bigger when he goes to the mission school. Children always put comments on his father and his profession. Teacher asks him about his father's employment. Instead of answering, because of his memory and because he remembers the degraded names used to

refer to his parents, Willie says, “you all know what my father does. The class laughed. They laughed at this irritation and not at what he had said” (Naipaul 37). From that day he creates his own imaginary world. The reality is too bitter for him to accept socially and thus starts living in his self made image. Willie grows up as a person who is confused about his caste, family background, about his religion, his parent’s personality and his country. Willie goes to a college in London on scholarship, “with no idea of what he wanted to do, except to get away from what he knew, and yet very little idea of what lay outside what he knew” (Naipaul 51).

He wants to get rid of his past .In London he starts to search life in whole but in search of wholeness he even loses the half, which he has in India, “the city disillusioned him. Its cool indifference pinches him. Its gaudiness goads him to analyse and reanalyse his self. His mind is full of thoughts of the hopelessness of home and his own nebulous present. He feels a nowhere man” (Vishnu 54). In London, Willie is totally confused and he tries to relearn everything he knew. He has to learn how to eat in public, how to greet people, how to ask for things. At the same time he takes everything half-heartedly as he feels himself alienated and homeless in London:

The learning he was being given was like the food he was eating, without savour. The two were inseparable in his mind. And just as he ate without pleasure, so, with a kind of blindness, he did what the lecturers and tutors asked of him, read the books and articles and did the essays. (Naipaul 58)

Floating in the bottomless sea of multiculturalism, for a while Willie seems to have found his ground when all of a sudden he comes to a realization that he did not need to rebel for the simple reason that distance from his roots has given him freedom without asking. In search of his roots in a strange world Willie again projects a borrowed, make-believe identity and ventures to live the image once again:

He adapted certain things he had read, and he spoke of his mother as belonging to an ancient Christian community of the subcontinent, a community almost as old as Christianity itself. He kept his father as a Brahmin. He made his

father’s father a ‘courtier.’ So playing with words, he began to re-make himself. It excited him and began to give him a feeling of power. (Naipaul 61)

In the process of settling down in the London life, Willie comes close to a few people each of whom leading a half-life in their own way. There is Percy Cato who was “a Jamaican of mixed parentage and was more brown than black” (Naipaul 61). Percy is in many ways like Willie. He is ashamed of his background and instead of presenting facts about his life, like Willie he believes in presenting fiction.

Willie Chandran is a man doomed to live under a shadow without a sense of belongingness with a foreign country. His cultural background and his awareness of his incompleteness have bred inhibition. Willie may hide himself by projecting a false ancestry but he cannot kill his reality and at all crucial moments his background and his half-ness become apparent and give him away.

Willie fails to see his future in London when he has completed his studies. His immigrant, wanderer soul takes him to Ana’s African country. From Asia Willie had come to Britain in search of an anchor but failing to find one he traverses to Africa, which seems to bear more affinity than the West. Thus, drifting away from one place to another, from one continent to another Willie feels he is going to lose his language and, “He thought about the new language he would have to learn. He wondered whether he would be able to hold on to his own language. He wondered whether he would forget his English, the language of his stories” (Naipaul 132). Language has ceased to exist as a set of signifiers for Willie. Before he has thirty-three years on this planet he has been forced by circumstances and his wanderlust to change three languages making him so confused that he does not know how to express himself.

One of the major themes of the novel is the half-life the exiles live due to their homelessness. Naipaul raises this important existential question in an autobiographical way through disorientation of Willie’s life. Wherever he goes, he realises that a man searches for wholeness but becomes only half-successful. Willie abundantly inherits the collective unconsciousness of the Indian ethos and therefore the Third World heritage ? and is by no means a flag-waving propagandist for the

erstwhile colonies of British imperialism. Willie strives to find but not to yield in the nature of his inward journey into the half-and-half world and is confused through the suffering and alienation. On the other hand Ana looks like an extension of Willie's own existence, mirroring his own sense of being on the outside of life. The exiles in the novel lead a half-life or look for a life or hope to borrow a life, and never to live a life to the full. According to Jason Cowley:

Half a Life reads as a study in estrangement and inner exile [...]. In this strange, languorous, often painful new novel it is not the Africans, but the settlers whose lives seem most incomplete [...]. It is they who are the true Conradian grotesques, wandering restlessly without home and hope. (Mishra 193)

The first day at Ana's estate house meant different to him. He felt as a stranger. He hardly knew about a colonial country in Africa. Willie met a little African maid, who greeted him in an oddly stylish manner, "So you are Ana's London man" (Naipaul 145). At this point of life, Willie was suffering from the oppression of kinship. He was not free from the nausea of disconnectedness, alienation and lack of social standards in a group or persons. He often thought back to the first day.

Willie's fate as a flotsam becomes even worse in this African country where he expected to belong. Walking in the streets in this town he feels he is, "walking as if in wilderness" (Naipaul 134). Willie becomes a nowhere man; he does not belong anywhere. Lack of the sense of belonging makes him indecisive and despite initial reluctance he stays for eighteen years. Describing his lot to his sister Sarojini, he remembers that in Africa instead of succeeding in finding a place for himself, he had lost whatever little autonomy he had in London. In London at least he was known as Willie Chandran but in Africa he becomes simply, "Ana's London man" (Naipaul 145). Willie's search for roots in the African state is laudable but abortive. For years he has allowed himself to become easy victim to slippery substances but on a rainy day when he slips after having spent eighteen years in Africa, he comes to realize that at forty-one, it's high time to stop making a fool of himself. He wants to emerge out of the shadow of the image of 'Ana's London man', which was thrust on him without his knowing. He is resolved that there are not going to be any more slips for him.

Resolutely he tells Ana: "I mean I've given you eighteen years. I can't give you any more. I can't live your life any more. I want to live my own" (Naipaul 136). As J. M. Coetzee says, "*Half a Life* is the story of the progress of a man from a loveless beginning to a solitary end that may turn out to be a true end, just a plateau of rest and recuperation" (Mishra 193).

To conclude it can be said that Willie is pre-occupied with varieties of dislocations, migrations, exile, the idea of being unanchored and displaced and with the enigma of a decentred and disorientating experience in the explosive and disconcerting realities of half-London, half-Portuguese and half-and-half world with their different linguistic cultural ecologies, sociological hues and nostalgia. Willie tries to run away from his background but he is reminded to his origins that always remain with him as he cannot be out of his roots in the cultural tradition and his relationship with caste and class.

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The Place of Art in Modern Society: A Critical Study on Albert Camus's Works

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An examination of the novels and essays of Camus reveal a deep concern in him regarding the role of an artist in the society one lives in. This concern is expressed in several passages of his fiction and theoretical works. The following study is an attempt to understand in what ways Camus visualized the creative act. It seems that Camus compared and contrasted many trends in writing to distinguish the act of imaginative creation as a special function in society. We have found interwoven in his fiction comparisons between journalists, historians, diary-writers, chroniclers, thinkers, fiction-writers and creators of pieces of art (sculptors). This work is based on *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Outsider*, *The Plague* and the essay 'The Artist and His Time'. While the first three were early works of Camus that made him famous, the last essay is like a reflection on his own works and critical reception in the world of artists. This has given us an opportunity to view Camus from two different angles: as an imaginative writer as well as a social thinker. Within a span of ten years, between 1942 and 1953, there is a marked shift in Camus's views on the role of the artist.

From religion to ethics to aesthetics, critics have explored Camus's thoughts with reference to all his novels, short stories and plays as well as the images and symbols in his essays and fiction. Many of the critical essays about Camus address issues such as Existentialism, Marxism, Christianity, political opportunism and political action as well as issues of individual and collective moral responsibility. These essays situate Camus in time. The underlying contrast and controversy between the Existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre and Camus run through most of the critical essays related to his time.

Gaetan Picon in his article 'Exile and the Kingdom' observes that the element of dialogue is inherent in Camus. "Camus's problem is to relate the unity of artistic expression with the vibrant inner experience, torn apart so that it may live."(Picon, 1962) We can observe this in his

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seminal essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

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In this essay Camus cites the myth of Sisyphus who was punished by the gods to roll a rock up a hill and which he could never accomplish to the finish. The gods were wise, Camus suggests, in perceiving that an eternity of futile labour is a hideous punishment.

Camus identifies Sisyphus as the archetypal absurd hero, both for his behaviour on earth and for his punishment in the underworld. He displays scorn for the gods, a hatred of death, and a passion for life. His punishment is to endure an eternity of hopeless struggle. What fascinates Camus is Sisyphus's state of mind in that moment after the rock rolls away from him at the top of the mountain. Sisyphus is conscious, aware of the absurdity of his fate. His fate can only be considered tragic because he understands it and has no hope for reprieve. At the same time, the lucidity he achieves with this understanding also places him above his fate. When Sisyphus accepts his fate, however, the sorrow and melancholy of it vanish. Sisyphus is aware that he will struggle forever and he knows that this struggle will get him nowhere. This awareness is precisely the same awareness that an artist has in this life. The artist is an indifferent observer of society and its functions. "Human will have no other purpose than to maintain awareness... Of all the schools of patience and lucidity, creation is the most effective."(Camus, 1991) The artist can see the resemblance between the life of a mythical character, Sisyphus and an ordinary Meursault. The role of this artist is then of a recorder of history almost like a journalist. In this way the writer increases awareness.

Sisyphus's life and torment are transformed into a victory by concentrating on his freedom, his refusal to hope, and his knowledge of the absurdity of his situation. In the same way, Dr. Rieux is an absurd hero in *The Plague*, for he too is under sentence of death, is trapped by a seemingly unending torment and, like Sisyphus, he continues to perform his duty no matter how useless or how insignificant his action may turn out to be. In both cases it matters little for what reason they continue to struggle so long as they testify to man's allegiance to man and not to abstractions or 'absolutes'.

We see the moralist in Camus in the way he has compared and contrasted the character of Cottard in *The Plague*, as someone who does not understand the purpose of life, with the three other characters,

Rieux, Tarrou, and Paneloux who do realize the immediate purpose of life. Dr. Rieux is the author's spokesman in the novel. His convictions contradict the Christian views on suffering which are recalled by Father Paneloux. Father Paneloux's first sermon expresses very little sympathy or understanding for the townspeople's suffering. He claims that the plague is what they deserved, and that earthly suffering is God's way of punishing sinners. Dr. Rieux's belief is that anyone who has dealt with human beings in pain will want to get in there and relieve their suffering, not sit back and preach about it. At the same time he believes that a record of human endurance and revolt is a valuable device to motivate future human intervention in universal phenomena. This record keeping is the role of an artist visualized by Camus.

Since Camus's theory has been lucidly expressed in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Critics have reviewed Camus's works in the spirit of his theory. Thus we find Germaine Bree discussing Camus's success as an artist in relation to the standards Camus had set for himself through his essays. (Bree, 1962) Many critics on Albert Camus have observed Camus's style and compared it with Camus's own views on the art of writing. Some critics have compared Camus's style with theories of art. Many critics have found Camus more of an artist than a mere philosopher and appreciated his works for their aesthetic quality. They have observed that Camus has set a very good example of the art of writing fiction and complimented him as a very good imaginative writer, almost a poet.

Most of the critics have contributed to our appreciation of the value of Camus as an artist. This leads us to fill the gap left by these critics and discuss some of Camus's essays and novels where we find clear evidence of the fact that Camus was not only seeking an ideal style of imaginative writing but also the right attitude of an artist towards the needs of the society. Camus was exploring not only the theme of the absurd in his works but also the role of an artist in the world one lives in.

In his first novel *The Outsider* Camus analyses the attitude of a journalist. (Bespaloff, 1962) The fact that one of the journalists admits that they have 'blown your case up a bit' due to lack of any other story reflects the lack of moral responsibility in this section of the society. Camus's presentation of the thoughtless clubbing of Meursault's case with a case of parricide points out the callous attitude of many creative

writers when they use the power of their pen and the press for earning a living at the cost of the lives and reputation of other individuals. The huge crowd, which has gathered to watch the proceedings of the court, represents the mass of readers while the journalist is the writer. It signifies the role of the writer in the society. Camus here highlights the difference between a responsible writer and the unscrupulous writers.

In *The Plague*, Camus gives an example of a responsible writer in Dr. Bernard Rieux. In the last chapter, there is a discussion on building a memorial for those who suffered through and fought against the plague and some one cracked a joke that there would be irrelevant speeches after which the leaders would have supper and go to sleep. While, Dr. Rieux could feel himself at one with the sufferers. And realizing that 'a monument or just a tablet' may not be representative of the immensity of the struggle against the plague, Dr. Rieux resolved to write a chronicle.

Apparently Camus begins this novel with a disclaimer. It is actually a modest assertion of his narrator's attitude. He believes that the role of an artist is not to take account of the differences of outlook among people. Rather his role is to give the exact detail of what happened in history and say, "this is what happened", when he knows that it actually did happen, that it closely affected the life of a whole populace, and that there are thousands of eye-witnesses who can appraise in their hearts the truth of what he writes." (Camus, 1948). Dr. Rieux's chronicle has been handed down to the generations of readers as a tribute to the endurance of the people of Oran with an assurance of a true record of Oran's history. To quote from the text of *The Plague*:

The irony of the situation is that a long painful struggle for life that was threatened by a pestilence leaves no lasting impression on the society at large, especially because it was held in isolation within the boundaries of the city of Oran. It becomes only a small part of the city's history mostly forgotten, memorable only for those who happened to survive it. This note keeping is a kind of reflection on the art of observing, recording and representing a piece of life that has gone by. It seems that in Camus's view a writer is a true witness and creates a more enduring memorial of the events.:

"Dr. Rieux resolved to compile this chronicle, so that he should not be one of those who hold their peace but should bear witness in

favor of those plague-stricken people; so that some memorial of the injustice and outrage done them might endure; and to state quite simply what we learn in a time of pestilence: that there are more things to admire in men than to despise.”(Camus 1948:296-97

In *The Myth of Sisyphus* we get a clearer articulation about the role of the work of art in the universe. Camus analyses the experience of writing as ‘the absurd joy par excellence’. Camus goes on to refer to several eternal pieces of work justifying his own view that ‘creating is living double’ and goes on to say about the place of the work of art in the universe that “it marks both the death of an experience and its multiplication. It is a sort of monotonous and passionate repetition of the themes already orchestrated by the world...it makes the mind get outside of itself and places it in opposition to others, not for it to get lost but to show it clearly the blind part that all have entered upon. In the time of the absurd reasoning, creation follows indifference and discovery.”(Camus,1991)

This is to say that a work of art is ever lasting; it is a record of multifarious experiences; only those pieces of creation outlive human life which are indifferent and lucid; work of art is authentic only when it gives a true account of the phenomenon which describes in a neutral manner and thus the role of the artist is that of a witness and preserver of the evidence of man’s endurance of the human condition.

“The work of art embodies a drama of the intelligence, but it proves this only indirectly...it cannot be the end, the meaning, and the consolation of life.” (Camus,1991:97)According to Camus an artist has a great responsibility towards future generations to whom he would submit his work. He cannot ‘yield to the temptation of adding to what is described a deeper meaning that it knows to be illegitimate. This is the same view which is substantiated in the last pages of *The Plague* where Dr. Rieux confesses that he would not be able to record Cottard’s thoughts because he has no notion of what he thought. Dr. Rieux could only tell his readers what happened to Cottard as a result of ‘having in his heart approved of something that killed off men, women, and children.’

In general Camus distinguishes between philosophers who ‘launch ideas’ and novelists who ‘should triumph in the concrete.’ Art should provide ‘revolt, freedom and diversity.’(Camus,1991:116-17)

Thus Camus appreciates the efforts of the men of letters, who may not have been successful in communicating their thoughts and experiences in writings but who made sincere efforts towards expressing themselves, along with successful writers who have created everlasting masterpieces.

In another essay entitled *The Artist and His Time* written in 1953 that is ten years later, Camus explains his own role as an artist in the face of the contemporary scenario. “Artists of the past could at least keep silent in the face of tyranny. The tyrannies of today are improved; they no longer admit of silence or neutrality. One has to take a stand, be either for or against. Well, in that case, I am against.”(Camus,1991:207) He also makes an satirical comment on the wars and executions saying “today judges, accused and witnesses exchange positions with exemplary rapidity.” And then he suggests that there is ‘no dearth of opportunities for action’ and approves of trade-unionisms.

While in the novels dispassionate observation of the phenomenon is advocated, in this essay Camus rejects the formula of being a neutral witness because the times are such that one cannot accept one’s milieu without interference. Here, we see a shift in opinion about the role of the artist with the advancement of age and experience in Camus. Since, the time has become so violent and full of injustice, an artist cannot be a mere recorder of history as the authors of some of the great masterpieces were in the past. The writers of today have to take a stand. The modern writer should also play a role as a man. “Considered as artists, we perhaps have no need to interfere in the affairs of the world. But considered as men, yes. The miner who is exploited or shot down, the slaves in the camps, those in the colonies, the legions of persecuted throughout the world – they need all those who can speak to communicate their silence and to keep in touch with them.”(Camus,1991:208)

However, Camus expresses his consciousness of the fact that in his own works he has ‘not taken part in the common struggles.’ Instead he has drawn the attention of his readers ‘toward everyday life, toward those, whoever they may be, who are humiliated and debased. In general, Camus’s role as an artist has been a socially involved and sympathetic one.

In conclusion one can say that in the world of flux and continual regeneration each individual is compelled to revise his own thoughts and adjust to the changing norms. That is why Camus, being one of the writers who has been certain and lucid in the articulation of theories, also happened to rethink his own views on a later date.

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Use of Irony in Arun Kolatkar's *Jejuri*

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Irony implies a statement which is made to indicate the dissimilar meaning, something that has a second meaning projected by the writer. It is implicit with reference to the circumstance in which the statement is made. Irony may be comprehensive to a situation in which a person thinks something and something contrary happens. Such ironical situations make the writing interesting, attention-grabbing, readable and enjoyable as well.

Arun Kolatkar adds a new dimension to Indian English poetry by using irony in his *Jejuri* (1976). He has handled this poetic device brilliantly and differently. *Jejuri*, a collection of different poems, is Kolatkar's master piece. Kolatkar wrote this poem on one of the most important places of pilgrimage in Maharashtra known as Jejuri. Manohar, the protagonist of the poem, is a modern man visits this small town which is more or less a village. He arrives at Jejuri early in the morning by a bus in the company of other tourists and what he observes of the God Khandoba and place Jejuri forms the substance of the poem.

The Bus, very first poem of *Jejuri* shows how Kolatkar makes use of the weapon of irony expressing ideas and depicting situations. The protagonist finds two reflections of himself in the two glasses of the spectacles which the old man sitting opposite him is wearing. The poem entitled *The Priest* reveals that Kolatkar makes use of irony in portraying a person. The priest ironically portrayed is a sort of man who is more engaged in his income than any kind of social or religious service. This poem depicts the disposition of the priest who is waiting for the coming of the bus and crowd of pilgrims and tourists for monetary gain. He is more anxious with the offering which the pilgrims always make when they bow reverentially before image of the god Khandoba. The use of irony in the poem *The Priest*, is clearly evident

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in priest's worldliness and greed. The priest is not a genuine priest in any sense of the word.

A Low Temple, also has its share of irony. The temple of Khandoba at Jejuri does not have a high ceiling. Not much of sunlight can enter the temple. The result is that the pilgrims cannot clearly see the various stone and bronze images or statues which are kept there. A pilgrim has to light a match in order to be able to see the images in its light. When the matchstick has burned itself out, another is lighted so that pilgrims can continue to see the images of the various deities the chief of whom is Khandoba in the low temple.

Kolatkár's skepticism in the celestial attributes of the statues at Jejuri is evident in this poem. Among the statues protagonist sees one of the goddess which has eighteen arms. The protagonist asks the priest who this goddess is. The priest replies that it is the statue of a goddess having eight arms. Actually, however, the idol has eighteen arms; and the protagonist has counted the number. But the priest still says that she has eight arms. Here one finds difference between fact and belief. In the first place the protagonist does not believe in gods and goddesses; and, secondly he is being asked to believe that an idol of a goddess has eight arms when it actually possesses eighteen arms. The disparity could not have been more obvious, and the irony could, therefore, not have been more arresting.

In the poem *Makarand*, The protagonist prefers to smoke outside than to go inside shirtless for the worship. The title of the poem needs a word of explanation. 'Makarand' means 'honey', but here it is used as the name of a certain sweet offerings to a god, somewhat like 'modak'. Here the protagonist's skepticism turns into total disbelief. In fact, he prefers smoking to going into the temple. In other words, the protagonist in the poem objects to the very act of the worship of a stone or bronze image supposed to represent a deity.

It is very difficult to decide at Jejuri what is a god and what is a stone because any stone, which a pilgrim picks up, may attest to be the image of a god:

What is god
and what is stone
the dividing line
if it exists

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is very thin
at jejuri
and every other stone
is god or his cousin (28).

A god's cousin is as sacrosanct as the god himself; and therefore, every stone deserves reverence. Kolatkár has ridiculed the blind faith of the pilgrims by saying that almost every stone at Jejuri is sacred because it is an image of some god. Thus there is no limit to the number of stone images of the gods whom the pilgrims can worship. This is an ironical way of denying the being of any god and doubting the legitimacy of any conviction in the stories which have accumulated around the name of Khandoba, who is supposed to be an incarnation of god Siva. In *Chaitanya*, he tells us ironically that the stones of Jejuri are sweet-like.

In *The Blue Horse*, again he uses irony which arises from a contradiction between what is supposed to be the case and what actually is the case. The priest of Khandoba's temple at Jejuri has arranged a holy ceremony to facilitate the protagonist to watch it in all its details. The ceremony consists in offering worship to Khandoba by means of hymns sung in praise of that god. The way in which the protagonist describes the presentation of the ceremony is ironical:

The toothless singer
Opens her mouth.
Shorts the circuits
In her haywire throat.
A shower of sparks
flies off her half burnt
tongue (47).

The singer of the hymn in praise of god Khandoba is a toothless woman from whose throat the hymn issues with some difficulty as is something has gone wrong with her throat just as something may go wrong with an electric wire with the result that the electric appliances in the house cease to function. The song being sung may be a holy one and therefore sacred; but the protagonist's approach towards the singer is most withering. Here we must appreciate and esteem Kolatkár's choice of words to suit his purpose. The toothless singer "shorts the circuits" in "her haywire throat". And then comes the height of irony. When the members of this group, consisting of a singer and a couple

of instrumentalist are regarded as 'Gods' own children' performing a religious ceremony.

The whole event continues with the exposure of the frivolity, ignorance, and duplicity of the priest. Khandoba's horse was a blue one; but the priest, being stupid and undiscerning, has allowed the painter to draw the picture of a white horse on the wall of his house. When the protagonist pointed out this inconsistency, the priest says that, to him, the picture of the horse on the wall looks blue; and then artificially imparts a blue tinge to the belly of the horse in the picture.

The poem steeped in irony is *Heart of Ruin*, the title of this poem refers to a temple which is in ruins at Jejuri. The roof of this ancient temple malformed exactly over the head of the stone statue of god Maruti. But nobody seemed to mind the accident. The god Maruti himself did not react unfavorably to this accident because, most probably, he likes the temple in its state of crumple. The temple is no longer visited by pilgrims because it is in ruins:

The roof comes down on Maruti's head.
Nobody seems to mind.
Least of all Maruti himself.
May be he likes a temple better this way (12).

A mongrel bitch has found this premise to be very suitable for giving birth to her puppies. The temple is no more a place of worship but it is still nothing less than the house of god. The closing two lines of the poem are, of course, ironical too:

No more a place of worship this place
Is nothing less than the house of god (12).

Yeshwant Rao, like many other poems in *Jejuri*, is observation on people's faith in the reality of gods and goddesses whose stone images or statues are installed in the temple of Jejuri, whom they worship and to whom they make offerings of money or of valuables or of commodities in order to win their favor. Yeshwantrao is the name of one of the many gods. This god is assumed to have no head, no hands, no arms, and no feet, in fact, none of the limbs which every other god possesses. Being headless, armless, and feet less, he is regarded as the patron of the people. Yeshwantrao is a second class god whose statue has been installed outside the main temple and even of the outer wall, as if he deserved only a place among the tradesmen and the lepers.

Actually it is an irony on the veneration of gods. The protagonist gives us a catalogue of the other gods which are worshipped by the people. Each of these gods is characterized in just one or two lines; and each of the gods is characterized ironically. Indeed, irony and sarcasm run through the whole of this poem. The catalogue of gods contains references to gods who are better looking; gods who seek worshippers because of the gold offerings which they are likely to make, gods who want to take possession of the souls of their worshippers; gods who claim to endow their worshippers with the power to walk on a bed of burning coals, gods who claim to have the power to bless the barren wives of their worshippers; and so on. The catalogue continues in the same ironical and highly amusing manner. There are some things unique about Yeshwantrao. He is a god having neither a head, nor hands, nor legs, nor feet. He is thus a shapeless god:

He's a god you've got to meet.
If you're short of a limb,
Yeshwant Rao will lend you a hand
and get you back on your feet (46).

People, who have lost a leg or an arm or a hand, go to worship this god in the belief that he would restore to them their lost limbs. The irony in this view is bitter because a god, who is himself maimed, is supposed to have the power to make the bodies of maimed human beings whole. Kolatkar is here at his best so far as his wit and his use of irony are concerned.

The Railway Station, is the closing poem of the whole sequence. The series begins with a poem which is entitled, *The Bus* and ends with *The Railway Station*. After visiting the temples he has decided to go back home by a train instead of a bus. But, on arriving at the railway station, he finds himself in a very difficult situation. This poem consists of six parts, each with a heading. Taken together, or even taken separately, the six parts of the poem build up the picture of the railway station which does not seem to be in use or functioning except in most inefficient and ineffective manner. The indicator at the railway station indicates nothing. The poet ironically uses the phrase "a wooden saint in need of paint." A passenger would not be able to know the numerals 1, 2, 3, etc. on the clock. They so faded and dim that, if a passenger were to total them, they would amount to zero. There is a dog living in the station. It suffers from a severe skin disease; but it is

the very spirit of the whole place. There is a young man, who is in charge of the tea stall at the railway station, is new to his job and he seems to have taken a vow of silence. The station master has no, time – table, except the one which was published at the time when the railway track was originally laid. The station master or the booking clerk embody the irony in the poem, such a kind of person, Kolatkar portrays before us with all the gods at Jejuri.

A passenger in this case the protagonist or the poet himself, begins to feel frantic because no train has yet arrived to take him away from Jejuri. He becomes so sidetracked that he ironically vows to do anything in case a train arrives or in case he gets some information about the time of the arrival of a train. The reason for this is that nobody, even the booking clerk or the station master, knows the time of the arrival of a train:

if only someone would tell you
when the next train is due (57).

The poet is willing to slay a goat as a sacrifice, or to smash a coconut on the railway track or, to bathe the station master in milk, or to do anything if someone tells him when a train would arrive. And the poem is not only an irony on this railway station but a most disheartening account of anguish and dejection. The poet's impressions of the temple are juxtaposed with those of the railway station at the end.

Kolatkar has an unforeseen command of irony which is rarely seen in other Indian English poets. Almost all poems in *Jejuri*, illustrates Kolatkar's gift of use of irony. By virtue of his rich thematic design and a skillful tapestry of technique of irony, Kolatkar produces a unique space for himself in the galaxy of Indian English poetry.

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The Objectifying 'Look' in *The Hairy Ape*

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Most criticism on Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* centres around class and race conflict and indeed, one of Yank's associate Long, not only alludes to Marxian class dialectic but also takes Yank to I.W.W. Headquarter for listing him as a member of the cadre. The present paper does not refute O'Neill's sympathy with the victim but concern for the class conflict and its solution through the Marxian vision of a classless and non social society comes filtered through O'Neill's existentialism, Sartrean to be precise. This view is also confirmed by our reading of Doris V. Falk's contention that O'Neill's view, "of human dilemma here – and in later plays – suggests that of Sartrean existentialism." (Falk: 34) She further says that though man's very lostness, his need to belong is the key to humanity, the moment he belongs he has abdicated his manhood, has ceased to be 'an existent' and becomes a passive, vegetative being at the mercy of the forces outside himself and beyond his control. This is the irony which the whole play informs, that by belonging one becomes, in Sartrean terms, the-in-itself – dull and complete, and in essence, de trop, that is superfluous.

That is why O'Neill calls it in the subtitle 'A Comedy of Ancient and Modern Life in Eight Scenes'. The existence of desire as a human fact, as Sartre put it, "is sufficient to prove that human reality is a lack" (Sartre: 136). But we take it as self-sufficient; we thus take it seriously. It is for this reason that the play is generally read as a tragedy and mistakenly so because we fail to underline O'Neill's ironic stance. We cannot call the desire to belong an unconscious desire in the simple sense of the word. The unconscious in O'Neill is that human reality is being-in-the-world. Yank also lives in the world with other beings but the others are objects for him. His own associates, he condemns, because they do not belong, that their association with the ship is not that of involvement, that he alone belongs, not others, not even the master of the ship. Indeed, he lives in bad faith, that is, in self-deception, which in making use of freedom denies it. The sense of belonging on the part of Yank amounts to losing his subjectivity, his

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freedom. As Edwin Engel observes: "He [Yank] enjoys a false sense of belonging to something, of being a part of steel and of machinery, whereas he is actually their slave. In those instances where he is not enslaved he has lost his vitality and become completely enervated - 'a waste product in the Bessemer process', inheriting the acquired trait of the by-product wealth, but none of the energy, none of the strength of the steel that made it." (Engel: 56) But O'Neill knows that it is a futile desire for in possessing one becomes possessed. In the world in which one's existence is part of others' existences, there cannot be a simple act of possessing, either a thing or a person. O'Neill's own life has been a series of frustrations. There was little stability of background in O'Neill's own life and this accounts for the fact that alienation or loss of identity is the basic theme of most of his major plays. O'Neill, as a child, was quite close to his mother but when he, at the age of thirteen, came to know of her illness and morphine addiction, he found himself cheated, lost and orphaned. He shifted his love to his brother, then to showgirls and prostitutes, and then got married three times and finally tried to find this sense of belonging in his writing.

Thus, O'Neill himself came to realize that only sport and art is the least possessive of objects. What disenchanted Yank was his sense of shame he experienced in the presence of Mildred. Through shame he discovered simultaneously the other and an aspect of his own being. O'Neill uses the Sartrean phenomenon of the 'look'. As Yank in scene III was absorbed in feeding the engine, talking to it as if it were a human being, a friend, indeed, in intimate terms, he suddenly becomes conscious, as O'Neill writes as "some other men staring at something directly behind his back. He whirls defensively with a snarling, murderous growl, crouching to spring, his lips drawn back over his teeth, his small eyes gleaming ferociously. He sees Mildred, like a white apparition in the full light from the open furnace doors. He glares into her eyes, turned to stone. As for her, during his speech she has listened, paralyzed with horror, terror, and her whole personality crushed, beaten and collapsed, by the terrific impact of this unknown, abysmal brutality, naked and shameless. As she looks at his gorilla face, his eyes also bore into hers. She utters a low choking cry and shrinks away from him, putting both hands before her eyes to shut out the sight of his eyes, to protect her own. This startles Yank to a reaction. His mouth falls open, his eyes grow bewildered." (O'Neill: 225-226) The significance

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of the 'look' in O'Neill, as in Sartre is crucial. Mildred's look on the naked body of Yank exposed him, making him thus an object. According to Sartre, "a radical conversion of the other is necessary if he is to escape objectivity." (Sartre: 345) Yank also looks back at her and she fainted and was even hospitalized. The look thus is an example of pre-reflective disclosure of the self and the other. O'Neill is not interested in Mildred so much as he is focused on Yank's reaction; particularly what she said that he was 'a filthy beast'. It is through Mildred's 'look' that he is erupted, becomes decentralized and dissolves his whole edifice that he belonged, and then by reference to her own projection she reconstitutes Yank as a filthy beast, not a human being. When Yank is looked at the stability of his world and the freedom which he experienced is threatened. Mildred is apprehended as one who steals his sense of being in itself, sucks him into the orbit of her sense of the beastly and reduces him to the mode of, what Sartre would call, being-in-itself, to an object or a thing.

Yank was caught unaware, as he was talking to the engine, as if she has caught him through the key-hole. Hence from that moment he pines for revenge in order to regain his being-for-itself. But he forgets that freedom goes with nothingness. As Sartre would say, we are what we are not and we are not what we are. Yank's predicament was vulnerable. He smarts under the sense of shame – shame of his own self, it is "the recognition of the fact that I am indeed that object which the other is looking at and judging. He can be ashamed only as my freedom escapes me in order to become a given object." (Sartre: 350) Yank's pain is that he has been exposed to the other's look. Mildred's presence has made him alien to himself, for the other's look now embraces his being and correlatively all his secrets. His shame is a confession; he cannot flee from what she has pinned him down. Mildred's look has shaken his stability. Being seen by the other involves becoming an object for the other. When the movement of the look is completed, Yank is no longer free.

In the next scene, while the other foremen have washed themselves, Yank has not washed either his face or body. "He stands out in contrast to them, a blackened, brooding figure. He is seated forward on a bench in the exact attitude of Rodin's 'The Thinker'. The others, most of them smoking pipes, are staring at Yank half-apprehensively, as if fearing an outburst; half-amusedly, as if they saw

joke somewhere that tickled them.” (O’Neill: 226) He now wants to be left alone, for as he says, he is trying to think like Rodin. He has become a thinker. Paddy thinks that he has fallen in love with Mildred but Yank says he has fallen in hate. According to Paddy, Mildred came down the steps to have a look at them. O’Neill deliberately uses the word look, in order to underline that the look takes away the Other’s freedom and gives the person looked at slavery. Yank’s look also has made her sick. According to Paddy she would be in bed now with ten doctors and nurses feeding her with salt to clean the fever out of her. Yank also smarts under her look. Indeed, he asks, “Who give her the noive to look at me like that? Dis ting’s got my goat right. I don’t get her. She’s new to me ... she don’t belong, get me! I can’t see her ...” (O’Neill: 231) Paddy blames him for making her sick but Yank does not understand the importance of his looking back at her. He is rather angry about Paddy for saying so and adds “Just lookin’ at me, who? Hairy ape, huh? (In a frenzy of rage) I’ll fix her!” (O’Neill: 232) This much he understands that her look has unnerved him and not the other way round.

This makes for the seminal importance of look in the Sartrean sense. We have already referred to the Falk’s reading of *The Hairy Ape* as underlines Sartrean phenomenological existentialism. However, she does not explore the central importance of ‘look’ in O’Neill and its corollary, shame that is where her reading of *The Hairy Ape* becomes sketchy. Yank under Mildred’s look becomes ‘The hairy ape’, as he feels, not that Mildred has called him one. This feeling perhaps has been part of his consciousness that he has a beastly figure. A radical conversion takes place in him from a kindly jovial person, happy in his work. He thinks of taking revenge only to regain his subjectivity. He has been seen by the other and that is his pain. All along he has defined himself in relation to the world, as one belonging to it. He has been avoiding others’ look by keeping himself in the stokehole. He did not expect, not the least, the daughter of the master, the white lady, pale and anemic, as her name suggests. His claim that he belongs was suddenly ruptured. His fellow worker Long tells him that he has been looking at this whole affair, all wrong, He diverts the whole existential concern to that of class conflict. The two are not incompatible, for master-slave relationship is also of the subject and the object. As Long puts it: “They wouldn’t bloody well pay that for a ‘airy ape’s skin – no,

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nor for the ‘ole livin’ ape with all ‘is ‘ead, and a body, and soul thrown in.” (O’Neill: 236)

O’Neill seems to suggest that mutual objectification through looks in the play can perhaps be remedied in a classless society. Therefore Long suggests that it could be done through peaceful means and not through personal revenge this is what Yank is also told by the party members. Yank is obviously frustrated, finds as he does, communists and the Christian Salvation Army without guts. One single look has busted his world. Now he is no more ‘steal’; he is merely ‘the hairy ape’. O’Neill looks at the whole spectacle, as we have noted earlier, less seriously, if not comically, although his sub-title of the play ‘A Comedy of Ancient and Modern Life in Eight Scenes’. This pain of having been looked at has driven Yank to desperation. He searches for a sense of belonging in the animal world but he does not belong to this world either. What troubles him is a sense of shame, his recognition, as Sartre would say, “of the fact that I am indeed that object which the other is looking at and judging. I can be ashamed only as my freedom escapes me in order to become a given object....” (Sartre: 350) As O’Neill also suggests Yank had no sense of shame among his friends but the moment Mildred looked at him, he was made alien to himself, “For the Others’ look embraces my being and correlatively the walls, the door, the key hole,” (Sartre: 350) Sartre said. Thus Yank’s ego for Mildred becomes a slave. His freedom flows towards her as her object. One may call it internal hemorrhage or bleeding. This sense of shame is what makes the play confessional, as good as the poetry of Sylvia Plath is confessional. Yank could have hidden himself in bad faith but his emotions were so volatile that he could not help but express it. His original fall was brought about by the insistence of Mildred. He senses her look at the very centre of his being. He finds her still watching him, as if he were caught eves dropping. The gorilla would also not accept him. It matters not whether we are human beings or animals, there is always, in each of us, the consciousness of charming our subjectivity but it cannot be done without making the other an object. That is why, the gorilla does not accept him as his equal. The Other’s objectivity is the first condition of my subjectivity. Yank feels happy to be killed by the gorilla, though mistakenly, in order to claim that he at last belongs. O’Neill seems to laugh at human predicament and indeed like the later Sartrean view about communism, perhaps feels that only Marxism is

the Philosophy, existentialism is an ideology. This reading of *The Hairy Ape*, unlike that of Falk, is not eclectic, and piece-meal. On the contrary, it takes into account Sartre's centre motif of the 'look', which destabilizes the life of Yank, seemingly complete in itself, and puts him, comically rather than tragically, to search for self-completeness and self-identity, an impossible possibility.

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Contextualising History, Communalism and Aggressive Nationalism in Taslima Nasrin's *LAJJA*

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Lajja (subtitle Shame), Taslima Nasrin's highly controversial novel recounts the nightmarish period of thirteen days in the life of the Dutta family of Bangladesh .It painfully but dexterously makes a daunting attempt to show the savage indictment of religious extremism and man's inhumanity to man. The Novel exposes the mindless blood thirstiness of fundamentalists and beautifully depicts the insanity of violence in postcolonial societies in general and Bangladesh in particular It captures the communal frenzy that sweeps the otherwise peaceful-streets of Bangladesh in the wake of demolition of *Babri* –Mosque at *Ayodhya* in India on December 6,1992 .It presents how the unbending fanaticism that takes the whole nation into its vise like grip, triggers riots and religious extremism of the worst order that make the life of the Hindus miserable. The massacre of the members of the minority community demolishes the optimism, idealism and philosophy of this South-Asian Nation.

The novel is about and against fundamentalism. It presents that the state of Bangladesh is not modern and mature despite its democratic set up.As a victim of poverty, colonial legacy, faith, communalism, violence, bloodshed, patriotism, migration ,exodus, riots, war etal , the state of Bangladesh is fragmented into pieces. Taslima Nasrin has well documented these pieces and has deftly marked the division between the two leading communities of Bangladesh--the Muslims and theHindus.Talking about the humanitarian aspect, spontaneity of secularism and the power to move, she writes in the 'preface' of the novel: Bangladesh is my motherland. We gained our independence from Pakistan at the cost of three million lives.That sacrifice will be betrayed if we allow ourselves to be ruled by religious extremism...The book which took me seven days to write ,deals with the persecution of Hindus, a religious minority in Bangladesh, by the Muslims who are in majority. It is disgraceful that Hindus in my country were hunted by the Muslims after the destruction of the *Babri Masjid*...The riots that took place in Bangladesh are the responsibility of us all, and we are all to blame .*Lajja* is a document of our collective defeat .(*Lajja*)

The whole novel is centred around the idea that religion is often used as a handy tool by extremists to persecute a community which doesn't believe in their religion. It ironically describes how religion which preaches universal brotherhood and peace amongst the denizens of this world becomes a powerful weapon in the hands of fanatics and wreaks unimaginable havoc on human-beings. The novelist has given a great deal of importance to religion and faith-related developments. The issue of the plight of women especially at times when the nation is overtaken by a communal frenzy is too significantly taken up. At the time of communal disharmony, women become the most vulnerable targets. And if they belong to a minority community, it further exposes them to the fangs of fanaticism. Religion has always been misused to suppress women and kill their talent. It is used to oppress them and has always been used to deny a status at par with men. Maya who is infatuated towards Jahangir fails to marry her. Religion stands in their way. Suranjan who is in love with Parveen fails to tie the nuptial knot with her, as her family wants him to convert himself to Islam, first. He doesn't acquiesce in to their unjust demand; hence he is rejected as a suitable bridegroom for Parveen. Maya is kidnapped, probably raped and killed; as her only fault is that she is a Hindu. Kironmoyee's talent of singing songs is too crushed under the false and orthodox ideals of morality. To rape a woman is an act of morality, but singing a song by a Hindu woman in the company of the other men is immoral! The double standards take a heavy toll on the freedom of women; imprison them to four walls of their houses and discourage them to follow a course of life which they love the most. They are rather forced to follow the norms that society has framed for them.

The nationalism of majority community undergoes a sea change and assumes a dangerous form. This happens due to an event that has taken place in India. The nationalism of the majority community as a result, comes up against a dilemma: how can nationalism that throws the colonizers out itself facilitate illiberal movements and regimes which create internecine violence, political upheaval and communal riots? Partha chatterjee in his influential book *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* refers to this type of dilemma as 'Liberal dilemma' which according to him, is right at the heart of nationalism which promises liberty, but is complicit in undemocratic forms of government and domination. The liberal dilemma of nationalism resurfaces in the novel when Haider expatiates on the subject of Islam as the national religion

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and Suranjan says ." what rights does your country or your Parliament have to discriminate between people belonging to different religions?"(86)

Sudhmay takes part in nationalist struggle. He takes to the streets of Dhaka to get Bengali implemented as a national language. This binds him with his motherland, as national belonging is manufactured by the performance of various narratives, rituals and symbols which stimulate an individual's sense of being a member of a select group. Sudhmay's fight for getting Bengali language declared national language is basically a powerful performance of a symbol (here, Bengali language) to share a sense of belongingness with the nation of Bangladesh. And this is what makes him a great patriot. This sense of being a legitimate national of his motherland binds him there, and he ignores all the warnings of his friends and relatives with regard to leaving Bangladesh for good and choosing India as motherland.

The demolition of *Babri* Mosque in India by the Hindu fanatics casts its horrible shadow over the Hindus of Bangladesh, setting norms and limits and making illiberal aspect of nationalism appear in the worst form. This immediately changes the status of the Hindus to second class citizens. The nationalism of the Muslims of Bangladesh becomes complicit with religion by privileging one religious community above another as the nation's most legitimate or true people. One of the effects of racist ideologies is to produce a sense of national identity by excluding and humiliating others.

The feelings of aggressive nationalism and patriotism amongst the Muslims of Bangladesh assume dangerous proportion and this finally culminates into riots and creates a vertical wedge between the Muslims and the Hindus. The fire of communalism engulfs even the moderate Muslims and they start ignoring their Hindu brethren. When Sudhamoy goes to his Muslim friends like Sakur, Faisal and Majid, they ignore him and he is often met with the statements like; "Sudhamoy, please sit in the other room while I finish with my *namaaz* or 'you've come today! But we have *Milad* at home." When Sudhamoy suffers a stroke, nobody comes to his rescue. The communal harmony that binds both Hindus and Muslims suffers a big blow and animalism takes humanism in its grip. Sudhamoy feels upset at the turn of the events and the fire of communalism that spreads in the fresh air of his motherland makes him shiver both with fear and pain. When he hears communally charged slogans as; 'Let us catch a Hindu or two, eat them in the mornings and

evening to”(17)”*Naraye Takbir,Allahu Akabar.....*Hindus leave the country If you want to live “(67).Communalism has been dubbed as the worst monster that crushes all the reasoning and rationales that engulfs whatever comes into its way .It creates a sense of inferiority in the minds of the minority community and always keeps them nervous by making them vulnerable targets. When Faroukh makes Suranjan eat beef and his other friends poke their tongues out at Suranjan ,the idea that he is one kind of human being and that all of his friends of another kind crosses his mind.It leaves an indelible impression on his mind and this impression later turns him into a fanatic.

The atrocities committed on the Hindus in the wake of the pulling down of *Babri* Mosque generate a sense of deep hatred in the minds of Hindus also .Suranjan is too deeply affected by the mindless violence that sweeps Bangladesh after demolition of the *Babri* Mosque.In a fit of anger Suranjan says ,”Debabrata, can’t we burn a Mosque ?”(163).Suranjan who has always opposed the construction of religious structure , wishes now to build a temple by pulling down the Mosque at *Culshan patt* one that was constructed by Saudi Arabians .What a metamorphosis ! An atheist is turned into a theist. A secular into a communal !!.A human being into a savage!!!. He becomes critical of those who still hold on to human values in the midst of communal frenzy and hurls a stream of abuse on his father and the tribe he represents that stands for secularism and human values .He says to Debabrata when the latter rejects his idea of bullet for bullet and blow for blow ,“No! well for your information, this is the only solution that I am looking for. I too want choppers, daggers and pistols in my hands.I want thick rods.Didn’ they go and piss on the ruins of a *mandir* in old Dhaka?I also want to piss on their mosques!” (164)

The stench of communalism changes the dynamics of politics in Bangladesh.The state of Bangladesh enacts Enemy Property act and under this law the property of the Hindus who had left the country is declared Enemy property.This act does a great harm to those Hindus who choose to stay back.This act stifles the fundamental ,human and democratic rights of its citizens besides devastating twenty million Hindus.They are practically uprooted from their homes.This act is clearly a violation of constitution, and is also a sign of disrespect to the independent character of the country: The Properties of the Hindus are categorized as enemy-property; but the property of the Muslims who are either staying in India or abroad are not attached.The rules of the

Hindu joint family system are too blatantly ignored :After 1966, The East Pakistan government had carried out an official survey which revealed that the property of Hindus who had left the country for India during the mass exodus of 1947 and after the riots of 1950 and 1954 was listed as Enemy property . They had left with the assurance that their homes, orchards, ponds ,family crematoriums, temples, agricultural lands would be duly returned to them .(129).The seminaries of knowledge too fail to escape from the communal frenzy .The names of the colleges that bear Hindu signatures are rechristened to get rid of the Hindu identity. Suranjan fancies: the reason Brahman Baria is now known as B. Baria,Barisal Brojo Mohan College is called B.M. College, and Murari Chand college is referred to as M.C. College. It is because people do not , want to say a Hindu name and therefore ,resort to abbreviations. Suranjan was worried that in no time these abbreviations themselves would give way to names like Muhammad Ali College and Sirajuddaula College !

The declaration of Islam as a national religion of Bangladesh clearly reflects the triumph of reactionary and fundamentalists over the secular – credentials of the state of Bangladesh .The declaration of Islam as national-religion is indirectly an act of discrimination against the members of the other religious communities. It creates a sense of fear and alienation which in turn converts the nationalism of other religious communities to communalism.The stench of communalism pervades the city of Dhaka when Kajal Debnath , a member of the association of the minorities, questions the very rationale behind reciting extracts from the *Quran* from state T.V. and radio and reserving only two days as holidays for the Hindus. This is how novel takes up the issue of the complicity of the state in perpetuating communal violence.

The novel analyses the role of political parties and their frontal organizations which make all out efforts to fish out in trouble in the water. The Hindu minded parties and their sister organizations launch a communal campaign to build up a grand temple at *Ayodhya* and their drive finally culminates into the demolition of *Babri* Mosque in India . Its ripples are felt in Bangladesh. On the lines of communal agenda of the political parties of India , the political parties of Bangladesh namely . *Jamaat-i-Islamit* too follow in the communal shoe of the Hindu-minded parties of India and wreak a havoc with the secular fabric of the constitution of their country by subverting it and giving it a communal hue. This finally subjects the Hindus of Bangladesh to unspeakable

miseries and reduces them to second or third grade citizens in their own motherland. Riots and violence are siamese twins that spring from the womb of communalism.

The pulling down of the *Babri* –Mosque at *Ayodhya* in India, communalize the otherwise non-communal air of Bangladesh. Riots break out. The Muslims inflict their anger at the Hindus. The communal slogans vitiate the atmosphere of the country, fear engulfs the Hindus. The liberal Muslims too desert their Hindu friends. To add fuel to the fire, police, administration and the political parties too support the mindless violence that triggers in the streets of Dhaka and unabashedly term it as a natural-reaction to the demolition of the *Babri* Mosque. In the mindless violence that sparks off as a natural-reaction to the demolition of *Babri* Mosque takes a heavy toll on the Hindus. To uproot Hindus, villages after villages are burnt to ashes. Their paddy fields are set on fire. Little boys are stripped off their lungis, girls and women are picked up at random and raped. The Hindu women are robbed of their *saries* and jewellery. The fanatics threaten to hack the Hindus to little bits and feed the pieces to crows, if they don't leave their country immediately. They are forced to drink water out of coconut shells and eating food on banana leaves. What is more, they depend on charity of rice. Once a day, they somehow manage to cook some wild plants or roots for themselves. Wives are raped in front of husbands, daughters in front of fathers and sisters in front of brothers. There have been cases where mother and daughters are jointly raped. The Hindus openly declared, "We'll beg for a living if we have to, but we don't stay here." (169). The communal frenzy sows the seeds of fanaticism and the friends of Suranjan —Kamal and Rabul stop bothering about Suranjan, his family and Belal starts looking at the Hindus of Bangladesh with the tinted glasses of fundamentalism.

The ripples of demolition of *Babri* Mosque are felt at Suranjan's home. A band of seven rowdy young men barges into his house, breaks whatever comes into their way, and takes away Maya along with them leaving behind a trail of abuse. They threaten the family by pulling out a chopper and saying "you bastards!" he said, "Did you think you could get away after destroying the *Babri* Mosque?" (147). The Muslims youth who have taken upon themselves the responsibility to avenge the demolition of *Babri* Mosque and have adopted the human ways to protest against the demolition of the Mosque. Suranjan knows it well so he prefers to sit back at home to avoid listening to obscenities

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like; 'Here comes one of those bastards responsible for breaking the *Babri Masjid*!. These Beggars should be kicked out of the country to India!' (184)

The novel digs deep into the causes that give birth to the monster of communalism and how it devours human values and finally leaves behind a trail of untold miseries and sufferings. Religion, as per the novelist is an easy tool in the hands of power hungry politicians and extremists to foment communal trouble. Religion is deliberately mixed with nationalism to give it a colour of idealism. The constitution of Bangladesh stands for secularism but its spirit is changed to Islam. In 1978, the commencement of the constitution of 1972, It changed to *Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim* (In the name of God, the compassionate the Merciful) and the word secularism is removed and clause 25(2), is now read "The state shall Endeavour to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity" (183). The nomenclature of the citizens of Bangladesh is deliberately and mischievously changed to Bangladeshis from Bangalees. The complicity of the state with undemocratic principles reminds of Fanon's observations in which he has warned the masses of dangerous consequences, if the power that has been got from the 'colonizers' passes on to a 'group' that privileges its interest over the interests of masses. To conclude, *Lajja* is a savage indictment of religious extremism and man's inhumanity to man. It shows how religion is misused to suppress the spirit and psyche of minorities and subaltern. The novel tears apart the nexus between the politicians and fundamentalists. It graphically but horribly describes how this complicity subverts the ideals of humanity and turns friends into foes besides creating permanent ill will amongst human beings. Unremittingly menacing, the novel exposes the insanity of violence in the postcolonial Bangladesh and Indian sub-continent.:

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Bishna as an Existential Hero in Gurdial Singh's *Unhoye (The Survivors)*

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Unhoye (The Survivors) Published in 1966, was Gurdial Singh's second novel and has been considered as one of the best novels of Punjabi literature by various distinguished critics. Gurdial Singh proves a craftsman par excellence when he narrates the stories of common people, simultaneously reflecting on the deep philosophical ideas of human existence. In this novel, he epitomizes his skills of blending crude reality with imagination. Nowhere in the discourse have the characters lost their attachment with the environment they are leaving in. After having a comprehensive understanding of the novel, with its surface and deep meanings intact, one can easily be convinced that the novel possesses rich multidimensionality as far as its thematic and mediating levels are concerned. To interpret it from a single, dominating observation can prove to be a flaw or mistake. In this way, though tactfully, the discourse of the novel has enhanced the responsibility of the readers to understand its multifarious complexities by viewing it from different perspectives.

The novel primarily deals with the struggle of its protagonist Bishna against the monolithic establishment. He challenges those rules and policies of the system which are imposed on an individual in the name of progress and development of the nation. The Government officials want Bishna to leave the possession of his ancestral house because a road is to be built at the same place where his house is located. Bishna neither leaves his house nor accepts any compensation for it. In this fight, he is not only supported but supplemented by his outstandingly courageous wife Daya Kaur. Although they are defeated by the system but their struggle, in one way or the other, continues till the end. Nowhere in the discourse, does Bishna accept the situation compromising with his self-respect and dignity. He never loses his strong subjectivity in front of any other character of the novel. And for this reason, even after defeat, Bishna seems to be emerging as an existential hero.

Existentially, the definition of heroism would enclose all those

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notions which are based on one's subjectivity, central position, freedom of choice and the most important, the actions of an individual in different situations. Since existentialism does not proffer any difference between the genders, the heroic figure can be a male or female, depending on the actions and the situations. The hero must possess a strong subjectivity through which he becomes able to achieve and sustain the central position in a given situation. This central position often plays the role of a hole in which all other beings lose their subjectivity and enter, at least on conceptual level, the state of an object, the state of being-in-itself, having no conscious and control over the situation. Hence, as a controller of the situation, a hero often gets applause on the basis of morality, justice, endurance and courage even from them over whom he asserts his subjectivity. In order to attain this position, he has to go through a number of actions, choosing freely from a wide range of contradictory possibilities.

Death or defeat does not necessarily hinder one's subjectivity, rather, it sometimes help making the actions more meaningful than itself. All these things collectively formulate a particular mode of being, the course of one's existence which often fundamentally remains, with little variations from culture to culture, analogous. Sometimes dialectical relations are also possible between a hero and the mediating third or the others but mostly, with the powerful subjectivity and the monotonous control over the situation, these relations are weakened to such an extent that they appear insignificant in the "totalization" (Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* 3) of the situation. For instance, in the context of Punjabi culture, a number of legendary heroes like Jeona Maur, Dulla Bhatti, Sucha Surma, Jagga Daku, Mirza and patriotic heroes (like Udham Singh, Kartar Singh Srabha and Bhagat Singh) have got applause and acknowledgement due to their unrivaled actions. They, with all temporal and spatial variations, remained at the centre of their situations and never lost their subjectivity in front of their opponents. They created their own world by adopting a particular mode of being which, at that time, was quite different from the mode of beings adopted by the common populace.

Looking from the existential point of view, the conceptualization of heroism, thus, seems to be based on the fact how an individual chooses to stroll about one's life. To select one's mode of living also implies that there are some other possible ways to lead one's life. These

modes of living can be numerous depending upon one's choice or decisions which also can vary in degree or form from individual to individual. Sartre, here, seems justified when he says, "Existence precedes essence" which means, "first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be" (Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions* 15).

Although there are many possible ways to lead one's life yet there are some particular ways of living, which have been acknowledged and appreciated by large number of people of a particular culture. The being that follows these ways is generally considered superior in degree and manner than his fellow beings. And this persona is usually termed as hero. When we analyze the character of the protagonist of *The Survivors* in the light of existentialism, we immediately recognize his different mode of living which, even if looks abnormal sometimes, is certainly heroic. The impact of the conceptualization of heroism reflects in the discourse of the novel through many subtle codes and these codes primarily can be found in the three characters: Bishna, Daya Kaur and Maghi.

In *The Survivors*, the mode of being adopted by Bishna is quite different from all other characters of the novel. From the beginning to the end of the discourse, the central position has been attained by him. His consciousness manifestly dominates the discourse of the novel. His mode of being is the result of his own decisions and all other characters of the novel, except Daya Kaur and Maghi, are unable to understand it. They think Bishna either a fool or non-existent (*unhoye*). Through this different and difficult mode of being, Bishna has succeeded in making his distinctive place among the protagonists of Punjabi literature.

To analyze the discourse from the point of view of existentialism is appropriate because the novel poses the question of existence of an individual who passes through many hardships and unfavourable conditions. First of all, let us consider the very title of the novel that is *Unhoye* (as used by the author) or *The Survivors* (as used in the translation). 'Unhoye' literally means 'non-existents'. The title carries a very deep existential irony in the question: who are non-existents? Bhagta, the brother of Bishna, regards him (Bishna), Daya Kaur (Bishna's wife) and, up to some extent, his own son Maghi as non-

existents. They are non-existents, according to Bhagta, because they have given their lives without a cause, or in other words, the reason for their deaths was not appropriate. It does not matter to him and all other people, whether they actually existed or not. But after analyzing the situation objectively, one would come to know that it is Bhagta himself who is non-existent. He can feel the presence of Bishna even after his death. He finds himself unable to negate the mental image of Bishna which still dominates his consciousness. He even fears to pass by the place which reminds him of Bishna. Even if Bishna is not physically there, yet his untiring subjectivity dominates the situation. The presence of his image in the unconscious of the other characters of the novel fills them with a mysterious terror. This unchallenging subjectivity and consistent dominance of the situation certainly proves him superior to the other beings in the discourse and, hence, makes him a heroic figure.

The state of being adopted by Bishna is according to his own freedom of choice through which he tries to maintain his pride and dignity. His consciousness dominates the discourse from the beginning to the end of the novel. The first incident with which we come to know about Bishna's domineering subjectivity is when he is being taken out of his house by the policemen along with his wife Daya Kaur and his brother, Bhagta. Bishna, raising the roaring battle cry "Jo Bole So Nihal..... Sat Shri Akal" many times, steers the situation and dominates the consciousness of all others who are present there, including the policemen even. Though arrested by the police, his behaviour and actions are of a freeman which remain constant throughout the discourse. On the other hand, his own brother has been objectified by the others or in Sartre's parlance he is caught in "looked at" (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 258) position. The narrator, very artfully, introduces us to two different modes of being through this incident. Bhagta has been described as, "His brother looked pale and listless" (18) while he (Bishna) walks stoutly in high spirits.

Both of them (Bishna and Bhagta) are at the same physical and social level but on the conceptual level, the position from where they perceive the outside world, their behaviour and modes of being are contradictory. The one, Bhagta, concedes himself a culprit, guilty, and a conscience-stricken being because others (the police and the people) consider him to be in that mode. He is being "looked at" as the culprit

of the situation because he himself acknowledges it. The other, Bishna is in “looking position,” a subjective face, from where he is able to negate the gaze of the others by asserting his dominance. He is joined in by his wife who supports and acknowledges his central position by raising a battle cry in response. The impact of Bishna’s subjectivity can be noticed by the reaction of the onlookers as:

Although, by now, people were used to such processions, there was something strange and uncanny about this particular one. And it cast a shadow of fear on the faces of the onlookers that lingered till the battle cries died down. (19)

After retuning from the custody on bail, Bishna goes to meet the *vazir*¹ in the *Pandal*². Instead of pleading for his lost house, he deliberately and sarcastically makes poignant remarks on the corrupt system of the courts and also on the role of the hypocrite bureaucracy. He does not loose his subjectivity at any point when arguing with the authorities, rather, makes them feel his irresistible dominating presence: This time round, Bishna spoke somewhat peevishly... The *vazir* virtually broke into sweat. And the officials started shaking his legs as though stung by a wasp. Until today, no petitioner had ever dared to speak to him in this manner. (27) It does not matter to Bishna with whom he is talking. It may be a common person (like Budha or Kaniya) or a *vazir*, an administrator or inspector, he reduces every being in front of him to the state of ‘being– in–itself,’ an inanimate being, “a thing among other things” (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 24).

Sartre asserted that it was during the war when he discovered the philosophical significance of social relations. He elaborates these ideas of interpersonal relations, totalization and praxis–process in his well-known book *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. In fact, *Being and Nothingness*, with its emphasis on the looking/looked-at, subjective/objective, central/marginal models of interpersonal relations, was incapable of explaining the positive reciprocity, collective action, and unintended consequences that a social philosophy requires. “Sartre, further, breaks the barrier that confined his earlier book *Being and Nothingness* to psychology by introducing the concepts of dialectical praxis, the practico-inert and the mediating third. Together, they account for the dialectical enrichment of individual praxis by group praxis that bears properly social predicates such as rights / duties, powers, the

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function of different institutions while simultaneously preserving the freedom and responsibility of the individual” (Gupta 43). Sartre’s concept of dialectical praxis is at the same time reflective and different from Bakhtin’s concept of dialectics in the sense that Sartre’s concept is based on individual praxis, the role of individual in the totalization of one’s situation and the interpersonal relations with and within committed groups in the form of mediating third.

Bishna, as an individual and as a social agent for committed groups, breaks the possibility of dialectical praxis with his compelling subjectivity on physical as well as conceptual level. As long as Bishna’s conscious-self is there, his subjectivity is prevailing, no dialectic relation is possible between him and his environment – consequently the situation remains predominantly single-sided. Due to his inflexible subjectivity, his actions are not acknowledged by any other character in the discourse except his wife Daya Kaur.

When he was arrested by the police, all his belongings were handed over to the *Chaudharies*. After getting bail, he goes to take his belongings back from Gokal. His words, said with irony and anger together, reduce Gokal to a dumb being, a being-in-itself, and a non-existent in front of him. Bishna even reminds him of *collective responsibility* by symbolically asserting his intentions and his mode of being as: But *Chaudharia*! When human beings are at their worst, even god is wary. You know how innocent a calf is, but when out of control, it is worse than a raging bull.

Symbolically, the innocent calf can be compared with Bishna while the raging bull is the establishment. Bishna, though considered a politically naïve, seems to be aware of the totalization of the situation: by being aware of the subjective and objective self simultaneously and the complex relation between them. Here, the discussion of the example of a boxer given by Sartre in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* would be imperative for understanding the situation. According to Sartre, most of the time a boxer is aware of what he is doing (in so far as what he does is the on-going realization of his project, and not in so far as his act is an event which develops also in the autonomy of the objective milieu), but he has trouble in totalizing what his adversary is doing. He is too busy thwarting the latter’s tactics to be able to reconstitute his strategy (it is his manager and second who carry out this totalization on his behalf and communicate to him between rounds). If he is not

too clearly dominated, he often even believes himself the subject of the fight and scarcely feels the blows: he is amazed to learn that he has been defeated on points. Hence, the intelligibility of the boxer lies in understanding the situation objectively while losing his subjective view point (10). In the similar way, Bishna is aware of the real situation and his position in society. He acknowledges the strength of the establishment when he denies hiring a lawyer to argue for his case in the court. But at the same time, he holds his subjectivity and inflicts it over the other characters, just like the way he is imposing it on Gokal. The relation between the objective knowledge of the situation and his own subjectivity, while simultaneously understanding the relation between the both, provides him with the dominating central position.

The conflict of Bishna with the establishment is, first and foremost, on the conceptual level while the mechanism he adopts is of overt and brutal confrontation. When Toti comes to claim for his *hata*³, which he has given to them on request earlier, Bishna's ways of holding his position is indistinguishable:

...If you're planning to get the compound vacated, you may leave... if you have the muscles, we also know how to dig our heels in. Get out... (76).

It is not the case that Bishna asserts his subjectivity only over the persons with whom he is conceptually at fight. But many other characters like Buta, who comes to live in his house when he (Bishna) is in prison, and his brother Bhagta are naturally dominated by his 'gaze' and central position. They, even if holding opposite views from Bishna, do not dare to cross his words and regard him as their superior in every aspect of life. This unprompted dominance is not the result of any loss or lack in their personalities but due to the acknowledgement and acceptance of their objectivity in front of Bishna. Even if he is not physically present, his mental image dominates the consciousness of Buta and Bhagta and they find themselves unable to resist it. In the court, the way Bishna answers the administrator, Bhagta feels dizzy and angry in the backyard of conscious (though unconsciously he knows what Bishna has done and still doing is right and judicious) but he does not have the courage to oppose Bishna consciously.

Buta, who is an active member of Parja Mandal, regards Bishna as his mentor. "He had been to jail several times, and on many occasions, badly beaten up by the police... As soon as he returned from the jail, he

would come straight to Bishna" and touch his feet in order to get his acclamation. This act of Buta corroborates the superiority of Bishna as a subject, a preferred hero. Buta has been depicted in the discourse as being considerably aware of the political and social systems because of his relations with Parja Mandal. His politically conscious attitude differentiates him from the other characters of the novel. His salutation to Bishna is actually a salutation to the concept of freedom which is synonymous with the mode of being chosen by him (Bishna). Buta is an assiduous adherent of freedom, and under the effect of which he is ready to do anything. He even pays no attention to his house and the upbringing of his children for the sake of his struggle against authorities for freedom. "Whenever he went to jail, his children would go around knocking on the neighbors' doors for months on end. His oxen and mill suffered, and his house wore a desolate look" (91). The person who values freedom even more than his children and house could only be a disciple of Bishna because he is an incarnation of absolute freedom at every front of life.

The next step that Bishna takes towards the transitional phase of his being to becoming is to leave the *hata* and to move to his village. The scene of leaving the compound (*hata*) and *Mandi* is very touchy and full of heroism. Bishna returns from the jail in the evening, asks Daya Kaur about her health and casually asks her to leave that *hata*. The indifference shown by Bishna, and the way Daya Kaur steadfastly stands with him, incredibly advocates the rare mode of being adopted by both of them. The decision to leave the *hata* is their own, the exercise of their free will. The significant thing here is that Bishna goes to the jail and fights for the same reason: for not leaving the possession of the *hata* when asked by Toti and Government Officials. But when his own brother offers him to live there (in the same *hata*), Bishna denies. The reason behind it is that Bhagta has got this house (after exchanging his allotted house in the new colony with Toti) as a compensation for their lost house and Bishna cannot tolerate it. His own brother fails to understand the "intelligibility" of his (Bishna's) struggle. Bishna, who is not only difficult but impossible to be objectified, once again proves to be the dominator of the situation by asserting his own decision according to his conscience, his free will.

On the part of a lay man, it is very easy and common practice to relate someone's sufferings to his tragedy and an unexplainable sympathy

automatically turns up with the one who suffers. But for Camus and the other existentialists, the relationship between a man's sufferings and his tragedy is not so simple and obligatory. According to them, sufferings become tragic only when one becomes conscious of happiness, and not of the sufferings. Camus analyses the *Myth of Sisyphus* and argues, "happiness and the absurd are two sons of the same earth. They are inseparable." He further says, "I fancy Sisyphus returning towards his rock, and the sorrow was in the beginning. When the images of earth cling too tightly to memory, when the call of happiness becomes too insistent, it happens that melancholy rises in man's heart..." (Camus 77). At present there is no sorrow because Sisyphus is not conscious of happiness, or in other words, the call of happiness is no more. "A face that toils so close to stones is already a stone itself! I see that man going back down with a heavy yet measured step towards the torment of which he will never know the end. That hour.... is the hour of consciousness. At each of these moments when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks towards the lair of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock.... Sisyphus, the proletarian of the gods, powerless and the rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: It is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn" (Camus 76-77).

If we probe intellectually the character of Bishna in the light of this philosophy of Camus, we find that he too, like Sisyphus, is toiling against the establishment which is, he consciously knows, futile. As the Sisyphus keeps the rock rolling, Bishna continues fighting against his circumstances and injustice. He, of course, is angry with what is happening around him but, at heart, he is not a grief-stricken man. He never laments over his condition nor does he curses himself for being a part of it. Happiness does not insist his being to be in a state of grief the way it does for an ordinary man. He is happy and satisfied with his struggle because "the struggle itself toward the heights (in case of Sisyphus) is enough to fill a man's heart" (Camus 78). Bishna is certainly a modern Sisyphus, an undisputable hero, who makes his struggle more meaningful than his existence. We must not imagine him a tragic character or a man-in-grief but an existential being, the hero and controller of the situation, whose way of living is freely chosen by him even if it is full of hardships and hopeless struggle.

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Cultural Conflict and Ideological Differences of the Immigrant Population in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake*

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Lahiri writes fiction about the Indian immigrant experience in America. She surprised the literary world in 2000 when she won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction for her very first full-length effort, a collection of short stories titled *Interpreter of Maladies*. She uses Calcutta as the setting for three of the nine stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* and accurately contrasts Indian values with American values in her other stories. The eloquent language, mature observations, and delicate insights belied her newcomer status, according to many critics, who welcomed her second work of fiction, 2003's *The Namesake*. Lahiri's first novel, the book details the story of a young Indian man trying to maintain his family's traditional values while dealing with everyday life in America. She developed multicultural perspective through her writings. Her debut work, *Interpreter of Maladies* won several awards. In addition to the 2000 Pulitzer Prize, she has also received PEN/Hemingway award, TransAtlantic award from the Henfield Foundation, O. Henry award, The New Yorker's best debut of the year award and Addison Metcalf award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 2002, she was also awarded with Guggenheim Fellowship.

As a collection of nine distinct short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*, her debut, addresses sensitive dilemmas in the lives of Indians or Indian immigrants. The stories' themes include marital difficulties, miscarriages, and the disconnection between first and second generation immigrants in the United States. The stories are set in the north-eastern United States, and in India, particularly Calcutta. Jhumpa Lahiri is an interpreter of immigrant life. Her writing is smooth-flowing and gentle. The stories are "on-the-face" direct and embrace you in their warm folds without you even being aware of it. She has helped in throwing clearer light on an Indian's perspective of life in an alien land. However, the book doesn't reek of ethnocentricity - it has a universal flavour and appeal that an immigrant from any corner of the world would be able to relate to.

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Both *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake* contain themes of conflict in relationships between couples, families, and friends. Through these relationships she explores ideas of isolation and identity, both personal and cultural. The characters in both works frequently encounter crises of identity, which are tied to their inability to reconcile their American identity with their Indian identity. Particularly in the short fiction of *Interpreter of Maladies*, she often leaves these crises unresolved. As a result, her work gives us a rather bleak outlook on the future of her characters. We might imagine that this reflects some of her concerns about their real-life analogues. She often correlates her characters' cultural isolation with extreme personal isolation, suggesting that the cultural isolation causes the personal. The instances in which this cultural isolation are resolved or avoided are generally accompanied by a similar resolution or avoidance of personal isolation.

There are many connections between Lahiri's work in *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake*. In *Interpreter of Maladies*, six of the stories revolve around South Asian immigrants in the United States. *The Namesake* revolves around an immigrant storyline as well. Three of the stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* deal with Indian encounters with Americans, or two cultures colliding into one another. Addressing the themes of immigration, collision of cultures and the importance of names in *The Namesake*, Lahiri demonstrates how much of a struggle immigration can be. According to Dubey,

The immigrant experience is complicated as a sensitive immigrant finds himself or herself perpetually at a transit station fraught with memories of the original home which are struggling with the realities of the new world. (22)

This constant struggle is portrayed in *The Namesake*, as first generation immigrants and their children struggle to find their places in society. As the Ganguli parents struggle with adapting to a different culture than they are used to, their children (Gogol and Sonia) struggle with trying to respect their roots while adapting to American society.

Lahiri's first book, *Interpreter of Maladies* is an excellent example of the fact that ethnic literature can encompass universal themes and experiences while still drawing attention to the history and culture of a specific group of people. Although the short stories are about the

Indian diaspora, the themes of foreignness, belonging, and human connections cross ethnic boundaries. It consists of three stories previously published in *The New Yorker*, plus six previously unpublished works. The stories all draw upon different aspects of her Indian background. Every one of the stories is affected in some way or another by India. Some of the stories take place in India; others involve the lives of Indian immigrants in the United States. The bulk of the stories, though, are about second generation Indian-Americans, like Lahiri herself. These stories are *A Temporary Matter*; *When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine*; *Interpreter of Maladies*; *A Real Durwan*; *Sexy*; *Mrs. Sen's*; *This Blessed House*; *The Treatment of Bibi Haldar*; and *The Third and Final Continent*.

Perhaps the most interesting twist on the relationships between the American-born Indian characters and India comes in the story after which this collection is titled. *Interpreter of Maladies* is about an American-born Indian couple, Mr. and Mrs. Das, who are on vacation in India with their two children, Ronny and Bobby. None of the family seems to be the least bit interested in India, except for Mrs. Das, who strikes up a conversation with Mr. Kapasi, their tour guide. Much of the plot involves the sexual tension that builds between Mr. Kapasi and Mrs. Das. She learns that he speaks many languages, and works at a hospital as translator between doctors and patients who do not always speak the same language. Due to this job, Mrs. Das describes him as an "Interpreter of Maladies." When they reach their destination, Mrs. Das stays behind in the car briefly with Mr. Kapasi while her husband and children explore the historic site they are touring. It is at this moment that Mrs. Das reveals to Mr. Kapasi that one of her children is the result of an extramarital affair, a fact that she says she has never revealed to anyone before. When Mr. Kapasi offers up his "interpretation" of this as a factor in her family's "maladies," she gets angry at him and storms away from the car to rejoin her family.

Travelling from India to New England and back again, the stories in this extraordinary debut collection unerringly chart the emotional journeys of characters seeking love beyond the barriers of nations and generations. Imbued with the sensual details of Indian culture, they also speak with universal eloquence to everyone who has ever felt like a foreigner. The stories, set in India and America, considered the connection of place and identity, particularly the identity of the immigrant

who becomes more or less assimilated into a new world, more or less distanced from his native land. Lahiri became the first Indian American, and in fact the first Asian American, ever to win a Pulitzer prize. The recent popularity of South Asian American works of fiction, and in particular the success of *Interpreter of Maladies*, indicates a growing recognition of and appreciation for the South Asian immigrant experience in the United States. The fact that her work has received both critical and popular acclaim points to her ability to convey both historical and contemporary realities of Asian American life to a mainstream audience. She, like most Asian American authors, is aware of the history that has defined American life for immigrants, and through her writing shows how past injustices create present biases that affect the lives of South Asian Americans. Her stories offer an opportunity for readers to learn about the specific experiences of South Asian Americans as an integral part of the social fabric of the United States.

Her debut story collection explores issues of love and identity among immigrants and cultural transplants. With a compelling, universal fluency, she portrays the practical and emotional adversities of her diverse characters in elegant and direct prose. Whether describing hardships of a lonely Indian wife adapting to life in the United States or illuminating the secret pain of a young couple as they discuss their betrayals during a series of electrical blackouts, her bittersweet stories avoid sentimentality without abandoning compassion. One of the themes she deals in most prolifically is the search for identity, as defined by the self, by others, by location and by circumstance. In her stories, everything – including gender, homeland, geography, occupation, and role within the community – can act in determining and qualifying identity. She brings up interesting questions as to what can and cannot act as agents in the determination of identity, and many of her characters struggle against or conform to outside influences that have effects on self-definition and outside definition.

In *The Namesake*, Lahiri enriches the themes that made her collection an international bestseller: the immigrant experience, the clash of cultures, the conflicts of assimilation, and, most poignantly, the tangled ties between generations. Here again she displays her deft touch for the perfect detail – the fleeting moment, the turn of phrase – that opens whole worlds of emotion. In many ways *The Namesake* lives up to the expectations that were built around the success of her

brilliant short stories – it is an evocative and deeply felt portrayal of family life and the complexity of relationships, the difficult process of trying to assimilate into a new culture and maintain their own cultural connections and identity. Her character portrayals are strong and reflect the individual's conflicting emotions. But despite this none of the characters are particularly likeable. Gogol is portrayed as a self-centred adolescent intent on distancing himself from his family and their Indian ways and he grows into a self centred young adult concerned with making himself an American version of success. It isn't till after his father's death and he starts to re-evaluate his life that you can feel and warmth or empathy for him.

At the beginning of *The Namesake*, the issue of names and identity is presented. As Ashima's water breaks, she calls out to Ashoke, her husband. However, she does not use his name because this would not be proper. According to Ashima, "It's not the type of thing Bengali wives do... a husband's name is something intimate and therefore unspoken, cleverly patched over" (2). From this statement we are shown how important privacy to Bengali families. Bengali children are given two names: one that is a pet name, used only by family and close friends, and one that is used by the rest of society. At birth, Gogol is given a pet name as his official name because his official name, sent in a letter from his grandmother in India, gets lost in the mail. Upon entering kindergarten, Gogol is told by his family that he is to be called Nikhil, a good name, by teachers and the other children at school. Gogol rejects his proper name and wants to be called Gogol by society as well as his family. This decision made on the first day of kindergarten causes him years of distress as it was also his first attempt to reject a dual identity. The importance of a namesake and identity is brought up throughout the story and becomes a concept that is central to the novel.

Throughout his life Gogol suffers from the uniqueness of his name. In Bengali families ". . . individual names are sacred, inviolable. They are not meant to be inherited or shared" (28). However, Gogol spends his life living in the United States where children are often ashamed of their differences from others. During adolescence, Gogol desires to blend in and to live unnoticed. Other Americans never view him as an American, however, even though he is a native born citizen. This presents a struggle between two cultures. The Ganguli's wish is to raise Gogol and his sister with Bengali culture and values. But,

Gogol and Sonia grow up relating mostly to their peers and the surrounding culture in the United States. It is only much later in their lives that they begin to truly value their Bengali heritage and that Gogol finds the importance in his name.

When he leaves for college, Gogol rejects his identity completely and becomes Nikhil (his long lost proper name that he rejected as a child). He dreads his visits home and his return to a life where he is known as Gogol. Gogol is not just a name to him; it signifies all his discomfort to fit into two different cultures as he grew up. His father named him Gogol due to the circumstances of his survival of a train wreck during which he was reading the work of the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. Being away from home at college makes it easy for Gogol to live as Nikhil in an American culture. He does so happily for many years, detaching himself from his roots and his family as much as possible.

Gogol finally learns that the answer is not to fully abandon or attempt to diminish either culture, but to mesh the two together. Gogol is not fully in tune with his identity until he realizes that it is embellished by both cultures. He does not have to be one or the other; he does not have to choose. He is made up of both, and instead of weakening his pride is strengthened by this. Though the novel wraps up with more downfalls occurring in Gogol's life, he is able to stand on his feet. He is no longer ashamed of himself or the way he has lived. He is proud of who he is and where he comes from. Most important, he is proud of his name and all that it means.

Characters of the novel comprises of Ganguli Family. Ashoke Ganguli is Gogol's father who has a near death experience while he is a young man. Prior to embarking for the United States in the 1960s, he is involved in a devastating train accident; he survives only by holding up the tattered remains of a short-story collection by Russian author Nikolai Gogol. Ashima Ganguli is Gogol's mother who is initially plagued by insecurities involved with moving to America. Unlike Ashoke, Ashima finds that she cannot acculturate into American society. Nikhil "Gogol" Ganguli is their son who is born and grows up in the United States. He is tormented by an identity crisis which stems in part from a mistake which is made when his family pet name, Gogol, (having two names is a common practice in Bengali families) becomes mistaken for his real name. Sonia Ganguli is Gogol's younger sister. Ashoke and Ashima

specifically gave her only one name which would serve as both an official and pet name, in order to avoid the confusion which arose with giving Gogol two names but pet names are hard to avoid, especially in Bengali families thus Sonali's name ends up being Sonia.

The Namesake continues to develop the themes of cultural alienation and loss of identity that the immigrant faces in making a new home in a foreign country. She follows the story of Gogol, born to an Indian immigrant couple who have come to create a new life of opportunities for themselves in the university suburbs of Boston. The name Gogol is given to him as a pet name, the name that only his close family will use. It is a Bengali tradition to have two names, a family name and a formal name for everyone else to use. But in America things are done differently, and very soon everyone is calling him Gogol rather than his formal name, Nikhil.

Like the best humanist artists, Jhumpa Lahiri has the gift of erasing boundaries between character and audience and the concomitant power to wound us by making us share the characters' tragedies. The range of her talent and imagination is broad but never loses focus in its execution. She has the unique ability to paint the worlds of both the immigrant and the native in miniature, allowing for immersion in detail while simultaneously placing them in a grand, sweeping perspective of universal truth.

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Iconoclasm of Decolonization: Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of Forests* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*

Dr. Rohit Phutela*

Kumar Ravinder Gill**

Wole Soyinka, the celebrated African postcolonial writer of Africa, has been acknowledged as the most definitive sub-Saharan African litterateur for his masterly representation of the postcolonial situation and its impact upon the post-independence African discourse. All his plays and novels render the African characters in a state of daze and dilemmas regarding their identity and future marred by the gory history and sins in the past. Nigerian independence and the following years of turmoil and tumult mark the postcolonial paradigm in Nigeria and other ilk countries towards the process of decolonization. Independence is expected to be the harbinger of equality and justice in its wake which turns out to be a myth since the old mistakes are repeated coupled with newer ones. The exhilarating euphoria around decolonization gives way to pessimism and gloom since the neocolonialism sets in, in consequent to the discursive practices of colonialists in the form of reining in the power of people and rule over them. Wole Soyinka's play *A Dance of Forests* enmeshes all the necessary themes of postcolonialism like the decolonization and neo-colonization making a telling commentary on the issues of power and its mobilization in African countries and its socio-cultural impact on the generation.

This obscure play unfolds with the first part where we have three chief living characters Demoke, Rola, Adenebi and the weird Obaneji and the impending festival of Gathering of the Tribes, with a big Totem Pole erected, and the two dead characters that have been summoned to this festival but are not welcomed by the living ones. The living characters are always bickering and hint at a respective hidden secret from each other. Two more characters, the Old Man and Agboreko, are introduced who are in search of the living characters for different reasons and yet keep missing them. In part two there is a skirmish between Murete and Eshuoro with latter being livid and revengeful at the violation of his tree and the death of his follower in

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the construction of Totem pole. The Play-Within-a-play takes the action back many centuries to the court of Mata Kharibu with the four living characters playing newer roles and the two dead characters presented as a heroic warrior and his hapless pregnant wife, both wronged by Mata Kharibu and his cruel consort Madame Tortoise. The Play-Within-a-play is Soyinka's way of presenting that old sins cast long shadows. The history of Nigeria is dotted with bloody injustice and brutality under the colonial regime which must not be repeated by the independent Nigerians. The play then returns to the present with a grand spectacle where Eshuoro storms in for revenge. A number of spirits, of the forests, of the palm, of the rivers, etc. appear and speak of the ways in which they have been exploited by human greed to the Questioner and the Interpreter. Forest Father makes a long speech, mostly to himself, about the futility of trying to teach humans the folly of their deeds. Demoke climbs the totem pole as an act of expiation for the sins of community event though he knows he will fall and die but is saved by Ogun, his mentor.

This complex play enshrines number of issues pertaining to colonialism and its everlasting scars summing up the postcolonial front. The play was performed as part of the celebration of Nigerian independence. Frantz Fanon ruminates over the drama of decolonization:

Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men. But this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power; the 'thing' which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself. (Fanon 1967: 28)

In this play, the three living characters Demoke, Rola and Adenebi, in a way go through this process of decolonization, exemplifying in microcosm what Nigeria has to undergo on a macrocosmic scale. In the beginning they indulge in recriminations to stave off their guilts but in the process of reliving history, Rola is chastened and Demoke confesses his guilt and undergoes penance.

Decolonization thus, sounds a good omen. But Soyinka is not naïve enough to jump to conclusions and maintains that all the wrongs of the colonization shall end in Nigeria.

Soyinka uses the element of masquerade in the play to justify his philosophy of "enemy within". Like in crime fiction, here too every character has some sly layers inside masking his true self. The Old

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Man fears that Eshuoro is in disguise among the group of four living characters to avenge of Demoke, his son. Adenebi too tries to evade the responsibility of the lorry accident which killed 65 people. Thus, although the four living characters want to flee the society of the Dead Man and the Dead Woman, it is really each other they want to avoid. The enemy is within their circle, within themselves. Soyinka underlines the fact that the enemy lies within by having the four living characters, double up as four characters in the past in the court of Mata Kharibu. Rola becomes Madame Tortoise, Adenebi the Historian, Agboreko the Soothsayer and Demoke the Court Poet. Perhaps Soyinka is suggesting, in the context of independence of Nigeria, that there is no point in putting all the blame in the colonial power and believing that Nigeria will be magically cured of all her ill once she is free.

Thus, Soyinka effects a thought provoking deliberation between colonization and decolonization while berating the former and unmasking the hollow euphoria of the latter.

In the first part of the play Demoke and Rola are obsessed with saving their own skins without any sense of solidarity despite Forest Father's repeated sermons of unison. But in the end Demoke risks his own life to undergo expiation ritual on behalf of the community. He speaks out:

Expiation? We three who lived many lives in this one night, have we not done enough? Have we not felt enough for the memory of our remaining lives? (73)

Thus, he speaks not for himself alone, but for Rola and Adenebi symbolizing the whole community.

The next development in the discourse of decolonization is Ngugi wa Thiongo's narratives. Ngugi's novels have been perceived largely as discourses on cultural decolonization as they involve the quest for a new socio-political order. His narratives are steeped in Kenya's historical landscape and at times border close to direct allusion on actual historical personages and events. To Ngugi, the narrative is a tool for shaping, ordering, reinterpreting and regaining the lost signifiers of historical identities. There are four basic thematic strands which tend to characterize Ngugi's recreation of Kenyan history. His works are marked by the portrayal of a peaceful African past of Pre-colonial period, the injustices of colonialism, a portrayal of the glorious struggle for Uhuru

(freedom), the betrayal and breaches of the common people in the Postcolonial period and the resilience of the people against the neo-colonial consumerisms.

Petals of Blood deals in the main with neo-colonialism in all its manifestations: oppression, exploitation, social abuse and injustice and thus “it probes the history of the heroic struggles of the people of Kenya, from pre colonial times to the present day, within a comprehensive cultural perspective which embraces the political, religious, economic and social life of Kenya” (Pandurang 1997: 132). Ilmorog, the locale of the novel is transformed into a proto-capitalist society with all the attendant problems of prostitution, social inequalities, misery, uncertainty and inadequate housing. Ngugi hopes that out of ‘Petals of Blood’, Kenyans (Africans) might gather ‘petals of revolutionary love’. In the world of *Petals of Blood*, nothing is free and the slogan ‘eat or be eaten’ is commonplace.

The protagonists of the novel are the losers under the new order: Munira, dismissed in colonial days from an elite boarding school for his involvement in a strike against the authoritarian British Headmaster; Karega, dismissed from the very school for the same reason; Wanja, whose brilliant studies were aborted when she became pregnant by the industrialist who had seduced her; Abdullah, who lost a leg in the *Mau Mau* revolt only to find others reaping the fruits of Independence. *Petals of Blood* represents Ngugi’s anti – imperialist consciousness, which is a part of his dialectical design. New order brings only hunger, pauperization and violence disguised as capitalist development. Ngugi remarks: “Imperialism can never develop a country or a people. This was what I was trying to show in *Petals of Blood*; that imperialism can never develop us, Kenyans.” (Ngugi 1981: 37)

Here the attention will go to an analysis of the role and portrayal of the central characters Karega and Munira, their relation to the problematic heroes (to invoke Lukacs) of the earlier novels; the argument will be that Ngugi, through these heroes, is indicating and trying to solve the dilemmas of the group to which he belongs, the African intellectual elite in Kenya. This novel comes after a gap of some ten years in Ngugi’s novel-writing, and though in some ways a highly schematic and symbolic rather than realistic novel, it deals with a fuller range of economic and historic analysis than the earlier works. Whether it is in naming the foreign countries and interests influencing Kenyan

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politics, analyzing the changing class position of the Kenyan bourgeoisie (a dependent comprador group becoming a national bourgeoisie through the use of state-controlled and financed economic agencies), revealing the political motives behind renewed oath-taking ceremonies (presumably based on what happened after the Mboya and Kariuki murders), subjecting the official versions of Kenyan progress and prosperity to a scathing satire, or presenting the forgotten victims of the drought, there is a density and specificity that shows that Ngugi has done his home-work .

What Ngugi does, especially in his portrayal of Munira and Karega, is to rework his previous concerns with the role and function of the educated minority into a set of divisions. Karega, like Njoroge in *Weep Not, Child*, is the poor bright boy attracted to the daughter of the wealthy prominent pro-British Christian farmer, whose family intervenes fatally. Once again he has a brother in the Mau-Mau. Munira, the son of the prominent farmer, is the victim, as Njoroge and Waiyaki in *The River Between* were, of the education he has received and his sense of his own potential and duty. His reason for going to Ilmorog, the desolated, drought-stricken village is part duty, part escape. He is referred to as being in a twilight state – the similarity to Mugo, the central figure of *A Grain of Wheat*, who escapes from political reality and engagement into a twilight world of religious reverie, is clear. His religious concern is to be developed much more fully than Mugo’s till, finally, prey to revivalist religious fantasy, he tries to murder Karega by burning the hut in which, in fact, the directors of the brewery are meeting (word fantasy has been used with some hesitation, but there seems to be nothing more than simple irony in the fact that Munira becomes an instrument of justice and vengeance. The symbolic significance, in other words, underlies the text, rather than being made manifest in it). As befits, the would-be Marxist analysis, even religious belief is not autonomous and independent, but comes as part of the schematic opposition – it is organized by Americans who make money from the collections while providing the workers with an alternative to trade-union and political activity.

Karega, by contrast, after an intellectual Odyssey that takes him from idealisation of a previous generation, through Black Consciousness and Negritude, and liberal legally-based reformism, ends with a Marxist understanding of history and class struggle, and a

commitment to trade-union organization. At the end of the novel he is gaoled, unjustly accused of the murder, and imprisoned because of his political activity even when his innocence is clear, but the general strike he has been trying to organize springs up miraculously (even the unemployed are going to take part). The theme of betrayal which we have in Ngugi's earlier novels here reaches its most extreme and generalized form so far. The post-colonial bourgeoisie which constitute the new ruling class in both economic and political terms is responsible for the wholesale betrayal of the hopes of the newly independent nation. Some like Kimera have very dark pasts; others, like Chui, have turned their backs on more positive pasts; all are currently involved in the active exploitation of their fellow countrymen. Abdulla, who has lost a leg in the struggle, epitomizes the attitude of the fighters:

For weeks and months I kept on singing the song ('Kenya is a black man's country') in anticipation / I waited for a job / I waited for a statue to Kimathi as a memorial to the fallen / I waited . (254)

In spite of the systematic differences between Munira and Karega, they end as sacrifices and victims. Only Joseph, the totally-committed younger generation militant, seems to escape this sacrificial pattern). The moment of positive communion Munira and Karega share while drinking the Theng'eta after the first harvest is degraded, like the drink itself, in the new commercial Ilmorog. Ngugi's recourse, in the case of Karega, is to take this detachment to be the necessary quality of the revolutionary leader – the militant must be able to analyze piercingly, to reconcile different workers' interests by making them aware of themselves as a dispossessed proletariat with a common fate rather than as members of ethnic groups. We may seem far removed from the idealistic young figures of reconciling sacrifice in the earlier novels, or from the sacrifice of 'a Mugo' that saves himself and those round him from the past, but there are important structural links between these earlier figures, isolated, yet sacrifices for unity, and the isolated revolutionary sacrificing himself for class unity, as there are between the earlier figures and the isolated deranged mystic who believes he is saving the community.

Petals of Blood marks an interesting shift in terms of locating both responsibility and power. The layers of power in Kenya are clearly

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held by the black neo-colonial elite, they are in effect no more than intermediaries: at best self-serving middlemen, at worst puppets whose strings are pulled by the immeasurably more powerful and faceless system of capitalism, operating in its global mode as imperialism. It is this greater awareness of the systemic nature of the problems facing Kenya which marks the shift in *Petals of Blood*. Even Wanja's father recognizes

The true secret of the white man's power: money. With money I can buy freedom for all our people. (233)

Thus, it can be seen after the scrutiny of the two African classics that decolonization or sovereignty doesn't always usher in a utopian state. The already marauded socio-cultural discourse doesn't get a rebound suddenly. The evil doesn't get totally decimated but stays in miniscule. But the situation is not hopeless. The chief characters in both the artifacts discussed above show that despite the political corruption and the frailty of human nature, its susceptibility to greed and the chance of ordinary the fallible human beings' doing something heroic is always a possibility. Both the writers, Soyinka as well as Ngugi, don't give up on human nature, even though, their critiques of human failings are pitiless and searing. Both the writers etch the characters who undergo the expiation [ritual] risking their lives in order to cleanse the community of ills which are the inevitable banes of colonization. A line from *Petals* sums up the entire debate. "Time has come for the reaper and tiller, and the worker and laborers to refuse to be like the cooking pot whose sole purpose are to cook and never eat." (153).

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Diaspora in Jhumpa Lahiri: An Existential Reading with Reference to *The Namesake*

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*Rajni Bala Gaba**

Diasporas as old as mankind, particularly with reference to exiles of all kinds. The Diasporic consciousness is, indeed, of the displaced, of mass-exodus. In particular, it refers back to the journey of the Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt, described in the second book of the Bible. The problem of the displaced however, was not so acute till the 19th century, when indentured labour, in the forms of the shipment of the blacks to America and, of Indian labourers from India to the West Indies, took place. Still it was nothing in comparison with another form of diaspora that came into being because of colonialization and more recently globalization the opening of job opportunities in the west. Obviously, this form is entirely different from the older form because people now go to the west voluntarily. It is when they try to settle as the people of the older Diaspora, that the real problem begins i.e. when they look back with nostalgia to the land of their forefather, of their birth, their belonging. The feelings of immigrants – their experiences in a foreign country, their loneliness, their gains and their losses are all reflected in ‘expatriate writing’ or ‘writing of the diaspora’.

Living in a country, away from their home, their native land: migrant people face cultural dilemma. There is a threat to their cultural identity. In this way they face a cultural alienation. They are essentially lonely and forlorn. They stand bewildered and confused. It is difficult to adopt one’s tradition because it is difficult to fabricate a home in the new land. Diaspora evokes the specific trauma of human displacement. Living away from their native land, diasporic people have devotion for their own culture, which is a characteristic of diasporic experience. Diasporic communities don’t split their association with their homeland, but erect different relations. Some people, living away from their culture, cannot adopt new life-style, which is difficult for them. They try to create an atmosphere of their own country, their own home. They feel difficulty in to be friendly with new people who belong to a foreign country. They create their own group or community, on which they belong to one native land. Robert Cohen describes diasporas as the

communities of people living together in one country who “acknowledge that the old country – a nation often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore – always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions.” (Cohen: IX)

To be in diaspora, means to be in an un-belonging room. It is an undeniable fact of this world. A diasporic community is known ‘other’. Indians in America have come to be known as a part of N.R.I. community around the world. They realize that it is hard to leave their own country even though they leave it in a conspicuous sense. From the very core of their heart, they always live in their native country, their homeland. This living ‘in-between’ condition is very painful and marginalizing for the diasporas. These shifting forms of human contact have led to the contemporary process of fragmentation, cross-fertilization, hybridization, realization, creation of new migratory subjectivities etc. in these shifts, diasporic people always search for their own identity. There are many questions in their minds – where is there home?, where they belong to? etc. the question of identity always strike their minds.

Away from their homeland, diasporic people learn to negotiate. They try to adjust themselves in a new atmosphere, in a new place. They learn to negotiate “the inter-subjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest or cultural values.”(Bhabha: 2) these people learn to live in their present and transformation of their culture. They try to find out new creative possibilities in new land. Rushdie also maintains in imaginary homelands that the state of migrancy and exile though painful, is emancipating. According to Rushdie:

straddle two cultures... fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy.(Rushdie: 15)

Hence a diasporic person faces difficulties of cultures, language, tradition, life-style etc. themselves in new surroundings.

The yearning for home in the first generation immigrants is a predominating feeling. They are strongly attached with their homelands. The children of the immigrants do not face such problems because of their parents living ‘there now’. But these children carry with them the past history of ‘origin’ of their parents’ homeland even they are born and brought up in a foreign country. But the first generation immigrants

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remain 'foreigners', 'the others', not knowing which country is their own. Thus they belong to no country. They always feel isolated and displaced in foreign country, always want to go back to their home. But Avtar Brah calls 'home', "a mythic place of desire in diasporic imagination." (Brah: 184)

We may call it a metaphysical compulsion to reclaim the thing we have lost. In fact, the diasporic consciousness is the consciousness of nothing, of the lack, a hole in the heart, so to say. Diasporic literature, as part of the postcolonial consciousness, has of late, become quite popular, and especially with the people settled abroad, expressing their anguish of belonging to two worlds-one lost, the other not gained. Thus, the diasporic are doubly doomed, belonging nowhere, "nowhere man", as Kamala Markandya put it, in the title of one of her novels. My paper also belongs to the diasporic stream with particular reference to Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. What I wish to point out-one, that we should not treat diasporic literature as homogeneous: two, that every writer of diaspora has a distinct mark, the way he/she treats the problem of the exiles. Though the emigrants rejoice in one sense, as they have gained better opportunities, yet they are haunted by some sense of loss. But before looking want to reclaim the thing we have lost, we will not be able to claim what we have. Infact, we will create fictions not actual cities or villages, but invisible one, imaginary homelands, Indians of the mind.

In *The Namesake*, Lahiri does not examine the motives of Ganguli family-why Ashoke Ganguly, a student at B.E. College in Calcutta, now Kolkata, decides to go to a foreign land, away from his family and friends, in America. The reason may be that Ghosh, a fellow-traveler in the train in India, advised him to go to America with the words: "To each his own", (Lahiri: 16) means to detach himself from his family, for making his own career. Ghosh further says:

Before it is too late, without thinking too much about it first, pack a pillow and a blanket and see as much of the world you can. You will not regret it. (Lahiri: 16)

According to Jhumpa Lahiri, Ghosh's advice might have helped Ashoke to decide to leave India for higher education but this is not so important because the decision was not made by Ashoke himself. In this way, human existence consists not in being oneself-revealing one's

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own existence –but in being 'they'. Ghosh, or for that matter anyone could have made the choice for Ashoke.

Ghosh met Ashoke in the train. He was going to see his grandfather. In the train, he was reading a collection of short stories by Nikolai Gogol. His favourite story was the last *The Overcoat*. It is a story of one Akaky Akakyeich who spends his lifetime in copying documents written by others and suffering the ridicule of everyone. Ashoke found in Akaky the fate of his own father who was also a clerk. In this way, each one of us lives the life of others. We not only disown our own country, but also our own selves in order to live like others. When Ghosh asked Ashoke whether he had decided to leave India, Ashoke could only muster courage to say that he had a family. He could not resist the temptation; as Ghosh put it: "Do yourself a favour", and "To each his own" (Lahiri: 16)

Then in the morning an accident took place and he was clutching a page of *The Overcoat*. He was rescued because the crumpled page which he was reading dropped from his fingers, giving the rescuers the sign of life in him. So, all his life, Ashoke felt obliged to Gogol for giving him his life, though with a limp. His parents wanted to see him back on his own legs, but no one knew that Ashoke not only wished to walk, but walk away; as far as he could from the place he was born and in which he had nearly died. Ashoke's heart was in a foreign land though his body was still in India. After some time he left for foreign land. "In spite of all that he'd gone." (Lahiri: 20)

The images of train accident were still fresh in Ashoke's mind. The naming of his son was also based on the writer (Gogol) of the book, *The Overcoat*. In the case of his marriage, Ashoke was not determined by Ashima's preference, but by his shoes made in USA. Ashima came eight thousand miles at Cambridge to live with an unknown person.

The sense of multi-culture develops the sense of loneliness, fragmentation and a need to clarity. We can see all this through the feelings of Ashima. She is wounded both emotionally and psychologically by this immigrant experience. Ashima recalls her old family culture, in order to survive in a new and alien culture. She recalls the memories of the days when she used to spend her holidays in the company of her father. "A water colour by Ashima's father, of a caravan of camels, in

a desert of Rajasthan is... hung on the living room wall.” (Lahiri:52) She reads their letters, “calculate the Indian time on her hands” (Lahiri: 04) with the wrist watch which her parents gave her as a gift. She is thrilled when she hears her mother’s voice on phone who calls her Monu. On her son’s ‘annaprasan ceremony’ she wishes that her brothers were there to feed him and her own parents to bless him. In this way her nostalgic reminiscences and psychologically tenacious hold of the past on the present underscore, is strong familiar bonds. Both Ashoke and Ashima display a concern for their families. They don’t enjoy Christmas celebration, and Thanksgiving, but they celebrate for Gogol and Sonia. Both their children prefer their privacy and independent life in America and complain against the joint family system:

Gogol and Sonia know these people, but they do not feel close to them as their parents do. (Lahiri: 81-82)

Gogol experiences a bicultural identity, a tormenting ambivalence towards his adopted life style and his inherited culture. He grows up with a name not meant to be his official one but even the Ganguli is something he cannot seem to accept. When he goes to cemetery, he finds that there is no name like his. He brings the rubbings home:

For reasons he cannot explain or necessarily understand, these ancient unthinkable, obsolete names, have spoken to him, so much so that in spite of his mother’s disgust he refuses to throw the rubbings away.

(Lahiri: 71)

Gogol rejects the past and reverses all ties with Indian values, as Lytord said that “it is both possible and necessary to break with tradition and institute absolutely new ways of living.” (Lytord: 07) In the novel, we come to know that the second-generation immigrant can be blamed to breakdown the values; they change the meaning of relationship. Ashoke and Ashima always miss their families. But Gogol does not like his parents’ life styles, who don’t try to accommodate people according to new environment and who are not open and frank with their children. He wants his parents to leave behind the inherited values.

In *The Namesake*, we can see the diasporic element in man-woman relationship. Ashima, an Indian girl is ready to marry according to her parents’ choice, though she is in the middle of her

studies. But it proves to a true marriage, as they both love each other deeply, though they don’t show it openly. Lahiri shows how the marriage in India and the US is different. For Indian people, marriage is a life-long relationship, but in foreign people don’t think so. That is why, Gogol’s relationships with many girls don’t live long. Even Moushmi, who is Bengali, living in a foreign country, in getting married to Gogol falls in traditional trap. In pursuing their desires, they are compelled to negotiate the contradictions arising from the psychologically tenacious hold of culture and cultural obligations. As a result there is emotional distance between Moushmi and Gogol which makes them isolated. J.C. Coleman writes:

The forces of isolation progressively destroy the older person’s linkage with the world, reducing the meaningfulness of his existence and increasingly forcing back into himself. (Coleman: 509)

Jhumpa Lahiri’s diasporic consciousness is chosen by the desire to act as others do. Exile or immigrants are haunted by some sense of loss and nostalgia. If Ashoke and Ashima had chosen to immigrate, they would not have looked back to their homelands. Diasporic consciousness is the most alienated consciousness. Gogol was not blessed with a name which was to be given by Ashima’s grandmother and Gogol was deprived of his good name. Thus he suffered all his life from the loss of identity.

Lahiri shows that diasporic consciousness is the consciousness of nothing. Ashoke came to America, alienating himself from his parents, brothers and sisters. When Ashoke’s and Ashima’s parents died, they were consoled by memory alone; their children could not comprehend their parents’ loss. Ashoke and Ashima, both felt stranger now, away from their homeland. Ashoke confront nothingness in the dread in the death of his own parents. Dread is the experience of nothing. One day Ashoke died, when he was away from his family, from Ashima, Gogol and his daughter Sonia and others. Ashima returned to India, leaving behind Gogol and Sonia.

In this way, Lahiri explores the idea that diasporic consciousness is the consciousness of nothing. She finds that this nothingness is born out of our expectations. Ashoke came to America charmed by Ghosh’s sayings, but somehow the consciousness of nothing finds a hole in the

heart. Ashoke went to a foreign country because of his fear of death and because he was charmed what Ghosh and others said about the West. But he himself was not committed to go to a foreign land. Had Ashoke and then Ashima chosen to migrate with a commitment, they would not have the diasporic consciousness of nothingness; because nothingness is not merely the negation of something, it is devoid of all meanings.

The problem of the diasporic, according to Jhumpa Lahiri is that they act like others i.e. they are not themselves. That is why Ashoke could not make a mark in America as a researcher, nor could his son and daughter till the last when Gogol resolves to put his own signature on his designs, no more mimicking others. He is able to do so by looking at his own father's life, asking at one point whether he came to die in America. Ashoke, as we recall, was prompted to leave his country for the promise land for fear of death. His son compels himself to give up his present in which he has been repeating other's design in order to return to the past, so as to see the past in terms of the unrealized possibilities, it still presents. Jhumpa Lahiri has thus opened the different dimensions of diaspora, taking her clue from Martin Heidegger

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Hemingway's *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* : A Cultural Study

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In his introduction to *The Viking Portable Hemingway* in 1944 Malcolm Cowley maintained that Hemingway created, Indian – like heroes who survive in a world of hostile forces by acts of propitiation and ritual, and – in the face of the failure of these acts – by stoic acceptance of what must come, Hemingway the man and his literary creations are closely interconnected. Hemingway, for example, assuring Cowley and other recipients of his letters that he came by the Indianness of his fictional heroes honestly.

The characteristic Hemingway ethics places heroic selfhood above the wider sense of obligation to the earth to which the author's avowed primitivism might be expected to bind him. In Hemingway's famous definition, "moral is what you feel good after." This contrasts pointedly with an earth-centred ethics such as that expressed by Aldo Leopold, who wrote that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community."¹ Nature exists in Hemingway's work and life primarily as a backdrop for aggressive and destructive individualism, the same individualism which, written large, has authored ecological devastation and poisoned the organic origins of the contemporary society that Hemingway turned to the nature to escape.

Harry, in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, is a writer who had resigned himself to a life of comfort, wealth and luxury which had resulted in his not being able to utilize his talent for writing. He is lying on the hot plains of Africa with a gangrenous leg. He is very close to death. Knowing that he is going to die, he makes a desperate attempt to redeem himself. He realizes that with death so close to him. "he would never write the things that he had saved to write until he knew enough to write them well"(54). He had given himself to life of wealth and luxury where too much comfort made him lazy and softened his will to work. And finally he stopped working altogether. At the beginning of the story, he quarrels with his rich wife, Helen. He blames her and her money for destroying his talent. But a little later he realizes that he

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himself is responsible for not utilizing his talent for writing.

What was his talent anyway? It was a talent all right but instead of using it, he had traded on it. It was never what he had done, but always what he could do. (60)

Harry had done what Hemingway himself despised most, that is, to be dependent on women Harry had been constantly falling in love with rich women and living on their money. But every time, he had failed in love. He quarreled till the relationship broke itself up. Now he is with Helen, she has more money than any of his previous wives. But he does not love her at all. Part of his despair after all, is that his true relationship, to writing, has blurred into what ought to be merely its reflection, his relationship with Helen. What has come between himself and his writing is "trade", whereby his love of writing, has shaded off into the selling of love that should make time for the true vocation of writing.

The text draws less on the cultural clichés regarding Hemingway (i.e. the self reliant man) than on the nostalgia evident in Hemingway's characters, who as Sam Gurgis observes, embody the psychic and cultural divisions [that are] based, in part, on the accelerating transmogrification of America from a society of production to consumption.²

This transmogrification forms a fitting, if somewhat fricative backdrop for the recurring motif of a lost age or world that makes up the sensibility of so many of Hemingway's characters and part of it, is the fund of nostalgia for the lost values and lost worlds that Hemingway's prose calls up.

The protagonist has obviously become a "poor Julian"³ by falling into the way of life of rich people. He had become what he despised – an insensitive and irresponsible individual. Harry tries to assuage his bitterness by making a scapegoat of his pleasant wife, Helen. He blames her wealth for his decay. Because of it he has followed a life of ease and sloth instead of realizing his former ambition to be a great writer. As Bhim S. Dahiya observes: "Harry had traded on his manhood as well as his talent as a writer, he had tried to blunt the 'edge of his perception' by adopting the hedonistic life of the rich (96). Like Gurko, some other critics are also of the view that Helen is the supposed cause

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of Harry's ruin as 'given' in the story. Oliver Evans asserts that "Hemingway employs her throughout as a symbol of death, or rather death-in-life.⁴ Marion Montgomery also identifies Helen with death. Harry, she asserts, "associates the smell of his physical death and the looks of his wife, which remind him of his moral decay."⁵ What Hemingway is trying to show is that Helen and her money are very much responsible for the deterioration of Harry. We also tend to agree with Charles Child Walcott that "The conflict in the story is between a fundamental moral idealism and the corrupting influence of aimless materialism.⁶ Thus, the emphasis in this story too is on presenting sharp criticism of society dominated by commercial values.

Describing the early relationships of Harry and his wife, Hemingway writes : "the steps by which she had acquired him and the way in which she had finally fallen in love with him were all part of a regular progression in which she had built herself a new life and he had traded away what remained of his old life."⁽⁶²⁾ The inference is that what has been bad for Harry has been good for Helen: She has thrived at his expense. But she does not thrive on his vitality; she thrives as would the hyena, on what is dead in him :

Helen remains silent in the story, a silence specially glaring for the way her functions of "caretaker" and "destroyer" get articulated in her absence. She is a nurturing mother as well as dangerous viper, a figure composed of equal parts Virgin Mary and Fallen Magdalene, neither very attractive to Harry. It is the principle of exchange that emerges as most vital, a principle that inheres in neither love, sex, writing nor money, not in him or her. So love for Harry is a sort of exchange (of one rich woman for another), as is sex, and writing (exchanged for drink, sloth, snobbery and lies). The money he chases in the form of love and time freed for writing becomes only another face of the primary exchange he remembers leading up to his lying on a cot in Africa. Lyall Bush comments :

It could as easily be designated capitalism, underwrites all relationships between people and things, and that it takes care to destroy all that engage in it. (37)

This conception of women, that they can live comfortably with their men only when the latter are dead morally, may be found in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" where Margot, when her

husband belatedly asserts his identity, shoots him. According to Edmond Wilson, "The emotion which principally comes through in 'Francis Macomber' and 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro' - as it figures also in the 'Fifth Column' is a growing antagonism to women."⁷ The only caveat we would like to add to this is that women here represent a set of attitudes which is fostered by money and the machines.

Harry's hatred, fear and misunderstanding of women stems from capitalistic culture's fierce differentiation of masculine and feminine experience, the differentiation fashioned from ideas that associate men with thought and action in the world, women with being thought about and acted upon: By these terms, men are subjects and women objects; men colonialists, producers and sellers, woman dark continents and irrational consumers. These economically reinforced gender differences suggest that the story might be read as an allegory of the debilitating sickness of a consumer culture that renders all things – women, experiences and words – as objects to be voraciously devoured on the way to others, from America to Europe to Africa.

The women characters of Hemingway's early and middle periods frequently have a menacing quality: they interfere with the pursuits of masculine ideals whether aesthetic or athletic. When Pop in the autobiographical *Green Hills of Africa* asks the author, "What are the things, the actual, concrete things that harm a writer?" Hemingway replies, "Politics Women, drink, money, ambition"(605/606). Seltzer writes:

But what is being bought, what sold? A question often raised in cultural studies is the extent to which a constant demand to buy is the symptom of a larger, unfulfilled, "hunger".⁸

Jackson Lears has observed that one of the principal effects of the emerging consumer oriented culture at the turn of the century was to render the sense of an "autonomous self" in American "unreal": "The autonomous self, long a linchpin of liberal culture, was being rendered unreal – not only by the growth of an interdependent market but also by a growing awareness of constraints or inherited drives placed on individual choice" (*The Culture of Consumption* 9)

Hemingway here juxtaposes African culture to American culture – Molo, the servant is an African and represents primitivism. Opposed to him are Harry and Helen. Harry is extremely self-conscious examining everything that is going on in his mind. Bhim S. Dahiya has drawn our

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attention to the contrast between the three characters. "While Helen is aware of Harry's situation but tries to escape it and Molo is totally unaware, Harry alone is aware of life's reality and is trying to face it without any external aids."(104/105) Molo is a simple pastoral character who has a limited knowledge of life. He is a primitive character who lives by instincts rather than consciousness. Life for Molo is limited to his need. Like the animal, he does what he has been taught to do. He is contended with serving his master and obeying his orders. Molo follows his master like a pet; he is presented as an utterly dumb character. What Molo seems to represent is a total absence of human consciousness; he is one of those creatures for whom ignorance is bliss. In this way, Hemingway contrasts the primitive culture with the civilized culture. He seems to say that real richness is available in a simpler way of life. We also notice that what is positive in that simpler way of life is presented without any sentimental idealism.

The most notable question is whether or not Harry has been able to redeem himself. The epigraph at the beginning of the story states that the western summit of Kilimanjaro is called the Masai 'Ngaje Ngai', the House of God and "close to the Western summit there is the dried and frozen carcass of a leopard. No one has explained what the leopard was seeking at that altitude."(52) This identification of Kilimanjaro as the "House of God" makes it a symbol of the ideal; the highest state of moral consciousness, the immortality of the highest kind of artist creation that Harry aspires for. The leopard in the epigraph becomes a symbol of aspiration and struggle for achieving the ideal. Two other symbols used in the story, the huge, filthy vultures which squatted obscenely near Harry's camp, and the hyena, whom he associates with death in his image of death as "a sudden, evil smelling emptiness and the hyena slipped lightly along the edge of it,"(64) are symbols of decay and death.

In his awareness of his failure and his self condemnation, he has taken a major step towards redemption. As Max Westbrook observes:

As the Christian sinner can approach salvation only through becoming truly aware of his sin (this is his apartness from God), so can the Hemingway Hero approach redemption only through becoming truly aware of his failures in stewardship.⁹

As far as the flight is concerned the struggle of the leopard is symbolized by his climb while Harry's struggle takes place in his mind. Thus, Harry has been identified with the leopard. Harry, like the leopard, has reached only close to the top. His death has put an end to his moral and spiritual struggle. As Lawrence A. Walz rightly observes: "Harry's victory is a kind of spiritual rebirth his renewal is artistic as well as a spiritual one." He goes on to say that Harry's victory is only partial, however, like the leopard in the epigraph, he does not reach the summit."¹⁰

Hemingway provides through art the mythic function of purity, of grace, of absolution – long a part of man's religious hopes. Harry had come to Africa to cleanse himself of fleshly sins. In his imagined airplane flight he goes through death to absolution and the House of God: "all he could see, as wide as all the world, great, high and unbelievably white in the sun, was the square top of Kilimanjaro." (Pg 74) It represents the efforts of a 20th century North American Caucasian, working with a series of primordial weather images, to arrive at a mythic solution not far removed, as the epigraph indicates, from the ancient belief of the Masai tribesman.

Bhim S. Dahiya correctly observes that the juxtaposition of the glorious ascent to the mountain peak, which Harry dreams about, and the following inglorious death climaxes the ironic tension between dream and reality, aspiration and actual performance, that runs through the entire structure of Hemingway's most accomplished story.(111)

He dreams of ascending the height of championship, of permanence, but the irony is that it remains only a dream. Harry's faith in the primeval Africa, where he hopes to "get back into training" and work the fat off his soul," is ironical, because instead of curing him Africa kills him. But at the higher level it seems to have killed only his body. He has died a better man and a writer capable of a flight towards the mountain of immortality. Moreland, Kim Lleen comments :

The Snows of Kilimanjaro is extraordinary in a different sense. This stylized drawing of a man lying on a cot looks like a crucifixion scene, offering an interpretive commentary on Harry death.¹¹

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The temporal and the transient are set aside. The heavenly and the eternal are conquered. *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* has an unmistakable Oriental strain whether Hemingway was conscious or not. Harry's flight and eternal merging with the snows of Kilimanjaro can only be seen in this light. It is in more than one way the re-emergence of the true artist in Harry/Hemingway. Art really rests in the realm of eternity. "What Hemingway provides in a lay form of art is the mythic function of purity, of grace, of absolution long part of a man's religious hopes."¹²

Harry's resurgence could be seen in another dimension too. In spite of the fact that the fear of wasted talent at mid-life lies at the bottom of "The Snows" as in Keats "When I Have Fears that I May Cease to Be." Hemingway almost with the zest of an oriental spiritualist links the resurgence of Harry with his willingness of self-examine relentlessly : "to work the fat off his soul." Carl Gustave Jung's observation on the purification of the soul in the light of his great attempt to gauge similarities between primitive culture and modern archetypal patterns using a concept taken from Greek Alchemy seems to be quite opposite to "The Snows" :

After the Ascent of the soul, with the body left behind in the darkness of death, there now comes an enantiodramia : the *nigredo* gives way to *albedo*. The black or unconscious state that resulted from the union of opposites reaches the nadir and a change sets in. The falling den signals resuscitation and a new light : the ever deeper descent into the unconscious suddenly becomes illumination from above. For when the soul vanished at death, it was not lost, in that other world it formed the living counter pole to the state of death in this world.¹³

In conclusion we may say that what Harry has been capable of achieving at the end is the benevolent effect of the primitive culture of Africa.

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Marginalisation of Hijras in India: A Reading of Mahesh Dattani's *Seven Steps Around the Fire*

Shivranjani Singh*

The *International Herald Tribune* considers Mahesh Dattani as "one of India's best and most serious contemporary playwrights" and Alyque Padamsee, an eminent theatre and advertisement films maker, calls him "one of the few, really the only playwright in English who uses theatre as a forum for airing social and political issues"(Chand). Dattani is certainly one of the fewest playwrights in India who have treated serious themes of transgenderism and homosexuality with considerable boldness and sincerity. These issues which are still considered taboo in the Indian society have been given prime treatment in his powerful plays- *Do the Needful*, *Night Queen*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Seven Steps Around the Fire* and *Bravely Fought the Queen*. The transsexuals and the homosexuals have been treated as the marginalised people who do not conform to the norms of the mainstream gender identity and sexuality. In India, the marginalisation of such people further puts the issues of gay identity and transgender suppression under socio-political repression. Dattani has taken a bold step in taking out these issues from under the rug and presenting them openly to the society to which they belong. He proposes the free expression of one's true self without necessarily falling into the categories like heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality. The major concern of his plays is to depict the homosexual situation as an identity crisis which results from being marginalised and oppressed. His characters are the individuals who find it difficult to 'come out' to the society and thus struggle to survive under the societal constraints.

Just as the constructs of gender are challenged from the view point of postmodern pluralities, the concept of sexuality is also questioned under multiple perspectives. These perspectives define sexual identity in various aspects with multiple choices and dimensions.

Postmodernism makes us think differently about the assumption of identity. Now it seems that no one has access to stable social relations and therefore the identity names of modernity (class, race, gender?) are both complicated

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and enhanced by other social processes. These processes exemplify the strange contortions of postmodernity-style, consumption, affinity, performance. (Bhattacharya 83)

The postmodern theories talk of multiple perspectives and multiple approaches to a situation. It is believed that no reality exists in isolation and all realities are equally valuable. Every old concept, even if it is scientific, religious, philosophical, social or political, is questionable and can be re-established on the new grounds of knowledge. Freedom of expression is observed in the postmodern world and the same can be observed explicitly or implicitly in the norms of gender and sexuality. Identity itself has been questioned on the grounds of individual differences and plurality of perspectives. The concept of individualism reinforces the idea of the postmodern identity where it considers every human being to be different and unique in itself. Individual desires, preferences, expectations, experiences and contexts of performance cannot be categorised into watertight compartments and hence there can be no linear explanation to the concept of identity or even sexuality.

Gender and sexuality are two interlinked concepts in which if gender refers to being male or female and performing respective roles in life, sexuality refers to the sexual inclination and sexual practices. If gender is performative, according to Judith Butler, sexuality is also performative. The concept of sexuality is also equally multidimensional like that of gender. Sexual identity has been contested among different theories at different times. Every society has some sex/gender system that shapes the individual mind sets through preaching, practicing, repetitions, rewards and punishments in particular situations. Willingly or unwillingly everyone has to conform to the rules set by the age-old systems thereby maintaining a 'forced harmony'. But one does not perceive the same behaviour in everyone as everyone does not feel in the same way as the systems expect from him/her. If there are different types of human beings, there would be different sexual identities also. The norms may categorise individuals into male-female, masculine-feminine, man-wife and so on, but this classification cannot divide all human beings into definite gender/sexual roles.

Dattani's radio play *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, broadcast for BBC Radio 4 on 9 July 1999 and also staged in 2004, deals with the issue of Hijra identity in India and its crisis when it confronts the mainstream

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society. The play runs around Uma Rao, a research scholar who in her way to research on gender-based power implications, comes across the murder case of a beautiful Hijra Kamla. Her investigations unveil a number of realities of Hijra lives in the Indian society. Uma is the wife of Suresh Rao, the Superintendent of Police and the daughter-in-law of the Deputy Commissioner. She uses this influence in her research work and manages to talk to a Hijra prisoner Anarkali who has been arrested as an accused of the murder. Anarkali at first refuses to talk to her but eventually pleads her to bail her out from the prison. She asserts that she did not kill Kamala because she loved her as her sister. Uma wants to help Anarkali but finds herself more helpless than her. She suggests Anarkali that she should tell the truth to her husband but Anarkali knows that this would put her into more trouble than the present one.

ANARKALI. Please, sister! I will die here.
Help me get out, then I will run away...

ANARKALI. They will kill me also if I tell
the truth. If I don't tell the truth, I will die in
jail. (SSAF 14)

Anarkali knows who killed Kamala but does not dare to speak the truth. She does not believe in police or even Uma. If Uma wants to help her she has to secretly arrange some money for her bail. Uma finds herself involved in this investigation now. The police, including Suresh Rao, is all critical about the Hijras thinking that Kamala's murder is just a result of some mutual fight between the Hijras. Constable Munswamy accompanies Uma in her research work and gives her some necessary information about the case. Kamala was burnt and drowned into a pond near a temple. Her body was found by some passerby four days after her death. Uma turns sceptical about her assumptions of Hijras and this makes her more curious to know the truth behind the curtains. She takes some money from her father saying that she wants to buy some gift for the Minister's son's wedding and goes to meet Champa, the Hijra guru and Anarkali's friend. Here she sees Salim about whom Anarkali had mentioned to her in prison.

ANARKALI. She was beautiful. Very
beautiful...That's why Salim's wife put fire to
her beautiful skin and burned her to the other
world. (SSAF 15)

Salim is in search of some photograph which Kamala had. Champa

informs Uma that Salim is the bodyguard of the Minister. He used to come for Kamala every day. He wants a photograph of Kamala and him together for which he drops in every now and then. Uma searches Kamala's trunk but finds no such photograph. She understands that Champa is beguiling her. She confronts Champa with this doubt and blames that it was she who wanted Kamala dead. Anarkali was the suitable candidate next to Kamala whom Champa has trapped in the murder case. Champa does not want to argue with her and asks her to leave. She is very sure of her immense love for Kamala.

CHAMPA. She was my only daughter!
(Pause) Take your money and get out of my house! Go! This is my house! (Pause) You don't know! You don't know!...

CHAMPA. You don't know how much we all loved her. (SSAF 28)

Uma understands that it is no way possible for her to win the trust of Hijras. She has no option left but to pursue this research on her own. Her investigation takes her to the Minister's house where she meets Salim. Here again she takes Munswamy with her who is very much afraid of visiting the Minister's house during his duty hours. While Uma urges Salim to let her talk to his wife, the Minister intrudes in quite unexpectedly. Uma talks to the Minister about the case and Salim's involvement in it. The Minister's reaction to the case is very calm, he too speaks the same language as that of her husband and Munswamy. The meeting is abruptly called off when the Minister's son Subbu comes down. Subbu is reluctant to go ahead with his marriage and seems rather disturbed because of this. Uma wants to talk to him further but the Minister interrupts in between and asks Uma to leave. When Uma comes to know that Anarkali has been released from the jail she immediately goes to see her. She finds her in a wretched state-brutally beaten and with a broken nose. Anarkali asks Uma not to put her position in danger because of them.

ANARKALI. One Hijra less in this world does not matter to your husband. ...

ANARKALI. Don't put your position in danger. Go home. ...

CHAMPA. Madam, do as she says. Go home to your husband. (SSAF 35)

The Hijras promise Uma to meet her at the Minister's son's

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wedding and surprisingly they do come after the ceremony is over. Uma persuades the Minister to let them perform as a good omen for the couple. The Hijras dance in front of Subbu and his wife. During their performance, Subbu starts feeling uneasy and behaves in a hysterical manner. He snatches Suresh's pistol and makes an attempt to kill himself. Just then, Anarkali comes near him and gives him a photograph. It is the same photograph which Salim was searching for. The photograph is the wedding picture of Subbu and Kamala taken after their marriage in some remote temple. After seeing the photograph Subbu starts crying and in this fit of anxiety shoots himself to death. With this the whole story of Kamala's death becomes clear.

When Uma asks Anarkali about why she did not tell her the truth, her answer is:

ANARKALI. Would you have believed me?... (SSAF 41)

She knew that Kamala was killed by the Minister's men but also knew that her voice would not be heard by anyone.

UMA. They knew. Anarkali, Champa and all the Hijra people knew who was behind the killing of Kamala. They have no voice. The case was hushed up and was not even reported in the newspapers. Champa was right. The police made no arrests. Subbu's suicide was written off as an accident. The photograph was destroyed. So were the lives of two young people... (SSAF 42)

The statement "They have no voice" sums up the play in a nutshell and thereby hints at the insignificance of Hijras in the mainstream society. Hijras are the marginalised inhabitants of the society who have no stand to claim their existence to the world. They are insulted, cursed, tortured, beaten and put to all kinds of extortions like stray animals. Kamala's tragedy owes to her being a beautiful Hijra.

Hijras respect their relationships more than money and power. Their mother-sister relationships may be seen as objects of ridicule by people like Suresh Rao and Munswamy but they mean a lot to them. Uma makes Anarkali her sister and goes to every extent in her attempts to save her. At once this investigation puts her married life in trouble too when she goes against the reputation of her family and personally interacts with the Hijras. Anarkali also keeps her sister relationship with

Uma by asking Uma not to put her position in danger for them. She also gives her a locket with the blessings that she would become a mother soon and for this she does not ask for any money from her. She loved Kamala so much that in order to save her from the cruel hands of the society, she fought with her every day. She must have foreseen the serious results of her alliance with Subbu at its very beginning and so she made every attempt to keep Kamala away from Subbu. Although Kamala was going to become the next Hijra guru after Champa and was thus a hindrance to Anarkali's way to the power position, Anarkali did not let her ambitions tamper her love-bound strong loyalty with Kamala. She is a far better human being than the Minister who cheats his own son and becomes the cause of his suicide. In order to save his reputation and avoid any embarrassing situation in the society, he kills his son's love thus making him an insane. He forces Subbu to marry a girl of his choice and hopes everything will be fine after his marriage. He tortures the Hijras through Salim in order to get the only proof of Subbu's marriage. Even after losing his only son in the end, he does not realise his guilt and hushes up the matter using his influence. Suresh Rao, who is shown a loving, caring and concerned husband, has no value for his wife's hard work and struggle in giving justice to the Hijras. He sells himself to the minister by destroying the evidences of the murder and keeping silence over his guilt.

In this way the play touches some of the relevant issues of present Indian society- plight of Hijras as the marginalised section of Indian society, class-gender based violence and its aftermaths. Being the people with ambiguous gender and sexual identity, Hijras are taken as the objects of awe and disgust. Their social status in the society is still under question as even being the minority community of India, they are not considered as a part of it:

CHAMPA. Please excuse me, madam. I did not know that... You see us also as society, no? (SSAF 23)

Champa's question to Uma clearly indicates that Hijras urge for a respectable recognition in the society.

The play is constructed on the lines of detective serial. The murder of Kamla, a eunuch, is the topic of investigation which is deliberately undertaken by a research scholar in sociology, Uma Rao. Within the text of the play, Dattani tries to expose the position of eunuchs in Indian society. He asserts through Uma as his mouthpiece:

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...There are transsexuals all over the world, and India is no exception. The purpose of this study is to show their position in society. Perceived as the lowest of the low, they yearn for family and love... (SSAF 239)

As the investigation proceeds, the dramatic tension builds on with a series of events creating suspense and realization of the plight of Hijras in their surroundings. Dattani uses a photograph to develop the suspense which is eventually disclosed, thereby, unveiling many covered up truths- Kamla and Subbu's marriage, Minister's involvement in Kamla's murder and Hijras' silence because of their fear of being killed by the minister's men. The play also presents some emotional situations that throw light on the condition of women in a patriarchal set up. Uma's conversations with Anarkali in the police station suggest her powerlessness in her family. Before this research she was just the wife of Suresh Rao, the superintendent of Police and the daughter-in-law of the Deputy Commissioner of the city. Eventually, she explores many new relationships and discovers her identity too. Now she becomes Anarkali's sister, a socialist and a responsible citizen during the investigation of the case. She unburdens herself from the guilt of her mother and also her barren life by helping the Hijras in getting justice for Kamala.

The serious tone of the play is subsided by the element of comic to some level. Anarkali's interaction with Munswamy and Munswamy's discomfiture at Uma's daring attempts create humour in the play, thereby making its treatment light and lively. Dattani also uses some innovative techniques like thoughts and voice-over to present his mind to the listeners. Uma's rumination about the origin of Hijras and their status in the society is presented through her thoughts. Also her reactions to what Munswamy asserts of the Hijras are depicted through her thoughts:

UMA. (*thought*). Nobody seems to know anything about them. Neither do they. Did they come to this country with Islam, or are they part of our glorious Hindu tradition?... (SSAF 16)

UMA. (*thought*). Is it true? Could it be true what my mother used to say about them?... (SSAF 17)

UMA. (*thought*). Then is it true? That they

are criminals? Am I making a fool of myself?...
(SSAF 17)

The play ends with Uma's thought in the form of voice-over:

UMA. (*Voice-over*). They knew. Anarkali, Champa and all the Hijra people knew who was behind the killing of Kamla. They have no voice.... (SSAF 42)

In this way, Uma's thoughts put light on Uma's personal connections with the Hijras and also the common assumptions about them in the mainstream society. The sound effects in the play also play a vital role in building up the theme - the enchanting of mantras and sounds of fire in the beginning of the play followed by a scream that is engulfed by the growing flames creates the backdrop for the play; the singing and clapping of hijras indicates their presence around and other minor details like Suresh's gargling, Anarkali's smoking and Uma's coughing, the traffic noises and the screaming of little children on the signals create the ambience for the scenes being run in the minds of listeners:

“The most challenging medium is radio”... “It's very evocative. You have only sound effects, the spoken word and silences. You perform in the minds of the audience. The play should allow the listener the space to imagine. Television tends to be very passive... Radio and stage are more evocative - that's why I like these mediums very much.” (Thapar)

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Treads across Experience: The Pakistani Bride

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The Pakistani Bride (1983) was the second published novel (the first written novel) of Bapsi Sidhwa. It was introduced to the Western readers as *The Bride* in order to extract a broader sense. To Sidhwa, writing the novel was happened accidentally – when she was accompanied with her husband Noshir to a remote army camp in the Karakoram Mountains in Northern Pakistan on vacation, she heard the tragic story of a runaway young Punjabi bride who was married to a Kohistani tribal. The escapee was hunted by her husband and the clansmen, caught near the rope-bridge after two weeks, and chopped off her head. Sidhwa immensely felt it was her responsibility to re-narrate the dejected tale after returned home in Lahore. Though Sidhwa did not know much about the Kohistani and Pathan cultures, and background of the girl (whom her parents were, how she married to him, why she ran away etc.), she read a lot and used her imagination to create the base for her novel.

The main plot of the novel dealt with Zaitoon's life and the sub plot deals with Carol's life. As far as the main plot was concerned, the meeting of the other characters to the main character shaped artistically. Each of them had an individual story; however, they brought harmony by creating a pertinent multi-setting to the bride's tale – familial, societal, cultural, geographical, political and historical aspects. Though the sub plot was not an integral part of the main story, it supported the plight of the central character the best. On the whole, Sidhwa showed how the women's lives were struck by the whirlwind of changes after the marriage. The confinements are much more to them after the marriage. Their lives were governed by men. Many times they were left despondent and uncertain. Their attempt of fleeing from such clutches might prone to their very existence. Apart from the position and treatment of women in a patriarchal society like Pakistan, Sidhwa divulged women's experience, their attitude, their endurance and their revolutionary approach to accomplish ultimate meaning of life as well as freedom.

Zaitoon challenges cruelties in patriarchy. She lost her parents during Partition. Though she was dislocated, she led a happy childhood

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with adopted father Qasim and neighbourhood couple, Nikka and Miriam. Under Miriam's guidance, she learnt domestic work and socializing with women folk. She had neither idea about life nor objective of life. So, she agreed to marry Sakhi, a tribal man according to the will of her father. Being a child of patriarchal society: Zaitoon said, "I cannot cross my father" (p. 167), when she was persuaded by Miriam not to marry him. Her romantic notions and ignorance about life made her accept Qasim's proposal.

However, for the first time, Zaitoon realized herself and expressed her misgiving about her marriage when she came across some glimpses at Dubair or in army camp. Of course, this was not her fully matured phase. To her, Carol's American socialite, clothing and drinking habits seemed strange. She shared the same piece of idea to Qasim who justified it by saying, "Their ways are different from ours, child" (p. 172). This response triggered her subliminal doubts about her marriage with the tribal youth. She understood Carol's ways were as different as her ways to those of the hill people. Therefore, she questioned, "But, Abba, I am not of the hills. I am not of your tribe. I am not even yours," (p. 172-73). She said quietly. Her encounter with the mountains and its tribe made her to understand the life, which she would be going to lead. Her unpleasant dream was an example for the ominous presentiment of her future life in the hills with Sakhi. It follows as: "...she had been standing by the river, admiring its vivid colours, when a hand had come out of the ice-blue depths and dragged her in, pulling her down, down ..."(Bhatt, 157).

Her marriage let Zaitoon bump into her husband Sakhi's cruelty. On the day of their wedding, he tore her veil from her head and gripping her hands harshly. Zaitoon's "screaming", "panting" and "trembling" were the resultant acts of Sakhi's "dragging", "tugging", "lifting" and "kicking" her." (p.186) As her emotional needs were not satisfied, she implored her father to take her along with him when he set off to Lahore after the second day of her marriage. She even asserted, "I don't know, Abba . . . I don't know him. Why must you leave so soon?" for Qasim's question, "Haven't you liked him?" (p.233) This instance showed her initial defense against her husband's hardnosed behaviour. However, Qasim tossed her request away by convincing that she was not a child but a married woman, her place was with her husband, and her husband's home was ultimate abode.

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Sakhi felt that Zaitoon's act of reaching her father and his efforts to pleasing her might bring him disgrace among his tribesmen who further doubt his manhood. This kind of thought process made him behave with fanatic rage. First, he beat his ox until its flesh gaped open. Next, he showed his wrath on his mother who tried to save it. He blew on one of his mother's shoulders and on her legs by shouting: "I'll teach you," he hissed, "I'll teach you meddling women. You think you can make a fool of me? Do you?" (p.111) Then he hit Zaitoon on her thighs, on her head for her intrusion by shouting: "You are my woman! I'll teach you to obey me!" (p.112) Commenting on the treatment of Women in a Patriarchal society in this novel of Bapsi Sidhwa, Indira Bhatt states: "Zaitoon's odyssey from the plains to the snow mountains and back to the plains is symbolic of the inner journey of the young woman from the fantasy world of love, romance and heroes to the harsh and hostile realities of life, where man is the hunter and exploiter, cruel and inhuman treating woman and animal alike. It is a barbaric world of uncivilized people that Sidhwa brings to life and light" (p.113)

Her miserable life, which deprived of love and full of her husband's "tyrannical (and) animal-trainer treatment"²⁸ and her "instinct for self-preservation" (p.136) led Zaitoon plan to flee. In the process of accomplish her desire, she inured to harsh living conditions and tried to understand geographical and climatic conditions well.

Though Zaitoon was discouraged her every attempt of seeking choice and dragged to make a subservient creature at every stage of her life, her longing for living nurtured her mind with immense fortitude and intrepid nerve: "That night Zaitoon resolved to run away. Her sleepless eyes bright with shock, her body racked by pain, she knew that in flight lay her only hope of survival. She waited two days, giving herself a chance to heal." (p.227) Zaitoon's transformation as a complete individual and a liberated soul did not occur suddenly. She was under gone into many changes: initially she accepted her life without second thought. Next, some incidents made her self-realized what sort of life she would be going to lead before her marriage with Sakhi and how exacerbate was it to live with him after the marriage. It compelled her to make some pleas. As her father refused her attempts of supplications and her husband trampled her individuality and personality, she sought her own choice. She was determined to execute her plan of action i.e.

fleeing which finally facilitated her to attain freedom.

However, Zaitoon's flight provoked not only her husband but also the entire clan. The penalty of such act was only death. All his clansmen got ready with their guns for hunt.

Zaitoon's story revealed us many things. Though the cultural constraints and her vulnerabilities made Zaitoon experience affliction, she emerged as an individual and in course of time she learnt what she needed the most: preservation of self and emancipation. Her own will, her exposure with the society, her understanding, her analysis of the situations which she came across, her conscience, her awareness and her realization were the factors which contributed her to challenge patriarchal society. Ultimately, she became triumphant personality out from her woes and pains.

Carol, an American woman was another character in the novel. She tasted the bitterness of ancient society's worst side by asset of her marriage with a Pakistani man. She accepted many things, which were strange and inconvenient to her. However, she tried to look at everything its brighter side. For example, she felt Farukh's over-possessiveness as the sign of his deep and unique love towards her. Moreover, she was thankful to him for not pressurizing her to convert into Islam and let her follow her own faith. Though her personal life was disturbed very much by Farukh's relatives and friends, she accepted them and felt that their inquisitive nature was a matter of their amicability towards her.

However, Carol could not digest the way she was treated. Farukh's insatiable suspicion on Carol's chastity was an example of it. Carol's socialite habits and courtesies seemed Farukh objectionable because to him, a woman looking into man's eyes meant her indirect acceptance for having sex with him: "I'm so ashamed of you! Displaying your honky-tonk pedigree! You laugh too loudly. You touch men. . . 'Don't you know if you only look a man in the eye it means he can have you?'" (p.113) Though she tried to convince him that they were his friends and his thoughts constrained only to physicality that was absolutely wrong, he did not change his opinion and persuaded her to admit her behaviour was slip-up. She was vexed with Farukh's behavior: "corroded her innocence, stripped her, layer by layer, of civilised American niceties" The atmosphere of repressed sexuality in Pakistan

made her feel that she was condensed "to a craving mass of flesh" . So, she decided to give him something jealous.

Sidhwa asserted that she hated to preach about feminism, but wished to make and create a scope and space for women to speak for themselves; she used her characters as instruments to illustrate women in different grounds. She insinuated for self-preservation through her major women characters who struggled to endeavour liberty but did not end their lives. Through Zaitoon's struggle and flee and Carol's speech and protests against the evils done to women by men Sidhwa gave voice to the voiceless women. Sidhwa felt that either women's compromise or their protest only meant to attain peace and harmony in their lives. Unless they were treated harshly and inhumanly, they would enjoy their roles as mother, sister, wife, daughter etc and serve their men wholeheartedly. Their rebellious acts were just their protests against men's spiteful treatment or defects of patriarchal society. In other words, women wholeheartedly accepted tradition, but not its flaws.

NOTES

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The Outsider' and his problem: A quasi-Existentialist Approach to Kiran Nagarkar's *Seven Sixes are Forty Three* (*Saat Sakkam Trechalis*) and *Ravan and Eddie*.

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*Divya Madaan**

Kiran Nagarkar (b.1942) is a bilingual Indian novelist, playwright, critic and screenplay writer. He announced his entry into the literary world with *Saat Sakkam Trechalis* (*Seven Sixes are Forty Three*) in 1974 which was initially written in Marathi and later translated into English. This debut novel shattered many of the stereotypes which defined a conventional, linear work of fiction and established him as a modern, non-conformist writer. In 1994 *Ravan and Eddie* appeared which, again, took the literary world by storm. *Cuckold* (1997), the canonical novel based on mystic saint Mirabai's husband Bhoj Raj, fetched him the 2001 Sahitya Akademi Award. His next work, *God's Little Soldier* (2006), received mixed reviews. Nagarkar's works revolve around the theme of identity crisis and chart the intensity of the struggle posited by an individual to challenge the regressive and closed social structures. The present paper is aimed at reviewing the two prime works *Seven Sixes are Forty Three* and *Ravan and Eddie* alongside a similar line. The dilemma of the protagonist and the nature of his resistance become the focal points of the discussion which follows.

Sartre, Camus, Nietzsche, Kafka and Beckett have contributed towards deconstructing and reviewing literature, art and social institutions through the assistance of a term called existentialism. The twentieth century was revolutionized by the sudden discovery that existence can be futile, absurd and baseless. Owing to this explosion, the persona of the mysterious outsider became an icon- a force which dared to question the normal. However, as a theory, existentialism is not to be approached as a concretized formula which elaborates upon the psychological, emotional or empirical constituency of an individual on the basis of a set of already defined behavioral tendencies. It is to be understood collectively. The term collective here implies that a personality is not to be isolated and tagged as "the outsider" for literary convenience. The "outsider" is the opposite of the "social" which is a confined and closed space operating upon a program based on definitions and

conventionalities. The approach, here, stresses upon the need of examining the environment and social set up which forces a person to retreat from participating in a system. What is the predicament which shapes the vision and psyche of an outsider? Is it safe to conclude that he is at the margins of a society by virtue of his maladjustment? Or, to reverse the diagram, is he, in a way, the centre and controller of his personal universe and the rest of the society is marginal and a misfit? Theories of existentialism have been, since decades, trying to solve this equation and various propositions and hypothetical conclusions are drawn accordingly. An existentialist is one who constantly ponders over the fact that he exists but this knowledge remains locked in a perplexed vision which colours every situation and activity as futile. This meaninglessness haunts his existence and actions. But, to be precise, what is the source of this meaningless approach? Is the outsider himself the problem? Or is he, somehow, insightful and possesses the ability to critically examine the social structures from an elevated platform? The outsider's estrangement is not open to interpretations and the process of decoding can lead to contradictions. His psychological constitution is a curious mixture of hope, pessimism, angst, frustration and sorrow. He lies outside the bound of definitions and regularities; rules do not apply to him as he is not concerned with the system. Furthermore, it is not to be implied that he is above the law or lies in a defeated state. In simple terms, the outsider becomes an outsider after he has had enough of the 'inside'. He knows the truth about the world of impressions and factoids and refuses to lie in a subdued state. The resentment is accompanied by his negation of a world gullible enough to mistake sensory images and hollow glitter for happiness. His definition of happiness is lucid and straight. The outsider yearns for freedom from shams, hypocrisies and masquerade. Viewed in this context, Nagarkar's works are case studies of those personalities who confess that there is an element of nihilism, a spark fuelled by the energy gained from their indomitable spirit, in them. This is the hallmark of Nagarkar novels. The plot functions as a mirror reflecting the shape, size and functioning of the society in an anatomical manner. And at a comfortable distance, placed strategically, we have the protagonist who holds and circulates the mirror to expose the diseased parts that are falling apart. *Seven Sixes...*, as the title suggests, aims at conducting such an exercise. The narrative engages itself in the task of deconstruction- the way the

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plot progresses (or regresses) is highly improbable and at times it becomes indiscernible and foggy. Kushank Purandare, a struggling writer, is at odds with his prospects and circumstances and we are offered a glimpse of his adventurous life through his reminiscences. At times he indulges into long, sophisticated monologues but avoids being judgemental or prejudiced. Kushank mentions a long list of friends, lovers, acquaintances and relatives and it is this web of relationships and encounters which moulds and shapes his vision, understanding and opinion of social institutions. His life is a series of disjointed stays as he refuses to choose a permanent abode. This aura of temporality infuses in him the ability to observe the world in a neutral and detached manner. This outsider has a distinct temperament. He is not averse to getting attached to others but, in fact, confesses having strong emotional bonds with his lovers. Kushank serves as the outsider and the participant as he has a flexible and malleable mind which can see through the mess of various forces at interplay at a particular moment. Society is dissected through the medium of relationships. Kushank's inability to sustain a relationship reflects the temporal, fleeting nature of human bonds.

Communication is a problematic field for Kushank. Monologues apart, he is a man of few words. This scantiness of syllables haunts him through all his relationships and this is a typical outsider situation. The lack of interest in participating in a dialogue reveals that stream of thought is clogged. For Kushank, conversation is a formality; it is the central factor sustaining a world smitten by falsities and exhibitionism. Language is a tool and it is often manipulated and moulded by the speaker to achieve certain ends. The outsider prefers silence over speech for the fact that he can see through this fabricated design. Talking is different as it is not regulated by codes of conduct; it remains free, liberated and spontaneous. Unlike communication, it has no structure, beginning or end. And this is a rarity in a space governed by the social. What is this social factor which virtually rules all dimensions of one's existence? It is the field of moderation and neutrality- a stage where compromise is the word and it implies a negotiation between the subject and his surroundings. Conversation, then, becomes a formality, a gesture which aims at securing a position with the centre- the mass ideology conformal with the sanctioned model of norms and relationships. Kushank remains disenchanting as he is able to deconstruct this program: "Aren't we all born fools,

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anyway? Every now and then you stray for a minute or two and become wise. Then you notice your mistake and lapse into foolishness again". (Nagarkar 127).

Kushank is projected as the viewer who is a part of and yet detached from the series of events he recalls. His relationships combust spontaneously as he is conscious about the position he occupies socially and it is this air of vigilance coexisting with a sense of self-disgust and angst which eventually destroys their warmth and cordiality. The novel ends on a painful note. It depicts the insensitiveness, intolerance and useless aggression of the social forces. Kushank is mercilessly thrashed for nothing. The mob at Ganpati Visarjan suspects Kushank of corrupting the sanctity of the function. Communal and religious dichotomies prevent him from presenting the case and he defiantly chooses silence: "It was not a question. Only the certainty of a full stop. Then blackness and no more pain". (Nagarkar 214) The "full stop" situation implies that a dead end has been reached.

Seven Sixes... explores the dark and threatening dimension of the social/outsider relationship. *Ravan and Eddie*, on the other hand, is humorously sarcastic and comparatively light in spirit and tone. It traces the childhood of two kids who live in a CWD chawl in Mumbai. Their childish vision, confrontations with elders and their aspirations are portrayed in an authentic, frank manner. How can existentialism be applied to critically examine their social relationships? The outsider situation, in this context, can be understood as the conflict between the kids and the authorities. Nagarkar exposes the hurdles posed by various sectors such as religion, academics, and family. For both these kids, being the outsider entails endorsing an attitude of non-cooperation. Ravan and Eddie are ambitious; the desire to rise above class differences is present in them. Existence, as they perceive it, revolves around resolving immediate problems in the best possible manner. They can be termed as the outsiders as they defy the disciplinarian model of upbringing which demands submissiveness and sobriety.

It is crucial to examine their familial and social position as both are shown undergoing various adventures which alter their psychological make-up and perspective towards society in general. 'He's lying. Why would I talk to him? He murdered my father.' And now Ravan was alone, truly alone, and the loneliness seared and

shrivelled him as if the sun had suddenly withdrawn all heat from the earth". (Nagarkar, *Ravan* 35).

Eddie's father dies accidentally while playing with baby Ram (who is later baptized as Ravan by his mother so as to ward off evil eye) and this mysterious misunderstanding binds the two. The implication of this accusation on Ravan's social image is irreparable and this fact lies beyond Eddie's comprehension. Later, when this rumour reaches Ravan's school, he gets transformed into a hardcore criminal who kills for monetary gains and in the process receives several 'assignments' from his classmates. Ravan's revered stature among the kids is still haunted by isolation. The outsider, here, is a victim of circumstances who very much attempts to be a part of the linear chain of social relationships but fails. He is approached from a safer distance. The narration is laced with humor and gravity of the entire situation is counterbalanced by the fact that childish imagination is capable of taking creative liberties. At the home front, Ravan's family is the very opposite of the conventional model due to its flexible distribution of gender roles. His mother, Parvati Bai, is the bread winner while his father Shankar Rao prefers to relax and proceed with an extra-marital affair. Their flat, too, is branded as the "House of Sin" by the neighbours. Hence, Ravan is made to accept social intolerance at every front. It is not only the web of circumstances which forces Ravan to retreat from the common circle of social cordialities but the presence of a spark, a desire in his heart to explore what lies beyond the usual side of affairs and reality that provides him with the energy to dare and experiment.

Later, when it comes to selecting role models, Ravan chooses none other than Shammi Kapoor as his guiding star. Mesmerized by the actor's performance in *Dil Deke Dekho*, Ravan becomes his dedicated disciple as he readily identifies with the social and economic status of the hero as portrayed in the movie. Struggle attains a new definition. He graduates from the position of a passive, mute outsider to a rebel. This is the trademark of these two kids. They do not require any adult to vouch for their existence; they know how to manipulate the circumstances.

Eddie's confession sarcastically exposes the psychological schematics on which the entire religious system functions and 'controls' the populace. Eddie mocks the gravity of the affair by weaving an

eloquent litany of his 'sins'. He unleashes his imagination and pours out an adventurous tale which reeks of falsity. Eddie works on a simple mechanism- give the authorities what they want and expect. His mother Violet, sister Pieta and Granna conveniently brand him as evil beyond redemption. Eddie's religious doubts and his fascination for Hinduism (and *Sabha*) are counted as blasphemy. In this case, too, the selection of role models is done with keen precision and the winner is Bill Haley- the rockstar responsible for the creation of *Rock Around the Clock*. Black marketing of cinema tickets is taken as a mission to fulfill greater ambitions. Authority at all levels is challenged and manipulated to demonstrate that there is a way out.

This novel presents a different perspective of the outsider situation. Obviously, the dark and depressive aura of an adult world is absent and the narrative sketches the world through a humorous angle. *Seven Sixes...*, on the other hand, paints a grim and dead portrait through the eyes of Kushank. Existentialism is given a new definition in both and the perils which obstruct the flow of life and creative energy are exposed. No solutions are suggested in either and the plot is left open ended. Kushank's painful survival (or death) and Ravan and Eddie's prospective course of action are made malleable- they can be (re) shaped by the reader's imagination and approach.

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“Mending Wall”: A Bibliographical Poem

Aman Lata*

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“Mending Wall,” one of the most widely anthologized poems of Robert Frost was published in 1914. It is based on the custom of New England farmers to replace stones dislodged from fences by winter’s “ground swell” or by hunters. John C.Kemp in his book *Robert Frost and New England* says, that for more than sixty years now it has been interpreted, anthologized, and applauded as one of his most successful and representative compositions. Quantifiable proof of its importance can be found in the continuing efforts of scholars and critics to explicate it and account for its extraordinary power. Although the poem has stimulated much controversy, its basic appeal is unmistakable and results from the skillfully presented relationship of speaker, and his neighbor, the farmer from “beyond the hill” who believes “Good fences make good neighbors.”

The difficulty of deciding where the ultimate wisdom lies is the poem’s central problem according to Peter B. Clarke. Does it lie with the speaker of the poem who apparently would acquiesce to natural forces and let the wall crumble or does it rest with the speaker’s neighbor who offers the proverbial “Good fences make good neighbors”? After raising the question Clarke himself answers the question by saying the wall is both good and bad. “The barriers,” he adds, “serves both to separate and to bring them together. . . The neighbor simply sees that barriers are necessary without understanding why, While the speaker knows why they are and sees the defects of the barriers too.”

For Philip L.Gerber this wall becomes insubstantial symbol of the real barriers dividing men, though the two neighbors labor together so closely that their hands touch and they engage in extended conversation. Further he adds that this wall can come down. In fact, it does, every fall and winter, were it not for spring mending time, it would topple altogether.

But he says there is still another wall, impervious, built slowly of set ways and traditions. This particular wall can never be removed.

As one neighbor recites over and over again his belief: “Good fences make good neighbors.” The other counters: “Something there Assistant Prof. In English Kamla Nehru College for Women, Phagwara

is that doesn’t love a wall, that wants it down.” To the passing eye these two men may give the appearance of working together but this cooperation is deceptive as their simplest communicative act proves to be futile. The closed mind shams harder than granite against an unwelcome idea.

Do men work together or apart? Obviously they do both, says frost, and the poem documents his case.

When the two neighbors meet in the spring to set the wall between them again, the narrator attempts to draw the neighbor out, points out Harold H.Watts. Here the speaker asks, why do we go to all this trouble to repair walls? What are walls for anyhow? The only answer he is able to get is that “Good fences make good neighbors.” It is the narrator who “Let his neighbor know” When the time comes to do work. The narrator questions the necessity of the wall in effort to make the neighbor think and come out of the darkness of mind he is walking in. But the neighbor is not ready to listen to anything except his own belief that walls make good neighbors. It’s only the speaker who knows this wall is a barrier between the neighbors. And “Something in the world doesn’t like a wall between a man and the world” (Marion Montgomery).

Thus this poem leads us to make a choice – which of the two is right, the speaker or his yankee neighbor? Should we tear down the barriers which discriminate and isolate individuals from each other, or should we be practical and admit that distinctions and limitations are necessary for human beings if they are to maintain a mutual goodwill. Here Marion Montgomery Carson Gibb says that it’s good to build walls. It’s obvious from the poem that the wall not only separates the two men; it brings them together too.

I let my neighbor know beyond the hill:

And on a day we meet to walk the line.

Moreover, it is the speaker, the narrator who for all his skepticism about the wall is the one to call this annual meeting.

As far as the style of poem is concerned, the monologue is cast in blank verse, and as usual with Frost, there is the artistic balancing of strict iambic pentameter lines with looseness and variety to create the informal and casual effect of conversation. Lawrence Thompson writes that the poem is a beautiful illustration of the poet’s that the poem is a

beautiful illustration of the poet's efforts to bring about the reconciliation of three separate efforts to bring about the reconciliation of three separate planes of sound; the first of these is the basic and theoretically rigid meter which Frost is willing to reduce "virtually" to strict iambic" and "loose limbic." These basic-accent, fitted to the variable structure of the line and of the stanza, offer an underlying foundation for words and phrases.

The poem has been interpreted symbolically by John F.Lynen. According to him the wall suggests the divisions between nations, classes, economic, racial and religious groups and the like, but none of these or combination of them all exhausts the symbol's meaning. "In the voices of the two men the younger whimsical, new fashioned speaker and the old fashioned farmer who replies with his one determined sentence, his inherited maxim – some readers hear the clash of two forces: the spirit of the revolt, which challenges tradition, and the spirit of restraint, which insists that conventions must be upheld, built up and continually rebuilt, as a matter of principle."

The psychoanalytical interpretation of the poem is given by Norman N.Holland. Who believes that the poem is rooted primarily in the first of five familiar stages of childhood development, i.e. oral, anal, Urethral, phallic and Oedipal, because of its references to speech and eating, both associated with the mouth. In the oral stage of childhood development, the first experience of the child makes him break into perspiration. At this stage feeding is his great joy. And he gets his first ideas about the world from the person who feeds him. At this stage, the child must learn two things. His first job is to learn that he is not at one with the world, that there is a self and a not self. In other words he must become individuated or he must learn his own identity.

The poem seems to contain a number of images having to do with mouth, with eating or speech – for example, "the yelping dogs," "stones which are "loaves," the speaking of a spell, the neighbor's twice saying "his father's saying," "I tell him," "he only says," and so on. So he concludes that the poem probably deals with a fantasy from the oral stage of development.

Northrop Frye sees the conscious theme of the poem as the identity of "something" from which radiate two human attitudes towards the wall corresponding to two seasons, winter and spring. The conscious

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theme in the poem represents a transformation of the unconscious. The poem is not one or other but the process of each becoming the other.

In developing the theme of human separation in "Mending wall," points out John C.Broderic, Frost contrasts varying ritual responses to nature as a means of propitiating a deity, ways of giving worship to that indefinite something that does not love a wall, that in fact, wants it down.

The poem is full of light humour points out John Ciardi. It has a fine dramatic setting in wall mending season, the speaker farmer on one side of the wall and his neighbor on the other side. From the very beginning of the poem, there is a tone of quizzical banter. A jet of humor brilliantly enlivens the tempo of the poem. Henri Bergson in an article "Robert Frost and comic spirit" has also found the material for comedy in the poem. He says that the neighbor moves mechanically in the conviction of his father, which is really the exclusivist superstition of stone age man. He is impervious to questioning, to good sense, to the physical reality which he faces. Indeed the whole ritual of mending the wall is futile repetition against subversiveness of the nature.

From the above discussion I come to the conclusion that the theme of the poem is walls both divide and unite men. And we must notice, if we are not to misread the poem, that the wall not only separates the two men. It brings them together too.

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A Comparative Study of Human Relationships in the Novels of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande

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Literature is the most powerful expression and the most effective medium of the most profound and felt experiences of a people. Comparative literary studies promotes a fully comprehensive awareness and susceptibility to literature. It performs a very useful service by training the readers' sensibility and making their responses really complete. It leads them to a more comprehensive and adequate understanding of the works and their authors. It is regarded as the most important academic activity of the present Era. Although the scope of comparative studies has not been determined and a sound methodology has not been evolved, yet an exciting study and comprehensive research is made possible by it.

Comparative studies is still in the process of growth. Some comparatists look for identities or similarities, some only for differences and disparities while there are some who attempt the both. In the present article an attempt has been made to undertake comparative study of human relationships in the novels of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande and tried to find out similarities and dissimilarities in their delineation of the theme of human relationships delineated with great skill and dexterity by both of them. Their treatment of the theme has been compared to bring a wider awareness of human relationships. The study includes the various types of relations and bonds that are governed and directed by a variety of psychological and cultural factors which establish rules and patterns for them.

The concept of human relationships is as old as human civilization. The theme has been very popular with the novelists since the rise of novel. The novelists like Richardson and Fielding on one hand, and Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, Faulkner and Hemingway on the other, emphasize their importance in human life. The Indian novelists in English like R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, Kamala Das, Ruth Pawar Jhabhwal, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande have delineated the subject of human relationships in their novels. In this essay the main thrust is on the comparative study of human relationships in the

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novels of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande. Anita Desai is not pleased with the literary achievements of the Indian women novelists as they are content to record the external experiences of life and ignore the psychological aspect. If they feel concerned with the psyche of a character, it remains only marginal. The novels of Anita Desai are subjective and psychological in nature as she could have the advantage of the privacy, solitude and shelter that are required for writing such kinds of novels. Even Shashi Deshpande deals with the psyche of her female protagonists through flash backs, retrospection, introspection, memories etc. though she remains a realist.

Women's quest for identity, her awareness of her rights and individuality, the western influence and the rapid process of industrialization and urbanization make man-woman relationship the most significant one. One comes across the problems of growing incompatibility, loneliness and alienation, lack of communication, withdrawal and isolation in various relationships delineated in the novels of Mrs. Desai and Mrs. Deshpande. The subject of human relationships has universal appeal and on account of the novelists' deep concern for human lot and their involvement with the psychic self of their characters make their novels to have a profound appeal. Alienation and mutual incommunication mar the emotional and psychic self of their protagonists. Their characters like Maya, Monisha, Nirode, Amla, Sita, Saru and Jaya find it difficult to face the assaults of existence single-handedly. Indian society, being male-chauvinistic society, expects that woman would make adjustments in a family. She has to face the oppressive atmosphere at home. The adverse and hostile attitude of family and society turns their life into a menace, The delineation of human relationships in their novels, against the background of the male-dominated Indian society, is wonderful and authentic. Generally their female protagonists sacrifice their identity and individuality at the altar of marriage. In spite of this fact, the novelists do not challenge the relevance of the institutions like marriage and family.

They portray their male characters as being rational practical, business like, and matter of fact in their attitude whereas the female ones are hyper-sensitive and highly emotional. Their contrasted attitude, outlook and temperament make them react differently to the same conditions. As women are generally dependent on men culturally and emotionally so any disruption in their affiliation or relation is taken as a

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total loss of self, besides being the loss of relationship. Marital relationships are established with the explicit purpose of providing companionship to each other. However, this element of companionship is terribly missing in the relationships of Maya-Gautama, Monisha-Jiban, Amla-Dharma, Sita-Raman, Saru-Manu and that of Jaya-Mohan. The novelists aim at exposing contempt, hypocrisy, pretence and insensibility scattered among various relationships in the Indian society. Mrs. Desai portrays the hypersensitivity of her characters that brings them under so much of psychic pressure that though they seem to be leading explicitly normal life, yet they turn into insane beings and their insanity remains unknown. The characters of Mrs. Deshpande are portrayed as being under tremendous psychic pressure but they do not become insane. The psychic pressure leads them to self-awareness, though they too feel entrapped within the chains of human relationships. At times these contacts and associations, from which there is no release, prove nuisance and nightmarish experiences as in case of Maya-Gautama, Monisha-Jiban, Nirode and his mother, Sita-Raman, Jaya-Mohan and Saru-Manu relationships. All these characters feel the heat of being related. Temperamental incompatibility leads to their aloofness: Cordiality, affection and concern are totally missing in the relationships delineated in the novels of Anita Desai and Mrs. Deshpande. A sharp contrast can be perceived between the inner and outer worlds of their protagonists and their inherent honesty has been brought in direct clash with the hypocritical world around.

Mrs. Desai and Mrs. Deshpande feel that women must not be treated as machines that can do nothing except to produce children and Mrs. Deshpande has strong objections to their treatment as “breeding animals” in Indian society. Even Mrs. Desai feels that women are capable of having potentialities and abilities that men have. They should be treated at par with their male counterparts. The sight of Indian women being mothers at the cost of their potentials really infuriates Mrs. Deshpande. Purely physical aspects of feminine self fills her with distaste and dislike. But it does not mean that the novelists are against the feminine functions, rather they uphold their faith in a woman who is both, traditional as well as emancipated in her outlook. In spite of using the technique of memory, retrospection of the past, and flash back, Deshpande’s stark realism remains obvious. She deals with authentic characters under typical circumstances and present their inner

conflict, exploitation, frustration. Human relationships, marriage, and sex pose obstacles in their quest for identity.

The female protagonists in the novels of Deshpande rise to heroic stature as they succeed in asserting themselves after passing through a lot of sorrows and sufferings. The novels of Mrs. Desai and Mrs. Deshpande present marital relationship as a glass-house where two people can see each other but fail to communicate. In the Indian society, women find it very difficult to relate themselves to the world without their husbands. So in spite of their sufferings, they try to retain their marital life. But in the novels of Mrs. Desai they fail to assert themselves. The psychic pressure proves too overwhelming that they feel compelled to resort to the violent acts. Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terror*, and Jaya in *That Long Silence*, feel compelled to make a compromise but they are armed with new awareness of their own selves. But the protagonists of Anita Desai remain in psychic misery throughout and it tells upon their mental health terribly. Sita in, *where shall we go This Summer* makes a compromise with life but it is different from the ones made by Saru and Jaya. The novelists under study feel pained to notice that male members of society do make use of various ways and means to curb the growth and personality of women and try every weapon to subordinate them. Women find difficult to make choices. Harsh and unhappy realities of life become the cause of worry and anxiety of Mrs. Desai and Mrs. Deshpande. Mrs. Deshpande tries to open the windows of her female protagonist’s depressing and melancholic world, so that fresh air of a spring morning may enter her dark rooms, Mrs. Desai on the other hand, keeps her female protagonists like Maya and Manisha in darkness throughout and this darkness proves too strong to be penetrated by any ray of hope. Although the novelists have raised certain questions regarding the place and position of women in the Indian society, besides gender issues, yet they prefer to remain within the limits of the Indian middle-class respectability. Human nature in spite of being unpredictable and unacceptable, does not remain unaffected by the healing touch of love and compassion. Jaya in *‘That Long Silence’* adopts a positive attitude to life and hopes to make it possible. We can say that the novels of Mrs. Deshpande end on an optimistic note whereas those of Mrs. Desai conclude with horror and pessimism with an exception to *Where Shall We Go This Summer* where the female protagonist returns to the

normalcy of life and the novel ends on a happy note. Sita neither turns mad nor does she resort to violent acts like murder or suicide. The novels of Mrs. Deshpande indicate the possibility of some positive action in future. She succeeds in building bridges between the old and new and, tradition and modernity. Her novels are immensely significant in their delineation of the reality of the Indian society which is to be within human relationships to make life possible. Although their protagonists are aware and enlightened. A sensitive and authentic dealing of human relationships makes the novels of Mrs. Desai & Mrs. Deshpande popular on the national and international levels. They have been gifted with a rare literary bent of mind. Shashi Deshpande becomes a superb chronicler of human relationships. She presents the vision of humanity and the fabric of life based on values. Being a theme of universal appeal, “epic after epic” can be written on human relationships. While dealing with a relationship the focus of both of the novelists, is essentially on the two human beings. Shashi Deshpande does not undergo the process of simplification of relationships as she writes for the Indian readers. Mrs. Desai portrays particular characters in particular circumstances who can be found in any society. That’s why her novels are equally popular with the western readers. D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf have greatly influenced Mrs. Desai. There is density of relationships in the novels of Mrs. Deshpande and those of Anita Desai. The characters in ‘*The Dark Holds No Terror*,’ and ‘*That Long Silence*,’ have purely family kind of identities.”

The characters in the novels of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande are essentially rebels and they can rebel against their spouse or children or relations. Anita Desai’s deep insight into human nature makes her depict particular traits in her characters which gradually turns into a psychic ailment. Frustration and depression in relationships make her characters neurotics. As the novelist belongs to upper-middle class, her portrayal of characters from upper middle class is sophisticated, realistic and well-chiselled. The relationships portrayed by Mrs. Desai and Mrs. Deshpande are love-hate relationships.

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Toni Morrison’s *Sula*: A Feminist Interpretation

Poonam Mor*

Toni Morrison occupies a distinctive place in the realm of contemporary African-American fiction. A major interest of Morrison has been to do justice to female points of view, concerns and values in all her works. One concern of Morrison is to present what are taken to be distinctively feminine subject matters—the world of domesticity, of gestation, giving birth and nurturing, or mother-daughter and woman-woman relation, woman-man relations. Another concern of Morrison is to show a feminine mode of experience, or ‘subjectivity’, in thinking, feeling, valuing, and perceiving oneself and the outer world. Morrison, beginning with organizing psychological traumas, has travelled to revealing her female protagonist’s thirst for quest and mundane humdrum of life. There is reconciliation, compromise, helpless resignation but no solace, and complete union at the end of her novels. Morrison is excellent in depicting the inner furies of women and their rising tone for emancipation and empowerment. She makes known to us the unconscious motifs of female psyche. We may say that most of the novels of Morrison are replete with her feminist concerns and a powerful description of feminine sensibility.

Sula is a story that takes place in a fictional town called Medallion, Ohio. In an interview, Morrison explains her thoughts on the creation of Medallion, Ohio, “When I wrote *Sula*, I was interested in making a town, the community, the neighborhood, as strong as a character as I could” (Step 11). Medallion, Ohio is a black community struggling to define itself against the racism that was so prevalent following the abolition of slavery. The town was actually founded as a second chance, or some hope for former slaves. This type of town lends itself more easily to the folklore tradition because it stands for the power of dreams and a change from the harsh realities of slavery.

In *Sula*, Eva begins as the victim of a white and male-dominated society. She sought relationship with BoyBoy through marriage—a decision that looked right because he was employed. The crisis was caused after five years of abuse and bantering when her drunkard, womanizing husband left her. She is left with one roomcabin, \$1.65,

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five eggs and three beets and three children with winter already silting in. Without her man's support and unable to depend on neighbour's courtesy for long, Eva is forced to assume the male role. Realizing the hopelessness of the situation, she leaves her children with a neighbor and disappears for eighteen months. When she returns, she is missing a leg but has a substantial income. According to Susan Willis as she observes in "Eruption of Funk: Historicizing Toni Morrison" that self-mutilation is[a] final metaphor for social otherness. . . . Unlike lack and deformity, self-mutilation represents the individual's direct confrontation with the oppressive social forces inherent in white domination. (322)

The missing leg of Eva represents the physical as well as emotional amputation that she underwent to survive in a racist and class-conscious American society. Though she has now money as well as time, she hardly spends it with her children and granddaughter. She adopts three boys, provides for them, but hardly shows motherly affection to them. Sula is born in a family where the women reign supreme. Eva, her grandmother, is an archetypal "great mother." She nourishes and protects her family by providing sustenance and life. Although her role as great mother places Eva in a situation that requires her to sacrifice, she also embodies the dark side of the role that is of a terrible mother. Eva is both the taker as well as giver of life. She is, in other words, capable of destroying that to which she has given life. She sacrifices herself and she also sacrifices her son when it is necessary.

Sula is unique in the make-up of her mind. Whereas Eva's relation to the community is central to her life, Sula dismisses herself from the ties and codes that bind together people of the Bottom. Sula is in search of her selfhood. She, therefore, is prepared to defy the rules, codes, mores, and customs which bring constraints on her life and behavior. Consequently, her rebelliousness manifests itself in several ways. Unlike other Medallion women, she refuses to marry and raise a family. Morrison establishes early on the events that make Sula's identity an essentially negative one. Sula overhears a conversation between her mother and other women during which Hannah remarks: "You love her, like I love Sula. I just don't like her" (*Sula* 57). Later the same day a little boy drowns when he slips from Sula's hands while she and Nel are playing. The first experience taught her there was no other that you could count on and the second that there was no self to count on either. She had "no centre, no speck around which to grow" (*Sula* 118-

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119). Hence, she sets herself on a mission-the mission whom she defines thus: "I do not want to make somebody else, I want to make myself" (*Sula* 85). As a result, she makes relentless efforts to make herself, and to attain and appreciate her unified black female self.

For a time she has an epicenter of sorts in Nel, her girlhood friend. Their experiences of emerging womanhood, of personal bonds, and of death and guilt are very effectively rendered. The critical difference between Eva and Sula is that the older woman had her power thrust on her by bitter circumstances and she bore both a deep pride and a bitter grudge for bearing that burden. Sula, on the other hand, wants to find and exert the power of her own life, a choice the older generation of women did not have. It is also a choice that the Bottom as a collective does not have. On the one hand her childhood friend Nel eventually defines herself by community conventions. Helene attempts to inculcate the same attitudes of propriety and orderliness into Nel in order to suppress any funky urges that her daughter may have: "Under Helene hand the girl became obedient and polite. Any enthusiasms that little Nel showed were calmed by the mother until she drove her daughter's imagination underground" (*Sula* 18). Helene's repressed upbringing represents a cycle of what Mary Helen Washington in her "Black-Eyed Susans" calls ". . . psychic violence that alienates [black women] from their roots and cuts them off from real contact with their own people and also from a part of themselves" (213).

Morrison demonstrates through Sula the difficulty women have in finding a relationship in which they can explore all aspects of their self. Black women are victims of American society, and this dominating society will have to be turned upside down before they receive love and respect. But when this day comes, there will be one black woman who will already know what love is, even if it is only self love, and that woman is Sula. For Sula love is synonymous with freedom. Sula's friendship with Nel is very important to her. But Nel turns away from Sula. As a result, Sula draws herself further away from the community and acts in destructive manner, both to the community and to herself. In *Sula*, Morrison creates Sula who wishes to break free from this social cycle of denial and certitude. Most of the women subalterns of Medallion never leave their hometown, and therefore, their search for self-identity is limited. In fact, they act out the script that has been written for them by the white and male-dominated society. She tries to seek the physical

as well as emotional freedom from the order and control of society. Sula rejects traditionally ordered principles like marriage, children, grandparental care, and sexual mores, because of the restrictions they create. This rejection is an automatic response of rebellion.

Males in *Sula* have been woven around the myth of the black man desperately trying to define manhood through adventurism. The street boys hang about in the streets to prey black girls—the easy victims to cater their urge for adventurism. The grown ups like Jude seek some manly work in a racist society: His arms ached for something heavier than trays, for something dirtier than peelings; his feet wanted the heavy work shoes, not the thin solid black shoes that the hotel required. More than anything they wanted the camaraderie of the roadmen. The lunch buckets, the hollering, the body movement that in the end produced something real, something he could point to. (*Sula* 81-82)

Failure to do real work as well as produce something real makes Jude seek manhood through marriage. There are other subalterns like Shadrack and Plum who enlist in the Army expecting “to feel something very strong” (*Sula* 7) amidst terrifying violence, which only shatters them. Shadrack returns with amnesia too disoriented to cover the mark of his maleness. Plum returns after two years of service in an unkempt condition. He drugs himself to forgetfulness till at last his mother ascribes him total forgetfulness of death.

Among other males are the three Deweys who wander aimlessly. Their similar name points to their non-identity whereas their stunted growth is suggestive of both immaturity and incompleteness. They remain unable to care for themselves for as long as they live, expecting Eva and Sula to provide their food, shelter, and clothing. There is one Albert Jacks called Ajax who is thoughtful, generous kind of man who is interested in sex, without being nailed down, “spends time in idle pursuits of bachelors without work” (*Sula* 126). His greatest love is for aeroplanes. He is afraid of the possessing love of Sula and ultimately leaves her. He returns to his vision of planes and flight.

Morrison in this novel experiments with masculinity by attributing some of its characteristics to her female characters and thereby presenting the new concept of womanhood. At the same time, she questions the validity of gender role division and society's concept of

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good and evil. In her state of loss, isolation, and finally death, Sula depolarizes the distance between herself and the community, and especially between herself and Nel. All the doors to a meaningful self and place in the community are closed to them. Sula is struck down for attempting both exploration and conformity while Nel, for her self-diminishing wish for respectability and survival. Sula draws the distinction between both of them when she speaks to Nel on her death-bed: “You think I don't know what your life is like just because I ain't living it. I know what every colored woman in this country is doing.” “What's that?” “Dying. Just like me. But the difference is they dying like a stump. Me, I'm going down like one of those redwoods. I sure did live in this world.” (*Sula* 143) Sula has the distinction of being in a community that believes that selfhood can only be selfishness. Because of her drive for self-knowledge, and because of her refusal to accept her community's conventions, Sula emerges as a unique woman.

Sula's refusal of positive identity cannot be tolerated, so she is explained as a demon. Like her mother Hannah, she sleeps with the men of the bottom indiscriminately. But unlike Hannah, her behavior is seen as arrogant rather than complimentary. Without evidence, she is accused by having had liaisons with white men, which is considered the essence of degradation. For Sula, putting her grandmother away in an old age home becomes an act of self-presentation encouraged by Eva's domineering behaviour but to the community it is a scandal. All this become the evidence necessary to fit Sula negatively into the social order. Sula becomes conscious of being black as well as female. Not only this, she also tries to raise the consciousness in the mind of Nel, Sula, a black girl who rejects patriarchal social order, understands that there is no love left for the black woman, and therefore she must love herself. And to acquire self-love she does what pleases her though she is discarded by society as a pariah. She tries to live up to the standard that she wants to create for herself.

All things have their use and even Sula's evil nature is used by her community to validate and enrich its own existence. As pariah, she gives them a focus through which they achieve some unity. Sula's peripheral life makes her scapegoat for the Bottom's citizens. Philip Royster contends, “the folk create the scapegoat by identifying Sula as the cause of the misery, which they identify as evil, in their lives. It is undoubtedly easier for the folk to anthropomorphize their misery than

to examine the generation of that misery by their relation to the environment. The folk produced good in their lives, that is, loving and caring for one another, by reacting to their own conception of evil, Sula, who they considered a witch" (164). It is significant, the emphasis the author places on women as accessible scapegoat figures for communities, for any obviously conscious disregard of cultural norms on their part seems to represent not only a threat to the community but to the whole species as well.

Although Nel and Sula have taken opposite paths, they are both dying. Death brings them together again when Nel comes to see Sula on her death bed. Sula had lived gloriously before she was struck down while Nel, on the other hand, endures physically but only at the price of never having fulfilled herself. What Nel learns at the bedside disturbs the center around which she has organized her life. She escapes her own responsibility for self-creation and action by believing that she has been a mere victim. Like the community, she achieves a false innocence by constructing a moral hierarchy with herself at the top and Sula at the bottom. Their conversation illuminates the difference between their philosophies. In her final speech in this novel, Sula crystallizes the differences: "How you know?" Sula asked "Know what?" Nel wouldn't look at her "About who was good. How you know it was you?" "What you mean?" "I mean may be it wasn't you. May be it was me." (Sula 146)

Ultimately, the alternatives embodied in Nel and Sula are not good and evil, but constraint and freedom. The oppression of African women in the United States, especially in the first quarter of the twentieth century, is documented throughout the novel. Morrison's most articulate statement in regard to the female's degradation comes in the passage that appears after Sula and Nel first meet: "Because each [Sula and Nel] had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they had set about creating something else to be" (*Sula* 52). Within this statement are found both the dilemma of the novel and the solution to the dilemma. African women are oppressed, and to escape their oppression, they must become self-propagators. Sula and Nel are both trying to forge their own identities as black women but neither is completely successful.

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Sula is a pariah whose values are often the polar opposites of those adopted by her provincial society. What Banyiwah-Horne suggests is of paramount importance. Sula as Banyiwah-Horne puts together, "becomes a pariah precisely because she rejects those values that aim at uniformity and stifle the self" (31). All her attempts at an experientially guiltless and egoless life ironically lead her not to identity or community, but to an ultimate sense of solitude and isolation. And thus she learns that an experimental life, especially for a woman leads only to ostracism, loneliness, and ultimately to a descent "down howling, howling in a stinging awareness of the ending of things" (*Sula* 123). Moreover, Sula's oppression as a woman is the result of an oppressive economic system, not men; she finds it impossible to escape all of the traditionalisms associated with women. The foregoing discussion highlights that Morrison's early novels demonstrate how the loss of self-worth in African-American women is caused by the black community as well as by the hegemony of the dominant world. Morrison is able to unravel through the sufferings of Sula that their sufferings and pain is the result of the exploitation and oppression caused by the hegemonic white society.

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Changing Role of Women in English Literature : An Overview

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*Harshdeep**

Traditional society in England as all over the world has been patriarchal where men have dominated every aspect of life. Women were supposed to be passive, submissive and treated as objects of beauty and sex to be possessed by the brave or the rich. Accordingly English literature has presented a large number of women whose primary desire in life has been to acquire a rich husband, to lead a life of luxury and were contented with a secondary role in life. In the traditional romances the hero would fight against giants and demons and all kinds of odds to win the woman of his dream. A Desdemona in Shakespeare's *Othello* or Isabella as in Webster's *The White Devil* and The Duchess as in *The Duchess of Malfi* are the role model for such women but there have been examples in English literature of women characters who were not content with this status, were discontented with their traditional status and strove to have equal status with men and to dominate men. *Wife of Bath* in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is a woman enjoying equal status with men. Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* dominates her husband, persuades him, much against his inclination to murder Duncan and usurp the throne though still she has to do, what she desires, through her husband and she cannot murder Duncan herself. In Shakespeare's comedies heroines like Rosalind in *As You Like It* play a more active role but the aim is only to possess the men of their choice but not to dominate them. In 18th century the women characters like Richardson's *Pamela* and *Tom Jones* Sophia are mainly concerned with preserving their virtue and to have men of their choice and not to yield to men they do not like. However, Defoe's *Moll Flanders* is a woman who takes independent decisions struggles against men, exploits them to her advantage and plays a dominant role.

Restoration comedy like in *The Way of the World* woman is object of sex and woman is concerned with successful marriage and avoiding the advances of men who may cheat them like Fainall who wishes to grab property of his wife.

William Shakespeare lived during the Elizabethan era and wrote

all his works based on the society of that time. The Elizabethan era was a time where women were portrayed to be weaker than men. During this time it was said that "women are to be seen, not heard." Marriages at this time were usually arranged by parents, and women were to marry whenever parents set them up. At this time people married for wealth and the well being.

In Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, Ophelia, a main character is controlled by her father and the king. Ophelia fits the stereotype of women of the times, because she is easily controlled by the men in her life. Ophelia cannot express her feeling for Hamlet because her father has forbidden her to see him. If Ophelia was independently and didn't allow her father to control her life, she would have been able to be with the man she loved. Another example of Shakespeare's portrayal of women of his time through his plays is Desdemona, in *Othello*. Desdemona, like Katherine in "*Taming of the shrew*" is a rebellious girl. Desdemona decides to marry Othello without her father's permission. At this period in time for a girl to deny her father the right to choose her husband was not common. The men in their lives, especially their fathers and husbands, easily overpowered most women of Desdemona's time. Then again Othello, Desdemona's husband raised his voice to her and hit her and she had no protection from him an effective control over their destiny.

Isabella in Webster's *The White Devil* is true and faithful to Brachiano and cannot think of a life without her husband. On the other hand Brachiano is unfaithful and wishes to marry Vitoria. He threatens Isabella that he would never sleep with her and would divorce her. Poor Isabella can only think of death in the face of this gross injustice to her. This shows that how a woman in Webster's age felt helpless before injustice by men. Poor Isabella is helpless and wishes to have the power of a man and says that if she had the power of a man she would have adulterous men stung by scorpions. This reveals the helpless position of women in society.

Lady Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's most famous and frightening female characters who lusts for power and position. When we first see her, she is already plotting Duncan's murder, and she is stronger, more ruthless, and more ambitious than her husband. She seems fully aware of this and knows that she will have to push Macbeth into committing murder. At one point, she wishes that she

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were not a woman so that she could do it herself. This theme of the relationship between gender and power is key to Lady Macbeth's character: her husband implies that she is a masculine soul inhabiting a female body, which seems to link masculinity to ambition and violence. Shakespeare, however, seems to use her, and the witches, to undercut Macbeth's idea that "undaunted mettle should compose / Nothing but males" (I.vii.73-74). These crafty women use *female* methods of achieving power—that is, manipulation—to further their supposedly male ambitions. Women, the play implies, can be as ambitious and cruel as men, yet social constraints deny them the means to pursue these ambitions on their own. Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband with remarkable effectiveness, overriding all his objections; when he hesitates to murder; she repeatedly questions his manhood until he feels that he must commit murder to prove himself. Lady Macbeth's remarkable strength of will persists through the murder of the king—it is she who steadies her husband's nerves immediately after the crime has been perpetrated. Afterward, however, she begins a slow slide into madness—just as ambition affects her more strongly than Macbeth before the crime, so does guilt plague her more strongly afterward. By the close of the play, she has been reduced to sleepwalking through the castle, desperately trying to wash away an invisible bloodstain. Once the sense of guilt comes home to roost, Lady Macbeth's sensitivity becomes a weakness, and she is unable to cope with it. Significantly, she (apparently) kills herself, signaling her total inability to deal with the legacy of their crimes.

To pave her way she learns the craft of using men by deceiving them into a marriage as it becomes her habit or a kind of obsession. She lives in a hostile, urban world, which allows for no weakness. Social position and wealth are the dominant factors for survival. She has neither and her life is a struggle to achieve both. Moll rises from abject poverty and anonymity to wealth and security and it is interesting to speculate just how much her account would have provided hope for those from the dispossessed lower social order who were literate enough to read her story.

Moll likes handsome gentlemanly men, but will settle for less, when expedient. In her life nothing is certain, it is a constant battle for survival in a world which is hostile and takes no account of poverty or

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feminine gender. She is quite prepared to ditch men, or to accept that men ditch her and she survives because she can adapt and change. When she turns to crime there is often a glimpse at a genuine coldness of heart, not to be wondered at, given the circumstances she finds herself in, time after time. It must be remembered that she lived in a family where women were deprived of control over their property and Moll is often 'ruined' because the men in her life are inadequate or greedy. If a man destroyed his wife's security, she has little power to change the situation. It is no surprise that Moll seeks the best of a bad situation as often as she can. Dressing up as a man seems to be a sensible solution and so it proves to be, until she gets tired of it.

Place of women in society is very different today compared to the place of women in Victorian society, as is clear from the example of, Maggie Tulliver in *Mill On The Floss* was written nearly two hundred years ago. It is no surprise that society has changed especially for women. This can be shown by looking at Maggie and her impetuous and violent behaviour has been likened to that of her father's stressing theme of heredity and her anomalies as a woman with masculine character traits-Maggie's anger can be seen as a symbol of feminist frustration and rage at the oppression of women in Victorian society. Maggie rejects the conventional definition of femininity in many ways, but her experience repeatedly defeats her striving for equality. And in the 19th century education was only for the privileged, and if the opportunity of education arose it was rarely for women. Maggie would have gained considerably from the kind of education in which Tom fails. For her desire such an education is seen as an aberration and defiance. As Maggie Tulliver approaches adulthood, her spirited temperament brings her into conflict with her family, her community, and her much loved brother Tom, and it seems as if her education and aspiration becomes her undoing.

All this brief survey of English literature shows that women in English Literature has steadily moved away from a completely submissive person, a piece of property to an assertive women though still ultimately contented with happy married life but from 19th century onwards women in English Literature has been discontented with this secondary position and desires to have intellectual pursuits and independent identity.

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