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Identity-Construction and Looking into the Soul: The Narrative Structure and Dynamics of Joseph Conrad

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Abstract

One of the notable characteristics of Joseph Conrad's fiction is the *Self-Construction* of character with self-conscious in addition to innovative use of narrative techniques. Conrad is noted for frequently employing contemplative personified narrators, many of whom produce recognizably oral narratives to a listener or a group of listeners. The most famous and arguably the most intriguing of these storytellers is *Charlie Marlow*, whose narratives form the primary subject of this research article. Joseph Conrad, through Marlow expresses his inner feelings, be it of joy at a young sailor's first command or his first view of the East. He expresses dismay at the meaningless destruction in Africa, the cost a man has to pay for his pursuit of greatness as seen in the case of Jim as in *Lord Jim*. Conrad voices the adventures, lives and the ideals of different men through his narrator Marlow who is not only the narrator of Conrad's tales, but also one who *looks into the soul* and sympathizes with the characters that he is made to describe. This method of narration gives Conrad the essential independence to express his point of view without making his presence felt during the course of the *narrative*. Conrad reformulates the concept of narrative identity in the novel itself. The present study concentrates on Conrad's interest in the power and uses of narrative and his concern with the problem of identity are intimately related. The imaginative reconstruction of the past through the act of narration involves the *construction of identities*: above all the identity of the narrator, but also that of the characters described in the narrative. Conrad's narrators often appeal to as well as challenge the purported values of the community to which they all belong.

Keywords: Joseph Conrad, Identity-Construction, Self-Conscious, Narrative Structure, Technique, Dynamics

Introduction

Being an artistic artist, the novelist touches upon life and portrays the ordinary realities of the average person which pass by unobserved by him. The novel thus provokes the imagination of the reader and allows him the freedom to place the situations and characters described within his realization in such a way that what he reads and what the novelist describes seems to be real, "A novel is a picture of life, and life is well known to us"(Lubbock 5). The reader sees the world that the novelist portrays through the narrator and after having read a novel, he returns to reality or dreams based on novelistic models. The novelist creates a situation which appears to be real and he also creates characters that are "*free* people, capable of standing *alongside*" (Bakhtin 32, 6). One of the hallmarks of Joseph Conrad's fiction is the *self-construction* of character with self-conscious as well as innovative use of narrative technique. In particular, Conrad is noted for frequently employing contemplative personified narrators, many of whom produce recognizably oral narratives to a listener or a group of listeners. In Conrad's novels, the narrator Marlow, searches for *identity* amidst the devastation carried on in Africa under the pretext of bringing civilization to the continent and the desire to achieve recognition in life, as seen in Jim. Conrad adopts the technique of having the story told by a character in it – that is, Marlow who offers his own opinions and not those of the author. Marlow is not only a go-between as a voice but is the author as well, without the author making his presence felt during the course of the narrative.

Another characteristic feature of Conrad's fiction is a preoccupation with questions of identity – a preoccupation that is unsurprising to anyone familiar with the story of his life. Born to Polish parents as Józef Teodor Konrad Nałecz Korzeniowski in a town in Russian-occupied Ukraine, formerly a part of the Polish Commonwealth, he went on to become a seaman in French and then English merchant ships, his eventual transition from seaman to writer in his third language involved adopting "Joseph Conrad" as his pen name and the far more complicated process of crafting his English literary identity. Conrad's own understanding of his multiple identities is summed up in his oft-quoted remark, made in a letter of 1903, that "Homo duplex has in my case more than one meaning" (CL3 89).

The present study concentrates on Conrad's interest in the power and uses of narrative and his concern with the problem of identity are intimately related on top of his self-reflective storytellers engaged in an interpretative or re-interpretative enterprise that concerns not only certain events in the past but also themselves. There is a sense that it is only by telling their narratives to their listeners that Conrad's narrators can come to a better (although never

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complete) self-understanding. But self-understanding is not a matter of simply discovering a preexisting and correct interpretation of one's character and actions. Conrad's fiction suggests that such an interpretation does not exist, that there is no such thing as an individual's true identity waiting to be discovered. The imaginative reconstruction of the past through the act of narration involves the *construction* of identities: above all the identity of the narrator, but also that of the characters described in the narrative. Nor does the identity of the listeners remain unaffected. By negotiating their identities with their audience, Conrad's narrators often appeal to as well as challenge the purported values of the community to which they all belong.

Conrad reformulates the concept of narrative identity in the novel itself, he also had a fondness for multiple narrators and framed tales, in which frame narrative and embedded narrative both illuminate aspects of the story but at the same time offer competing interpretations of it, leaving it to the reader to decide which interpretation is to be given more credit. As Jeremy Hawthorn has put it, Conrad's use of personified narrators in general, and frame narratives in particular, gives the clear picture "that distinctively Conradian senses that we do not perceive the world and its people in unmediated form, but indirectly, either through one reporting consciousness, or through a chain of linked consciousnesses" ("Half-written Fictions" 155).

The Narrative Structure and Dynamics

The narrator is a source of information, which flows from the novelist to the reader and may also be regarded as a means by which communication between the novelist and the reader is enabled. "One of the ... devices of the storyteller is the trick of going beneath the surface of the action to obtain a reliable view of a character's mind and heart" (Booth 171). The narrator describes events in the narrative, addressing the audience directly. He also communicates to the readers, the state of mind and emotion of the characters described. The novelist's use of a narrator serves to establish a close relationship between the writer and the reader. The writer, very subtly, is able to put forth his point of view and his comments without allowing the reader to feel his presence. This method of narration is extremely effective for the narrator sets the tone of the tale that he narrates whilst also conveying the novelist's point of view through multiple narrative strategies.

Although Conrad's fiction betrays an ongoing concern with the way in which personal as well as collective identities are constructed through storytelling, the Marlovian narratives offer a particularly fruitful ground for an examination. An almost exclusively oral storyteller whose narratives are always introduced by an anonymous narrator at a higher narrative level, Marlow tells the greater part of as many as four of Conrad's works. In all of these texts *Youth*, *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Chance* **Marlow** relates to his listener or listeners a narrative in which he himself features as a character. All these factors combined make him the ideal narrator for

Conrad to dramatize the close relation between narration and identity. The fact that there is another narrator describing how Marlow addresses an audience, in *Chance*, mostly a single listener, draws attention to the act of narration and thus to the process of *identity construction*. In other words, the Marlovian narratives show identity in the making. That Marlow always tells a tale, at least partly, about him also means that Conrad can exploit the difference between the narrator and the character; he can formulate the way in which the narrating self relates to the actions and thoughts of his past self. The fact that Marlow appears in four works encourages the readers to consider how his identity evolves from text to text. However, there is no clear continuity between his incarnations because he creates himself anew in each of his narratives. What makes the figure of Marlow especially interesting is that he not only allows Conrad to dramatize *identity-construction* in the fiction; it is also partly through Marlow that Conrad creates his own *literary identity*.

Heart of Darkness is the artistic projection of Conrad's personal journey to the Congo in 1890. It marks the beginning of a major creative phase in the literary journey of Conrad. Marlow says at the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*: "Between us there was the bond of the sea" (135) and this statement is the yarn that connects him to *Youth* which marks the introduction of Marlow as the narrator in Conrad's fiction. Conrad once again uses Marlow as the narrator, because he was not only concerned with the events described, but with their impression on the readers: "The journey is a journey into darkness...He was preoccupied with the mystery and problem of Evil in life. He tended to focus on man's predicament which often forces him to face the unknown" (Sethuraman et al 104,105). Marlow too is developed into the self-expressive character seen here and in *Lord Jim* and *Chance*. However, Conrad's purpose is not merely to entertain, but also to instruct. It is Marlow's memory that pieces together and re-creates Conrad's journey into the Belgian Congo. On a personal level, the Congo journey was the prime influence that determined Conrad the sailor to become Conrad the novelist. For Conrad, the expedition to the Congo became a journey within, a journey through darkness into the self. It records a journey into the darkness within man which awakens at the touch of the actual experience of the Congo and the light that it sheds on confusion, fascination, guilt, the sense of nightmare: "It seemed to throw a kind of light upon everything about me – and into my thoughts" (*Heart of Darkness* 141). Conrad's aim is not only to take the reader on a journey to the Congo but through this journey to bring to light questions which may arise in the mind of the reader, being faced with a situation as that seen in Africa.

Heart of Darkness to be a highly complex and layered text in which communication takes place at various different levels. This complexity alone, however, cannot fully explain why it is sometimes so difficult to distinguish between the particular instances of senders and receivers. Conrad himself used narrative to reengage indirectly with his complicity in the

colonial enterprise in the Congo. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad certainly suggests that there is no ultimate truth about the self and that language is an imperfect tool for self-expression and for rendering experience. But the text also demonstrates how language and narrative can help the readers cope with the past by organizing the fragmentary experiences into a coherent whole. Although Marlow will probably need to retell this narrative to find the effective story with which he can fully identify, he is shown to be moving towards a coherent understanding of his Congo experiences. By extension, that Conrad may have written *Heart of Darkness* at least partly in order to come to terms with his traumatic experiences as well as with his complicity in what he had seen in the Congo. Joseph Conrad, through Marlow expresses his inner feelings, be it of joy at a young sailor's first command or his first view of the East. He expresses dismay at the meaningless destruction in Africa, the cost a man has to pay for his pursuit of greatness as seen in the case of Jim as in *Lord Jim* and the role of destiny when one like Flora in *Chance* has to suffer because of no apparent fault.

Youth is a story about Conrad's early voyage as second mate on the 'Palestine' in 1881-82. An old leaky ship named 'Judea' is rammed by a steamship in Newcastle harbour and further damaged by storms in the English Channel. It is put into the harbour at Falmouth for repairs which seem to be endless. After the ship sets out for Bangkok the cargo of coal soon catches fire. A long, but fruitless struggle ensues in order to control the fire, but the ship explodes off Sumatra and the crew has to abandon it, taking to their boats. Marlow is able to obtain charge of a boat and relates memories of his first command. To him everything appears adventurous and he takes delight in commanding the small lifeboat. Marlow navigates to a little tropical port and wakes up the next morning to have his first view of the East: "This was the East of the ancient navigators, so old, so mysterious, resplendent and somber, living and unchanged, full of danger and promise" (131). *Youth* is a recreation of Conrad's life at sea. It is an evocation, a recollection of a mood, of an attitude that he recaptures. Marlow, whom we see in *Youth*, is a part of the group that travels to the East and authenticates his narration. Conrad adopted British citizenship. He was proud of the sea-faring activities of the Englishmen and through Marlow voices his own pride as an Englishman. The young Marlow undergoes a process of maturation from which he emerges as a more self-possessed and fully-formed person than he appeared to be at the beginning of the narrative as the indivisible component of Conrad's narration. Marlow's description is realistic, and the narration is informed by all that he goes through till the Judea blows up and he is given command of the new vessel.

More explicitly and in a more complex way than any other work by Conrad, *Lord Jim* is about the human need to construct a coherent identity by means of narrative. Both in its form and subject matter, the novel dramatizes the compulsion to tell narratives of the self and the desire to have these narratives verified by others. It also asks the related question of how the failure of one

of its members threatens the narrative of the community and, more broadly, the narrative of imperialism. Completed about a year and a half after *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* takes up and develops many of the issues raised in the earlier novella. But unlike *Youth* and *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* is not primarily Marlow's self-narrative. Jim is the main character and his narrative identity the central interest of the novel. Marlow serves as his confidant and the recipient of his confession but recedes ever further into the background of the story he tells. This is not to say, however, that Marlow's narrative function diminishes in importance, but that it undergoes a profound transformation. As a full-length novel, *Lord Jim* also features various other characters who become storytellers. Criticism has tended to focus on their stories only in so far as they shed light on Jim's character, yet some of these are also interesting as self-narratives in their own right. Marlow, in both his oral and his written narrative, offers a balanced interpretation and synthesis of all these varied and partly contradictory stories. Yet, he is far from being an impartial observer. For Marlow too, the act of narration turns out to be a deeply personal undertaking, a means of creating a coherent story of this episode of his life, one that he hopes can invert the effect of the many contingencies with which Jim's case is fraught. *Lord Jim*, in turn, can be read as a piece of autobiographical fiction, even though it is not based on a single memorable event or period of Conrad's life, as were the two earlier Marlow tales.

Conclusion:

The creator and his creation maintain a democratic relationship, and the Marlovian narratives are thus nothing but the result of Conrad's productive cooperation. Probably the novels of Conrad exhibit the idea of personal honour which is essential to man's existence. In his novels, a character defends himself through his actions. He took recourse to the character of Marlow in order to voice his own feelings, whether skeptical or otherwise. Joseph Conrad's stories of the sea, the jungle, and the social and political instability of mankind and the innermost workings of the human heart are commentaries on and reflections of his own life and varied experiences. Conrad's early experiences set the pattern of his life and provided themes which often occurred in the books he later wrote. Like many of his heroes, he was lonely and sought independence. The emotional estrangement of man in an alien surrounding whether self-imposed or circumstantial recurs in Conrad's novels. He used his life at sea as a canvas against which he examined human nature and action. He would gather his fellow sailors around him, on the deck of a ship and have one of them narrate a personal experience. In order to maintain distance from the narrative and to be able to comment on the situation and the characters without interfering in the narrative, Conrad created the character of Marlow who was crucial for his commentaries on the action and situation in the narrative, and who subsequently acted as Conrad's spokesperson.

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Symbols and Images as a Positive Force in Reclaiming Jewish Identity in Dara Horn's *In The Image*

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Abstract

Each and every culture has its own beliefs, practices, ideas, customs and symbols. One active way of remembering the past is through the practice of rituals and following the traditions. Dara Horn in her novel *In The Image* presents ancient Jewish history in the light of contemporary American Jewish life and explores the Jewish past as well as the Jewish present. This paper focuses how the ancient images and symbols which are the essential substance for the existence of the Jewish present tradition help them to reclaim their identity.

Keywords: Dara Horn, *In The Image*, Jewish, History, Identity

Culture is more than sum of the customs and beliefs through which it is recognized in a distinct way of life. It is a medium through which people of divergent personalities are tied together through a collective belonging to something greater than themselves. As a social and communal adhesive of sorts, a given culture fosters a sense of kinship amongst people through a common connection to language, customs, and a shared past. According to Thiong'o, "Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of

values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture....” (16).

In search of roots and restoring the old values are essential in a young Jew’s life. The Jews like to know about their historical past, as they are the people who face abomination and violence all over the world and chased away by most people. Whitfield states that, “the claims of the past were not utterly abandoned” (376). Leora, a 17-year-old Jewish New Jerseyite who is interested in her ancient Jewish history is in search of her roots. She learns Yiddish, language of a modern Jew and likes to explore the primordial places. She visits Jewish historical sites in Spain where she has immersed herself in hundreds of years of history. She is very much influenced by what she has seen and feels about the places and the people. She thinks her as a medium of source through which she shares her beautiful experiences about the ancient places to the very old community where she belongs.

According to Prince, “A true Jew, in addition to be a Jew by birth, or conversion, must have the inner condition of heart that earns him or her the praise of God” (21). Belonging to the intangible culture which contains folklore, traditions, language and natural heritage which are inherited from the ancient past and maintained in the present with fervent texture, Leora’s family follow the traditional way of prayer and a special Friday night dinner in honor of sabbath. They lit candles and recite blessings over the candles, sing the prayers and sit together and sing songs in honor of the day, reciting the grace after meals in Hebrew, “exactly like in those old Jewish folktales” (56). This practice is the symbol of maintaining their natural heritage and faith which they have inherited from the past, maintaining it in the present and preserve it for the future generations. Even though they live in a space which contains various identifications along with the supreme American culture, still they cling to their own beliefs and traditional values. Leora identifies her father as a person who wears tefillin during morning prayers. This tefillin is a symbol that shows their faith in their religion and God which signifies that they still follow the word of God. The tefillin in their arm and on their foreheads reveal that they bind themselves with the transcendent and eternal God and their traditional beliefs.

The bitterness of exile and waiting for redemption are painful experiences in the life of the Jewish people. Working as a journalist Leora happens to see the Tefillin in random accessories, a shop that sells antique collections. It invokes the memories of the story shared by her former lover Jason about Rosenthal and other discriminated Jews who travels from Europe to America in a ship which reveals the painful experience of the journey and the pitiable condition of the Jews. During 1920s and 30s anti Semitism is common in Europe. In many places Jews have been living in concentrated camps. The modern ghettos of Nazis change into a place where

Jews face execution, torture and death. They are slaughtered mercilessly. Racial abomination and the blind rage turn the Jews into a small dissolving community.

To escape from the slaughter the Jews started to migrate to America. Rosenthal reveals the suffocating memory of the journey as they travel as packed in hundreds, without ventilation. The Jews get frustrated because they face expulsion, persecution and enslavement. Their anguished cry makes them to shed away their past and are ready to give up their culture and ethnic identity. To get rid of their past identity many Jews throw their Tefillin into the sea. They do not want to trap themselves again in their old traditional ways and old-world culture which cause them so much pain and suffering. The first-generation immigrants let go off the past and adapt the new culture with an open heart. It is not only the tefillin they discard but also, they discard their culture, language, ritual and their past history. Here throwing away the ritual object tefillin signifies the shedding of their painful past.

Survival is the basic necessity of every human being. The Jews are in search of a new space. They negotiate the boundaries, spread their wings and fly to new places to survive. Wherever they go they face discrimination, violence, economic exploitation, deprivations and ghetto conditions. In America's industrial cities where clock fixing is common, the entire Jewish family has to work for hours in factories to survive. Leah, an Austro Hungarian, comes as an immigrant to America to survive. She enters into America to build a happy and peaceful life. She comes from a town south of Kiev, a land of woods and works in a sewing factory in America. Leah's marriage with David, a Hebrew scholar ends in the very first day as he shows his cruel nature. By the force of law and afraid of excommunication David grants Leah divorce. Leah's life starts to change when she speaks to Aaron, the factory clerk. They fall in love but her parents refused her to marry Aaron because he is a Cohen, descendant of the high priest. According to Jewish traditional law a divorced woman cannot marry a member of the priestly class. For a Jew, religious law is more important than his or her personal demands. Even though Leah's family is in the midst of the boiling cauldron of multiethnic and multilingual America they still decide to follow their religious law given by God. Leah's disappointment makes her to get angry over the ancient law which takes away her happiness. Aaron and Leah get married in the factory without the knowledge of others but soon darkness engulfed Leah's life in the form of Aaron's death as Aaron died in the boarding house fire. Leah mourned for Aaron and plans to go back to her home country. She returns to her homeland in a ship from New York harbor. When the ship passes under the Statue of Liberty, she takes the box that her father has given her and throws her father's Tefillin in the ocean with bitterness. For Leah tradition and rituals are the one which rip her apart from her happy family life with Aaron. She thinks it as a curse which uproots her life and turns into a more miserable one.

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The history of holocaust brings torment, distress and anguish. Leora reflects about the change that occurs in the life of the immigrant Jewish people and the change in their names. To join in the land of the free and the home of the brave and to escape from racial atrocities they discard their old names and change their names which help them to fit in the vast American culture. They are afraid to expose themselves as Jews because of the fear of the loss in their social position and status. Even though they remain as a Jew in their life they do not want to stamp themselves into the old-world religious identity with religious names. But changes occur in the life of Jason, a young Jew as he adapts Hassidism and renames as Yehudah, a dried-out name, a name once discarded by the Jewish people who enter into the mainstream American culture as immigrants. Now the modern Jew, Jason wants to use it so he takes it back and gives life to that name. When Jason is being called as Yehudah by his wife Rivka, Leora is surprised to hear and see the fierce loyalty of Jason towards Judaism. From a self-hating Jew, a Jew who feels very uncomfortable around religious Jews, a soccer player who has adopted modern American culture during his college days has now changed completely into a Hassidic. Ezrahi points out, "Jews have always used in self-defence, that of barricading themselves behind a wall of Torah and fighting the next round with God" (121).

Memory is the process of maintaining information over time. Jews are the holders of longest and most tenacious of memories. The color of the Jewish past remains unchanged in their life because of the unforgettable painful memory. The images of the past history affect the memory of the Jews and bring them a new experience. Leora's visit to Amsterdam and the Rijks museum evokes the memory of her ancestral past. She is amazed by the paintings of Rembrandt, a Dutch artist, who paints scenes from the Bible which everyone regards as his greatest creative triumphs. Rembrandt uses the models of Jewish quarter in his paintings because he believes that they resemble close to the biblical scenes and characters. When Leora sees the paintings of Rembrandt and the name Titus in the Rijks Museum she could not resist the thought of the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jews in Europe. She also sees the painting of Prophet Jeremiah mourning over the destruction of Jerusalem. She opines:

The prophet Jeremiah mourning over the destruction of Jerusalem. A weighty title, not at all fitting for the delicate pain of that painting, the darkness encroaching on the timid patch of light, the pressure of the prophets cheek against his palm, the shrouded eyes with their white brows that quivered as they fought back tears, the thin veins stretching beneath the translucent, baggy skin of the single bare foot. (122)

The pain in the face of the prophet affects Leora's mind. It brings the memories of her people's struggle, captivation and exile during the period of King Zedekiah. She remembers the

wrath of God that has befallen on her people. The painting invokes the memory of destruction, of their rich culture, their colorful tradition and their intellectual accomplishments. By seeing the image of the prophet, she is haunted by the memory of Jewish up-rootedness, dispersal and wandering. The images in the paintings are the symbol of destruction of lost culture and values.

The Hebrew word for symbol is 'ot', which denotes not only a sign, but also a visible religious token of the relation between God and man. When Leora sees the water logged tefillin, the property of an immigrant Jew, she yearns to reclaim it. She does not want to shed her ancestral past. Leora wants to reclaim the lost values and objects which she considers as their lost symbols. It is a symbol which connects her with the rich historical past. When her lover Jake presents her with the same tefillin which retrieves from the New York harbor, it renews the life of Jake and Leora and connects them with their mythical past. By retrieving the symbolic object Jake and Leora honor their ancient past and the word of God.

The memory of the tragic events and the natural pull towards her religion and tradition shapes Leora to maintain the Jewishness. The inhuman persecution of the Jewish people and the troubled history in the paintings at the Rijks Museum connects her with the memories of her ancestors. It prompts her effectively in the revitalization of Jewish life. The paintings of the ancient days ie, biblical days of Israelites during the days of destruction and exile help Leora and her partner Jake to realize and understand their ancestors' painful past. The call of the ritual object tefillin thrown by the first-generation immigrants makes her reclaim the object to maintain her identity. As Nochlin says, "the passing down of Jewish wisdom from one generation to another seems an honorable and praiseworthy practice" (16). Jake and Leora shape their life by what they make of their experiences and memories. As for Leora and Jake reclaiming the relics is a symbol of reclaiming their Jewishness. The future of Judaism bounds up in remembering the past and following the rituals. The understanding of Jewish law and rituals helps the younger generation to embrace their religion and tradition with passion.

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Effect of SMS Lingo on Writing Skill: An Investigation

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Abstract

The present study attempts to investigate a fascinating way of using language for sending a text message to a mobile phone and its effects on writing skill. Using a survey method, the study examines how the non-standard contracted forms are used and avoided according to the context. The data has been collected through a questionnaire from 10 UG students of the University of Hyderabad and then analysed to check the hypothesis put forth. The study reveals that the use of a non-standard contracted form may affect the writing skill. However, the appropriate use of the forms of the words enhances the writing skill.

Keywords: SMS language, SMS Lingo, Text messaging and writing skill.

1. Introduction:

Language is species specific, so is the writing. It took the humans many centuries, to evolve the finest writing systems which we are privileged to employ today. In recent times, the use of electronic devices for the purpose of writing has added a new chapter in the history of writing in human species. Not long ago, the world has witnessed the use of electronic devices such as Mobiles to send and receive messages. However, the language used in this messages or popularly abbreviated as SMS (Short Message Service) sent through mobiles drastically depart from the conventional language used for the purpose of communication. Thus, this paper endeavours to explore the characteristics of this language and examine its effect on the writing skill of the young undergraduate students in the Indian context.

SMS Lingo is a characteristic language which predominantly uses contracted forms for sending text messages or SMS using mobile phones. Due to the revolution in the telecommunication sector, especially the user-friendly interface of the device has resulted in high use of mobiles across the age group. However, the use of this lingo is very widespread, especially among today's youth. The primary objective of SMS lingo seems to make use of the minimum number of characters to

convey an intelligible message. The need for this minimum number of characters seems to have emerged as the telecommunication companies had set an SMS character limit, allowing only certain number of characters per message. The limitation on the use of characters, further leads to the use of innovative but idiosyncratic and sub-standard contracted forms of words in the SMS.

A study carried out by Solomon (2011) reveals that text messaging does not only involve contracted forms but also much more than that such as the use of pictograms and logograms. His observation in this regard is quite fascinating. He states, words are either shortened through the use of initial alphabets to represent the word or by using both, alphabets as well as numbers. The message, “Bye, take care. I will talk to you later” for instance, could be conveyed or written simply as ‘Bye, tc ttyl’. This instance suggests that the short words such as bye are not contracted and only the initial letters of the words are used to contract the whole sentences such as ‘tc’ for take care and ‘ttyl’ for ‘talk to you later’. In addition to that, it also suggests that the omission of the subject and the tense marker to make the text as short as possible. The following instances show the alphanumeric combination to write the text. For instance, the words such as ‘Great’ is rendered to as ‘gr8’; “To night” as ‘2nit’ “for you”, as 4U; and “before” as b4.

Since nearly unrestricted freedom is taken to convey the message through writing, there emerges the wide concern of the masses who research on linguistics in general and the writing skills in particular. Therefore, the current study endeavours to inquire into the following research questions.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

The study attempts to answer the following four research questions:

- a) What type of language is used for SMS?
- b) How the language used in the SMS lingo is different from the language used in other conventional written communication?
- c) Why the different type of language is used for SMS?
- d) What is the impact of the SMS chat language on writing skill?

1.2 Hypothesis

The study hypothesis that the use of a contracted form of English words for SMS texting affects the writing skill.

2. Literature Review

Though the impact of text messaging on language has generated a great deal of debate, not many books have been written on the subject. Solomon (2011) surveys the research done on the texting language. According to him, the first book ever published on texting language is by Hannu Luntiala (2007) followed by a most comprehensive work on the topic by Crystal (2008). In the existing literature, he also observes that the phenomenon has been viewed from three different perspectives. The first perspective believes that text messaging is potentially harmful to the writing

skill of the learners. Researchers like Rosen et al. (2009) as cited in Russell (2010) believes that the regular use of SMS lingo can impact negatively on the everyday language of the learners to exercise it. This perspective is based on the argument that the SMS lingo does not follow the essential mechanism of the writing such as grammar in general and syntax, punctuation, spelling and capitalization in particular in order to bring brevity, concision economy to the SMS.

On the contrary, the other perspective believes that the SMS lingo or the exercise of texting rather enhances the learners writing skill. Crystal (2008) is the major contributor to this perspective. He asserts SMS Lingo is not really a threat as many fear it can. Regardless of the way, the more the learners write, the more they improve their writing skill. Thus, in fact, the increased use of texting rather enhances the literacy among the young learners. O'Connor, (2005) also contributes to this perspective by stating that the more you got students to write, the better is it.

The third perspective doubts the either positive or negative effect of texting on the writing skill. Many researchers in the field like Solomon (2011) posits that it's not the text messaging which is bad in itself but its misuse such as the inconsistent, idiosyncratic and non-standard use of abbreviations, expressions and spellings is.

According to Russel (2010) as cited in Solomon (2011) SMS lingo should be recognised as a different language. He argues that, learning of a new language usually does not affect students' ability to use the grammar of another language, it would be inappropriate to consider the view that the text messaging can affect learners' grammar. However, there seems to be a problem with this view of Russel as it contradicts with the fact that the language learnt first causes the linguistic interferes while learning another language.

2.1 Methodology

The data was collected through a questionnaire from 10 UG students of the University of Hyderabad and then analyzed to check the hypothesis put forth.

2.2 Limitations of the Study

The questionnaire prepared to check the hypothesis put forth was consisted of ten questions and the data was collected only from ten students which have helped the study to be focused but limited the scope of the study.

3. Data for Discussion

The numbers appear on the right side shows the number of students (out of 10) ticked the particular option.

1. Which language do you use for texting?	
a) Formal	1
b) Informal (the short forms)	2
c) Both	7

2. Why do you use the formal or informal (the short forms) language for texting?	
a) For saving time and space	8
b) To hide spelling mistakes	1
c) Some other reasons?	1

3. Have you ever felt that the short forms help us in hiding our spelling mistakes?	
a. Yes Always	0
b. Yes at times	4
c. Not at all	6

4. If so? In which words?	
a. Long words	2
b. Newly introduced words	1
c. Difficult words	4
d. No answer	3

5. Can you provide a few of such words?	
5a. procrastination, Czechoslovakia, tomorrow, important	
5b. Palazzo, Squabble	
5c. continuous, disheartening, program, conspicuous, programmer, professor, encyclopedia (3 students did not provide any example)	

6. Have you ever felt that the use of short forms affects your correct spellings?	
a. Yes	3
b. No	2

c. At times	5
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7. If so? In which words?	
a. Privilege, tomorrow(4students), Professor, Programmer, Fellow, people, balloon Saturday, necessary	

8. Have you ever used the formal language deliberately in texting?	
a) Yes	6
b) No	1
c) At times	3

9. If yes/no? Why? Did it help you in anyway?

10. How will you write the message? *Hi, shall we meet tomorrow for discussion in Shopping Complex?*

4. Results

Proving the fact that the characteristic language, *SMS lingo* is used extensively in texting by the youngsters; the study also brings out the following interesting facts:

1) The *SMS lingo*, as well as formal language, is employed by most of the subjects according to the context.

2, 3, 4 & 5) The main motivation for the use of *SMS lingo* is *to save space and time*, though it is also at times employed *to hide possible spelling mistake* in long (*procrastination, Czechoslovakia, tomorrow, important*) difficult (*continuous, disheartening, program, conspicuous, programmer, professor, encyclopedia*) and newly introduced words such as *Palazzo* and *Squabble*.

6 & 7) Most of the students felt that the use of short forms affects their correct spellings in words such as *Privilege, tomorrow(4students), Professor, Programmer, Fellow, people, balloon, Saturday, and necessary*.

8 & 9) The texting is *context-bound*, the *formal language was deliberately used with the elderly people and teachers to show respect and maintain the right attitude*. The formal language was also used *to keep the conversation very realistic and natural*. It was at times used because it felt more *proper* and help *to strengthen the knowledge of sentence formation and practice the usage of certain tricky words*.

10) The SMS lingo is used among/between people who know each others' texting abbreviations and versions well. Texting involves immediate turn taking. So texters opt for abbreviated forms and omit punctuations and ignore capitalization which requires pressing extra keys and consumes more time and effort and costs the recipient extra patience in taking his/her turn and slows down the process of communication.

The following things were observed when the subjects were asked to write the message: *Hi, shall we meet tomorrow for discussion in Shopping Complex?*

- a. Vowels are deleted: *fr* for 'for'
- b. Only Consonants are used: *tmrw* for 'tomorrow'
- c. A complete word is replaced by a letter: *v* for 'we'
- d. Use of numerals instead of words: *4* for 'for'
- e. Punctuations are avoided: no full stop.
- f. Unnecessary punctuations are used: *!!!*

5. Conclusion

Though the use of *SMS lingo* has been quite useful to save time and space and for other various reasons, the continuous use of nonstandard contracted form of English words affects the writing skill. The study also brings out the fact that if formal language is used for the SMS texting, the texting can be used as an effective tool for improving written communication skill.

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Food and Identity in Preethi Nair's *One Hundred Shades of White*

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Abstract

Food has been widely recognised in areas such as anthropology, sociology, food science, semiotics as well as in literary, film and cultural studies. Food and eating mirror the making of a self and reflects a detailed and comprehensive image of our identities. As self-understanding and authentic existence are the chief objectives of any kind of philosophical inquiry, especially in postmodern times, food becomes a valuable key to that. The paper proposes to study Preethi Nair's *One Hundred Shades of White* as chronicle of such a journey spanning three generations of women through the metaphor of cooking. Food is one of the most popular tools in the hands of diasporic women writers to express their longing for as well as rejection and finally acceptance of their home culture. The novel is an unforgettable rendering of a mother and daughter's search for identity and 'wholeness' in an alien land and coming to terms with the 'duality' of their existence.

Keywords: Preethi Nair, *One Hundred Shades of White*, British Asian Literature, Diasporic literature, Women's literature

Food, which is ensured by stuffing down, is indispensable for the survival of our life. The unique quality of integration of food makes it important and is open to symbolism. As Peter Scholliers says: "Food crosses the border between the outside and the inside and the principle of incorporation touches upon the very nature of a person" (8). It is then quite obvious that food is a part of us and it is linked to our oneness. Food is considered with wide social and cultural point of view irrespective of the common need for nutrition. "Food is a cultural practice through which people participate in attitudes and rituals of a group and these participations can be socially controlled as well as more automatic" (Scholliers 7).

A great importance is attached with respect to linkage between food and identity to both the study of food and literature. That particularly is pivotal and of essence to every human being is an established fact as different social theorists opine because it gives sense to existence and establishes relationships between oneself and the other thereby creating values. The oneness of the people affects their view-point and formation of their society. It formulates the process and

procedure they act, react, eat, think, work etc. "People do all this with reference to economic, social, cultural and political conditions, events and expectations, and by doing so, they influence the economic, the social, the cultural and the political" (Scholliers 5). Nowadays, the idea of homogenous identity is untenable—identities are multiple and they are a combination of various facets. The important question is how food is related to identities and processes of identification.

In any society, and even more so in diasporic societies, women are the carriers and preservers of culture and identity of the community. The paper proposes to study Preethi Nair's *One Hundred Shades of White* as chronicle of an immigrant's journey away from the centre of their homeland to the pluralism of a multicultural society. The journey spans over three generations of women and their search for identity and 'wholeness' through their inherited culinary talent. Food and the art of cooking is portrayed to be diffused with mystical powers that has healing properties and that ensures communal wellbeing. The novel set primarily in India and Britain is also a record of celebration of the bond between mothers and daughters.

The books, films, plays and other gazettes put together and paved the way for emerging the literature of 'British Asians' in the 1990's. It is because of this that the South-Asian immigrants and their descendants find their respectable place in mainstream of contemporary British literature. Overbearing traditional parents, cultural and racial conflicts, arranged marriages, grand weddings, feasts, funerals and Indian fabrics provide almost a set backdrop that reflect the reality of the ghetto Indian community in the UK. If a writer is true to his personal experience, then the novel becomes another 'me too' pity memoir. If on the other hand the writer aims for the objective eye of the outsider, they are promptly accused of siding with the 'West' and betraying their community. Against this backdrop of contemporary British Asian literature Preethi Nair's, *One hundred Shades of White* stands out for its empathetic storytelling of an immigrant's journey from a mono-cultural consciousness towards a consciousness of multiculturalism and pluralism.

The novel alternates between the narratives of Nalini and her daughter Maya but is, in fact, a story of three women belonging to three generations - Ammu the grandmother who never leaves India, Nalini the mother who comes to Britain with her young children at the age of 24, and Maya the daughter who comes to the UK at age four and grows up there. Ammu occupies very little space in the whole narration but remains ever present in the minds of her daughter and granddaughter till the very end of the novel. Her gift for cooking, the mystical and healing properties she attributes to the spices and her inherent wisdom are inextricably linked to her rootedness in her home culture. She is always at peace because she is in harmony with nature and she can hear the 'pace'. Her stories are the common thread, binding the three generations together. Nalini inherits her mother's gift of cooking. Working as her mother's assistant in a small village of Kerala where the mother-daughter duo lived in harmony with the world and earned their living as cooks Nalini had soaked in all of her mother's culinary wisdom regarding the healing properties of spices and food. The village astrologer had warned her: 'You will be a very, very prosperous woman, unimaginably so, but never lose sight of your gift. If you do, you lose your centre and all else falls away.' (p. 58)

Decades later Nalini's husband Raul deserts her and she finds herself alone in a foreign country with no money to even return to India and two young children totally dependent on her. Forced to take up employment in a sewing factory cooking saves her sanity: 'It was 1978 and I was alone in a strange country at the age of twenty-six. This first place of employment, Humphries & Co, Bow, was a badly-lit factory, where I sat making shabby dreams for two small children... The monotony of the noise would take me far away, with my children and mother, back to India, to a beautiful home with a veranda surrounded by mango trees ...The noise would bore through the memories, but I would stitch them together with a fabric of sunshine and laughter... I cooked. Cooked whatever they (the children) needed for the next day, cooked just to forget. Forget that somewhere I was losing them...' (91)

True to the predictions of the astrologer, her talent for cooking brings her freedom from poverty and her monotonous job at the sewing factory and restores laughter, prosperity and love in her life. Her intuitive and wise use of spices, her deep sense of gratitude and love infused her pickles with mystical restorative properties and she soon makes her a prosperous woman with her own brand of pickle, 'The Abundance of Spice'. While working to establish her pickle brand and change her life for better, she has the untiring support and love of Maggie and Tom. Maggie became almost a mother-figure to Maya and Nalini's main source of female affinity so important for women to flourish. Maggie and Tom provide Nalini with the know-how to survive in an alien land. Together with their support and the remembered words of her mother's wisdom Nalini's life is rebuilt again: 'My mother used to say that it was forgiveness that worked on the soul and made miracles possible. According to her, forgiveness from a broken heart combusted energy that made insurmountable obstacles just dissolve.' (101)

Nalini also meets Ravi Thakker, her future husband through a cooking assignment for a dinner party he was throwing. Years later when she thought she had left her past firmly behind and has had another daughter Ammu, her first husband Raul re-surfaces as a family friend from America and threatens to undo the fabric of the new life she had built for her children. Blackmailed by Raul to maintain silence Nalini is forced to sell her shop and raise money. Already divorced from her gift, Nalini loses Satchin, her first-born to a freak car accident and her life unrolls again. The grief is all engulfing: 'Nothing pulls you out of it, not even seeing another suffer in the same way; the sobs that I heard from the other side of the wall were Maya's, who stored her tears for night time. We grieve alone. Months went by and it didn't get any easier.' (265)

Nalini loses Maya too first to a grief that isolates both of them in their own cocoons. Raul comes to meet Maya at her school after Satchin's death and poisons Maya further against Nalini. Maya goes away to University and then to Spain and makes a new life for herself, mastering the language, getting engaged to an upcoming Spanish lawyer and finding employment. Repeated calls from Nalini couldn't bridge the gap between them: 'Then one day as I (Nalini) was in the garden planting some coriander seeds, I decided it was time to let her go. Never once did I stop loving her and it was then that I understood what my mother did for me and what she meant by letting go. I went back into the kitchen.' (268)

Taking a loan Nalini started afresh and leased a small shop. Ammu, her youngest daughter had always taken a keen interest in her mother's cooking unlike Maya. She brought Nalini's life back to a full circle with her eagerness to learn from her mother the mystical art of cooking like Nalini learnt from her mother. The trajectory of Maya, the third-generation female character, in terms of metaphor of food, culinary practices and eating habits, comes a full circle with her first rejection and repulsion of traditional Indian food cooked by her mother and then her final acceptance and recognition of the magical and curative powers of the same. Maya, Nalini's daughter arrived in Britain at the age of four and promptly fell in love with the local food, rejecting her mother's food. Despite Nalini's best efforts Maya showed no interest in the traditional home food: 'Her food would often go to waste as Satchin and I discovered that we liked burgers and fish fingers with ketchup a whole lot better. We would gang up against her and make her place these items on the grill instead or tell her how to make English things.' (24)

On her maiden trip to India to buy some fabrics for her employer Maya visits Mumbai to find out the house she was born in and then travels all the way to her grandmother's village in Kerala. The journey becomes a metaphor for her search for identity as it revives a side of her that she had never believed to exist. On her return she fails to sum up her experience of India to her Spanish fiancé Marcos: 'That India had revived a part of me that was lying dormant? That colours, aromas, contradictions, emotions from the place that we are from are born with us, and at some point, we are asked to rediscover them?' (253)

Her journey to India has two main outcomes. The first is understanding the mystical power of freshly cooked home food prepared with love: 'I spent days on end sitting in the kitchen area with his mother and their servant girl. I watched spices being ground with stone, leaves being soaked and dried in the sun, fruit being preserved into pickles, dishes prepared from scratch with love and attention. Each person was working through their own thoughts and kneading dough or grinding lentils was a temporary respite. The end results were amazing: brightly coloured and full of freshness, not packaged for convenience and thrown together in disposable haste; answers so clear that it was impossible not to see them.' (251-52)

The second outcome is to accept her roots and learn to forgive. Maya goes back to her grandmother's village and finds the small hut in which her grandmother had lived till she died. She meets her father's relatives too and discovers the bitter family history behind her parents' marriage. The old village priest-cum-astrologer hands Maya two letters from her grandmother, one addressed to her mother and the other to herself. The letter filled with Ammu's innate wisdom and love encourages Maya to finally embrace her roots, her genes and learn to forgive: 'When you are ready, the truth will come and find you. I know you are brave enough, for invisible things too are passed through the genes. Your journey, you know, begins here in the place where you are from. When you find the truth ... forgive and let go. Do what you love...listen to the magical conversation that is always taking place through the food that you savour, the words that are spoken to you, the music that you hear, the people that you meet, and you will never feel alone.' (248-49)

Her trip to India is soon followed by another work-related trip to America and Maya is determined to find out the truth about Raul, her father and childhood hero. Forced to

acknowledge the depth of betrayal by Raul evidenced by the presence of his family in America, Maya contrasts him with Ravi, the only true father-figure and rock in her life. The layers of lies pulled away from her eyes, she is finally ready to go back to her family and hope for forgiveness and a new beginning.

Thus, from the analytical study of the role played by food in the life of women of three generations, one can admit unhesitatingly that food plays a key role in the life of a person, especially an immigrant. Food of the home country is often the only tangible 'home' in the life of an immigrant. For Nalini who grew up in India, cooking home food becomes a way of holding on to familiarity and makes her feel close to her mother who she misses terribly. For Maya, however, her smelly and messy Indian food is a source of much ridicule and bullying in school. She rejects Indian food as she rejects the sandalwood paste dot on her forehead and her greased-with-oil hair. She wants to make friends, fit in and be happy in her adopted country. Only when she is ready can she search for her roots and embrace the duality of her identity.

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**So It Goes: Genealogy of Humanism in Kurt Vonnegut with Special
Reference to *Slaughterhouse-Five***

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Abstract

In this paper, we have focused on the humanistic perspectives of genealogy of *vonnegutian* humanism, which passed from generations to Vonnegut Jr. as a legacy. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, he has expressed his concern over freethought, which he inherited from his ancestors and became his guiding principal for life. This freethought gave birth to his Humanism, which was the primitive concern why Vonnegut Jr. negated religion in his life and passed his freethought missionary to others through his writings. Here in this novel, he questions religion, sufferings of man and enunciates that there is no God in the Heavens who promises Heaven and makes people suffer on Earth. He says man is the centre and everything he himself can reward, judge and punish the wicked and can make the moment everlasting. Moreover, stresses the fact that man is bound to things which happen around him and cannot do anything to prevent and uses a panacea, *So It Goes*, the story of life goes on.

Key Words: Kurt Vonnegut, humanism, freethought, panacea, genealogy, religion

The German-American Community in Indianapolis, largely a product of mid-nineteenth century immigration, had a strong heritage of freethought (open evaluation of religion based on the use of reason). Especially, Clemens Vonnegut's writings and ideas deeply affected his family and the literary achievements of his great-grandson, Kurt Vonnegut, specifically the younger man's ideas concerning religion, science, and ethics. The junior Vonnegut's own Midwestern brand of freethought, in the form of what scholar Todd F. Davis called a "postmodern humanism," displayed a deep sense of skepticism about the irrationalism of his time while simultaneously championing an ethical responsibility to ourselves and each other, devoid of supernatural influences. Yet, true to his form as a freethinker, Kurt forged his own humanist identity. Clemens Vonnegut was born November 20, 1824, in Munster, Westphalia. He studied in German public schools and apprenticed as a mercantile clerk. He came to the United States in

the early 1830s, on assignment from his employer, J. L. de Ball and Company, which sold specialty fabrics. His year in New York convinced the young Vonnegut that America would be his permanent home, and he later traveled to Indianapolis with his friend Charles Volmer to start a new life. He founded the Vonnegut Hardware Store in 1852 and was considered one of the city's most respected citizens. Vonnegut also translated noted freethought orator Robert Ingersoll's *Open Letter to the Clergy of Indianapolis* into German for publication.

However, his involvement with the Freethinker Society of Indianapolis, especially as its first president from 1870-1875, may be his most profound humanist legacy. From its inception in 1870 to its dissolution in 1890, the Society worked towards two goals: education and advocacy. Education came in the form of lectures and talks, often given by Vonnegut or other society members on topics relevant to freethinkers, such as socialism, women's suffrage, science, theology, and American government. Alongside these lectures, the society also devoted resources, both financial and instructional, to schools and extra-curricular services for youth. The leadership of the society, particularly Vonnegut, believed that the success of their organization, hinged on educating the young in freethought and secular ideas. Their secular Sunday school, held at the German-English School at 216 East Maryland Street, boasted strong attendance through most of the year. Giving educational lectures, as mentioned above, became one of the most important aspects of the Freethinker Society, especially in its peak years. These lectures served the group in two ways: first, they provided communal experiences often lost on those without religious belief, and second, they allowed members to have vibrant conversations that related to the promotion of freethought ideas. Vonnegut and other members of the society also gave lectures on religion, politics, philosophy, and science. After the end of the Freethinker Society in 1890, Clemens Vonnegut continued his activism more than any former member, mostly through writing. *A Proposed Guide for Instruction of Morals*, published in 1900, enunciated Vonnegut's philosophy of freethought both in theory and practice. This treatise also displayed a rhetorical flourish that Kurt would cite as an influence.

Vonnegut is of the view that, no religious creed has any real proofs. It rests simply on assertions. However, that does not mean that humanity cannot be moral. In fact, Vonnegut argued the opposite: True virtue is its own reward, which is not enhanced but rather misled by belief. Belief deprives us of the joys of this world by teaching us that we must detest them, and instead of them we must hope for a heaven. Belief forms the germ for persecution of those who differ from us in their religious convictions.

*“Subject to eternal,
Immovable laws,
We all must fulfill*

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*The circles of our existence.
Man alone is able to do
What's seemingly impossible.
He discriminates,
Chooses and judges;
He can make the moment last.
He alone may
Reward the good,
Punish the wicked,
Heal and save,
Join to utility all
That's erringly rambling."*
- Kurt Vonnegut, in *Fate Worse Than Death*

Vonnegut saw morality as the wellspring of the intrinsic quality of human character which ought to be nourished and cultivated early, continually, and carefully. In subsequent pages, Vonnegut explained how such "cultivation" is achieved. Public education, family instruction, physical fitness, and social activities presented the means by which individuals perfected a moral life without the supernatural. Vonnegut's morality was clear, traditional, based on the family, and demonstrated a moral life without the need of God. While Clemens Vonnegut presented his philosophy clearly, the events surrounding his death were anything but. Clemens Vonnegut's death in 1906 created somewhat of a mystery for his family, and later his great-grandson. It was said that he died in the snow . . . or so the story goes. Kurt Vonnegut recalls this story in his autobiographical work, *Palm Sunday*. This story bewildered Kurt, whose own freethought can be traced to his great-grandfather and his own extended family. However, like many other family stories, this one stretches the truth a little. Clemens did not die by the side of the road but was rather found unconscious. True to his iconoclastic nature, Vonnegut wrote his own eulogy back in the 1870s and asked for its recitation when he died. In it, he railed against the creeds of Christianity:

I do not believe in the atonement to the blood of Christ or in the sin of incredulity. I do not believe in a punishment in a future life. I believe neither in a personal God nor a personal devil, but I honor the ideal which man has created as the tenor of all virtues and perfections and has named God.

Until the very end, Vonnegut believed in the power of humanity to throw off the shackles of religion and embrace the values of inquiry and human-based ethics. Nearly a century later,

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Kurt Vonnegut (born November 11, 1922, in Indianapolis) wrote that his great-grandfather's freethought was his own ancestral religion and that he was pigheadedly proud of the heretical nature of his family. Kurt Vonnegut, a future honorary president of the American Humanist Association, carried the torch of freethought for his grandfather, and in some respects, introduced his ideas to a new generation. In many of his works, Kurt would openly criticize religion, spirituality and faith, so much so that it even ruined one of his marriages. Nevertheless, echoing his grandfather in a 1980 speech at the First Parish Unitarian Church, Vonnegut declared, "Doesn't God give dignity to everybody? No—not in my opinion. Giving dignity, the sort of dignity that is of earthly use, anyway, is something that only people do. Or fail to do."

Kurt's connections to freethought go deeper than his great-grandfather. His father, renowned architect Kurt Vonnegut, Sr., married Edith Lieber, of the illustrious Lieber family. Hermann Lieber, successful art-dealer and co-founder of the Freethinker Society of Indianapolis was Edith's great-great uncle. Growing up, young Kurt received his religious instruction not from his parents, but from his nanny and housekeeper Ida Young. She would often read him Bible passages, exposing him to her interpretation of Christianity. Biographer Charles J. quotes Vonnegut as saying these church attendances were merely a "theatrical event." (*So It Goes* 17) The often-contradictory nature of his upbringing influenced Kurt's complicated position towards religion and spirituality.

In many of his letters, his complex inter-relationships between the sacred and profane often appeared. While Vonnegut would often reassert his freethought, ("Trained in agnosticism and the social sciences, I find superficial and obvious explanations for whatever whenever possible...."), he nonetheless appealed to ecclesiastical ephemera, at least in metaphor. In a November 28, 1967 letter to the Massachusetts Draft Board #1 (at the height of the Vietnam War), Vonnegut wrote this about the relationship between the God concept and war:

This attitude toward killing [war through drafting soldiers] is a matter between my God and me. I do not participate much in organized religion. I have read the Bible a lot. I preach, after a fashion. I write books which express my disgust for people who find it easy and reasonable to kill. We say grace at meals, taking turns. Every member of my large family has been called upon to thank God for blessings which have been ours. What Mark is doing now [his son, seeking conscientious objector status] is in the service of God, whose son was exceedingly un-warlike. (*Letters*)

Notice the phrase, "my God"; the distinction between the "God" of common American experience and Vonnegut's conception stresses his humanism. Much like his great-grandfather's

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use of a God as an ideal in his 1906 eulogy (see above), Kurt Vonnegut used the language of Christianity metaphorically as an explication of his personal disgust of violence.

His most popular novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), also reinforces Kurt's strong denunciation of war and a belief in a common humanity. Specifically, "so it goes" is a phrase that Vonnegut peppered throughout the novel, often after horrible events or even banal ones. This phrase shows no matter how bad things get, no matter how high one can get, the world (and indeed the universe) goes on. As an example, this passage from the novel, describing the protagonist Billy Pilgrim's memory of a sculpture of Jesus, is fairly apt:

A military surgeon would have admired the clinical fidelity of the artist's rendition of all Christ's wounds—the spear wound, the thorn wounds, the holes that were made by the iron spikes. Billy's Christ died horribly. He was pitiful.

So it goes. (48)

"So it goes" becomes the novel's panacea; a means for the narrator to deal with the grim realities of war without the comfort of religious beliefs. In some respects, it can be seen as a mantra for humanism.

Reminding his metaphorical religiosity again, Vonnegut did have a radically humanistic view of Jesus Christ, even though he did not identify as a Christian. Writing in one of his last books, *A Man without A Country*, Vonnegut outlined his view of Jesus as a character of moral and historical importance. "How do humanists feel about Jesus?" wrote Vonnegut,

"I say of Jesus, as all humanists do, 'If what he said is good, and so much of it is absolutely beautiful, what does it matter if he was God or not?'"(80-81)

Later in the book, Vonnegut calls Jesus the "greatest and most humane of human beings" and waxes mournfully about modern Christians' inability to emphasize the Sermon on the Mount, specifically the beatitudes. For some reason, Vonnegut continues, "the most vocal Christians among us never mention the Beatitudes. 'Blessed are the merciful' in a courtroom? 'Blessed are the peacemakers' in the Pentagon? Give me a break!" To Vonnegut, Christ should be seen as a moral ideal, not a prophet or a savior, much the way his great-grandfather saw the meek and mild carpenter from Nazareth. Thus, Jesus becomes an icon of humanism, rather than a figure of religious devotion.

True to his roots, Kurt Vonnegut carried his humanism through to the end of his life. In an address he meant to give on April 27, 2007 (he died on April 11; his son Mark gave the

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address in his stead). In this address, written for Indianapolis's "Year of Vonnegut" celebrations, Kurt espoused his continued commitment to humanism:

Am I religious? I practice a disorganized religion. I belong to an unholy disorder. We call ourselves "Our Lady of Perpetual Consternation." We are as celibate as fifty percent of the heterosexual Roman Catholic clergy. Actually—and when I hold up my right hand like this, it means I'm not kidding, that I give my Word of Honor that what I'm about to say is true. So actually, I am honorary President of the American Humanist Society, having succeeded the late, great science fiction writer Isaac Asimov in that utterly functionless capacity. We Humanists behave as well as we can, without any expectation of rewards or punishments in an Afterlife. We serve as best we can the only abstraction with which we have any real familiarity, which is our community (*Armageddon in Retrospect* 51-52).

Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* is basically an anti-war book. This book is based on historical context which centres on the bombing of Dresden on the nights of Feb. 13 and 14 in 1944 during World War II. Hundreds and thousands were killed at locations like Dresden, which were non-military in nature but served as methods of weakening Axis morale. Vonnegut himself was present at Dresden when it was bombed and is a way of releasing emotional turmoil caused by war. *Slaughterhouse-Five*, much like other Vonnegut books, has his strong disgust of war and the ironies of contemporary society in attempting in vain to answer the question "Why war?"

An article from *The English Journal* 1974, an educator Rita Bornstein cites several objectives for a war-peace studies course, including "to examine and evaluate traditional and human values and beliefs concerning war and peace" and "to analyze and react to war literature and discuss the role of literature in meliorating human problems". Her actual goal for the course is to study the melioration of war. As a goal for a classroom setting, this one is certainly unique, ambitious, and inspiring. However, textbooks for this kind of study were largely non-existent in 1974, and still are in 2008. Hence, Bornstien and other educators have turned to literature as a source for anti-war curricula.

Kurt Vonnegut, being an iconoclast in his novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, is also fairly well known along with other examples of prolific prose, for handling war issues. Vonnegut himself fought in World War II, and earned a purple heart, but was later known as a pacifist. *Slaughterhouse-Five* certainly carries its own fair share of anti-war rhetoric, but it also insightfully deals with all of the problematic complexities of both pro and anti-war stances. I say 'insightfully' because it seems—and I believe that Vonnegut would see this as well—that any

extremist perspective ultimately leads to fallibility, and ultimately leads to a kind of war—involving a battle of different opinions. Vonnegut tackles these issues in the novel as well as in his later writings, and in his own particular way his style seemed, and still seems, to influence people, possibly even more than some anti-war marches may have.

The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death the very subtitle of the work, is a subversion of war mongering philosophy. Vonnegut uses the word “crusade”, which refers to the holy wars, where children were sacrificed during 13th century, famously conducted ‘in the name of the church.’ Interestingly, Vonnegut’s own crusade against war is secular, sarcastic, and surprisingly sane. Still, it is strange to attempt to use a book to stop a war—it certainly breaks the old code of “art for art’s sake” and—if stopping wars is indeed Vonnegut’s aim at all—upholds the old cliché that “the pen is mightier than the sword.”

It is fact that only by becoming “unstuck in time”, Billy Pilgrim or anyone else can escape war, it seems to Vonnegut or his Tralfamadorian philosophers, who assert that “Only on earth is there any talk of free will”. From the perspective of the Tralfamadorians, war is inevitable, as are all things including the destruction of the earth—and it is only by thinking outside of unpleasant moments that one can escape them. And yet the book mentions that Vonnegut appreciates Lot’s wife for looking back on the destruction of Sodom and Gamorrah, even though she turns to a pillar of salt for doing it because it is so “human.” Hence, the Tralfamadorian concepts of escapism, while offering one means of exiting the horrors of war, are not the same as the more human views of looking back as Vonnegut offers us, the readers. According to some critics who investigate Vonnegut’s anti-war stance, “The status of the Tralfamadorians is therefore the most important issue in any discussion of *Slaughterhouse-Five*”. Critic Willaim Rodney Allen writes,

“A major reason *Slaughterhouse-Five* had the enormous impact it did was because it was published at the height of the conflict in Vietnam, and so delivered its anti-war message to a most receptive audience”.

The fact that Billy Pilgrim’s son becomes a Green Beret in Vietnam seems to complicate the issue still further. Indeed, Pilgrim does not want his son to fight in the war after he has experienced the horrors of it, yet his wishes are empty and his son still deserves his father’s love.

In any event, *Slaughterhouse-Five* paired with Vonnegut’s other writings gives readers insight into his philosophies and what he was attempting to accomplish in his writing. Vonnegut hated war, just as any sane person would hate war. Very few people are actually pro-war, and Vonnegut’s perspectives on World War II show just how willing he was to explore various perspectives concerning war. So, while he considered himself a pacifist, he also saw World War

It just as a war, and decisively wrote to curb injustices. In many ways, reading Vonnegut would enable one to approach the goals set out by Ms. Bornstein and her peace-war studies course: “to discuss the role of literature in meliorating human problems.” So it goes.

Conclusion

Being a prisoner himself, Vonnegut has experienced the actual war experience in Dresden, when he was captivated by German soldiers. He felt the pain as he saw people suffering during the war. No one was spared, mothers losing their sons, wives their husbands, children their father, sisters their brothers and many more casualties. So it goes, Vonnegut has million reasons to write upon, but its life that goes on and here he has mastered his work by writing an anti-war, which will guide millions to come.

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**Pangs of Migration and Confrontation with Hegemony in
Moshin Hamid's *Exit West***

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Abstract

This paper investigates the problems of migration and role of Western Hegemony in shaping Eastern ideology in migrated subjects. Migration, as a painful and political process, alters Eastern subjects to the level of dehumanization through various socio-economic forces i.e. media, education, cultural programs etc. In *Exit West*, the protagonist Saeed represents the pangs of migration and his inability to leave his own country. Saeed escapes from war but finds himself strangled further in one crisis after other. Saeed's journey explains the nowhere-ness of non-Hegemonic social entities who has no place to be called home. They are the 'other' who neither speak nor are spoken about.

Keywords: Moshin Hamid, *Exit West*, Hegemony, Migration, Alienation, Ideology, social entities, Other

Oxford Dictionary defines migration as the act or instance of migrating; a group of people migrating in a body. Migration is movement in order to settle down permanently or temporarily. Human migration is common and has been taking place since ages, by choice or situation. Whatever the reason is, migration leaves a person in spills, longing for their true self. It is challenging as when you cross the border, people on the other side stop seeing you as human. They do not understand that migration is not a choice but rather people are forced to leave their home countries. The native people fear the incoming strangers and forget that this can happen to anyone. West is getting too comfortable dehumanizing other humans, as the

suppressed are not able to live up to the standards set by West. Migration is the matter of surviving in the toughest conditions and fitting in any society. When people leave their home country and migrate, they become Hybrid; they now have two identities, the real self and the one that they have developed overtime in order to survive. In the whole process, people tend to forget who they are; unable to shed their real identity completely. Migration is a process which is also the reason of deterritorialization which is a reality of movement of flip side of complement. Deluze explains it as

Necessarily reterritorializes on its interior milieus. A given presumed fragment of embryo is deterritorialized when it changes thresholds or gradients but is assigned a new role by the new surroundings. Local movements are alterations. Cellular migration, stretching, invagination, folding are examples of this. Every voyage is intensive and occurs in relation to thresholds of intensity between which it evolves or that it crosses. (5)

There is an inner conflict which makes the life miserable as migrants leave their home in search of a bright future, but they even lose the past with uncertain present. Migrants live a painful life and often become hybrid. Hybridity is a term from post-colonial theory. It is the mixed culture and identity of migrant and their struggle to find their own roots. The main effect of migration is that a person is never able to leave his true identity, he tries his level best to imitate, but deep inside his real identity remains the same. This results in internal conflict and identity crisis.

Hegemony is control by one country, organization over other group by consent. It was coined by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. He investigated why the ruling class was so successful in establishing its own personal interests in society. There is powerful Western Hegemony; and Eastern Hegemony doesn't even exist. They rule other parts of world as it is technologically advanced. Developing countries look up to West for everything; they have made it clear that they are advanced in political, military and social fields. East follows West even in fashion. West generalizes things and does not give others a chance to prove their worth. It is not a geographical division; it is epistemological division. Mark Rupert explains

Hegemony arises from one state's productive pre-eminence in the global division of labor, and the commercial, financial and ultimately military-political powers which are seen to emerge from that structural predominance. (1)

He says that domination of one group over other contains military factors as well. Developing countries which are weak in comparison to developed countries fear attack and serve West. Ideology is something which tells about the world and their ideal concept of how to exist in this world. Karl Marx explains that idea and ideology are not independent but only a product of

materialistic thing. In his theory of ‘class struggle’, he explains that it is struggle that makes class. There are only two classes, haves and have-nots, capitalist and workers respectively. Have-nots provide labor and haves control the factors of production. He says capitalist are not in Harmony with human nature. “If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process”(14). The society is like a pyramid in which workers are in bottom and capitalist being the privileged one, take all the profits. Louis Althusser in his essay ‘ideology and Ideological state apparatus’, tells that term ‘ideology’ was invented by Cabanis, Destutt de Tracy and their friends but after fifty years, Marx came up with different ideology. Althusser says that according to Marx, ideology has its material existence only because it is practiced.

So, ideology is a matter of the lived relation between men and their world. This relation that only appears as “conscious” on condition that it is unconscious, in the same way only seems to be simple on condition that it is complex, that it is not a simple relation but a relation between them and their condition of existence, but the way they live the relation between them and their conditions of existence: this presupposes both a real relation and an imaginary, “lived” relation”. (233)

Ideology turns human as a social subject. Human is put in the subject position, under an illusion that whatever they are doing are doing it by their own wish or freewill. Althusser takes the Marxist ‘theory of state’ to another level and clears the difference between repressive and ideological state. Repressive state works by violence and ideological state works on the basis of ideology. The haves and have-nots are also divided on the basis of male and female. Males play the role of capitalist, being the more superior ones, depriving females from economic benefits and want things at less price and expectations. Haves exert their power over have-nots and become oppressor. Cultural Hegemony is the domination of the society from ruling class, who mold the culture of the society so that they can impose their views on the other. They make fake social constructs that are only for the benefit of ruling class. Ruling class becomes the oppressor and the weak becomes oppressed. Hegemony consists of two things, one is that powerful call imposes its interest on other, second is it consists of economic leadership. The ideology and belief of dominant class are reflected on the oppressed class. They try to showcase everything pleasant so that the suppressed people follow it and automatically their ideology becomes an established fact that everyone follows.

In *Exit West*, the protagonist Saeed and Nadia deal with the problems of migration and displacement. They are living in an unnamed city on the verge of civil war. As the title suggests, the word exit depicts the desperate need for migration. Hamid focuses on Saeed and Nadia trying to explain the similarities between readers and his characters. He forces us to think that what would happen if one day, out of nowhere our own life was unexpectedly interrupted and taken

over by war. Saeed and Nadia, like everyone else in their city perform their day to day activities in fear “in the city swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at war” (Hamid, West 1)

Living in a place that is constantly on the verge of war is frightening but slowly people get habitual of such situation as well. The daily routine of people still goes on despite the fear of death. Saeed and Nadia met in a class when people did not even prefer to go out. The rich people migrated easily but the middle class and poor had no choice but to stay and wait for a favorable situation. Saeed’s father felt that “he had made a mistake with his career” (Hamid, West 49) as if he had enough money, he could send his son away from all this and at least his son could live his life in peace. The conversations people had mainly focused on “conspiracy theories, the status of the fighting, and the country” (Hamid, West 50). People stopped showing up at offices and it was assumed they might have escaped to some other country. When situation became worse, people took anything they could and just tried to become invisible. There was a feeling of isolation, “Nadia and Saeed, and countless others, felt marooned and alone and much more afraid” (Hamid, West 55). Fear of death was constant in people. People vanished in those days and it was not sure, whether they were alive or not. Saeed stopped functioning after the death of her mother, in a blast when she was in their ancestral car. It also shows that people were not safe anywhere, they could be killed anytime, and this shows how brutal everything was. Nadia started living with Saeed and his father after the death of Saeed’s mother. She felt connected to them and started feeling as a Family member. Their relationship was growing constantly when rumors started to circulate about doors that could take anywhere but out of this mess, to places far away “well removed from the death trap of a country” (Hamid, West 69). According to Walter L. Admson:

Hegemony for instance, is sometimes compared with domination; in this case the reference is to the process of gaining legitimate consent within the functional universe of civil society, as opposed to simply holding it together through a monopoly on the means of violence. (10)

He explains that hegemony is related to domination. Developed countries suppress the developing country and try to show their power by controlling weak. When Saeed herd about doors, he thought that how is it possible to disguise and appear magically in such country that will never accept them. Most of the people did not believe these rumors but others started to look at their own door differently. Every morning, Saeed and Nadia checked doors of their home as they now gazed differently towards their own doors. The growing danger was felt by Saeed, “Saeed desperately wanted to leave his city, in a sense he always had, but in his imagination, he had thought he would leave it only temporarily” (Hamid, West 89). He liked to travel but he wanted to settle in his own country and now leaving his country once and for all and being aware

of the fact that he might not come back ever again, knowing that leaving would mean scattering of his family and friends circle, and realization of this fact made him extremity sad.

He decided to give it a shot, to travel through one of the magical doors, he gave money to an agent and tells this news to his father, but as a surprise his father refuses to leave. He says he is unable to leave their house as it has uncountable memories in it; it reminds him of Saeed's mother and that past offered him much more than future. Saeed tries to convince him but he in turn takes a promise from Nadia that she will stay with Saeed and support him in this tough time. Saeed was well aware of the fact that when they leave, his father "might be at mercy of strangers, subsistent on handouts, caged in pens like vermin" (Hamid, West 90). Nadia was comfortable with all types of movements in life as compared to Saeed; he was much more drawn towards nostalgia. Saeed knew that he will not be able to come back while his father was alive and thinking that this might be the last night he spends with his father, he was bowed down. He knew leaving him alone will kill him, "but that is the way of things, for when we migrate, we murder from our lives those we leave behind" (Hamid, West 94). They went through the door and reached a refugee camp and saw "hundreds of tents and lean-tos and people of many colours and hues" (Hamid, West 100). Everyone in the camp was foreign to each other, so in one way no one was.

Hamid talks about real problems of migration; he explains how people have to live in tents without money despite having their own homes, using barter system to get goods and even basic necessities of life. Setting up temporary homes is painful but to Nadia, it felt like playing house, like she uses to do when she was a small child. Once Saeed met an old friend, it was "like two leaves blown from the same tree by a hurricane landing on top of each other far away"(Hamid, West 109). It made Saeed happy and somewhat satisfied to see a familiar face. The desperation to get out from camp could be seen, not only because they did not want to live there; but the fear to get trapped there forever. Saeed and Nadia then went through another door which took them to London. They started living there and "unlike Nadia, he felt in part guilty that they and their fellow residents were occupying a home that was not their own, and guilty also at the visible deterioration brought on by their presence" (Hamid, West 129).

Saeed realized that they were illegally interrupting someone's life; doing the same thing that was done to them. He was the only resident of the house who objected when people started taking items of house in their possession. Riots began in their part of London, "Saeed and Nadia had to make a decision: whether to stay or to go" (Hamid, West 132). It is difficult for them to decide what to do next, whether to stay or look for a new place. In this whole process of migration, Saeed and Nadia were drifting apart. The stress of work resulted in ignorance of each other's feelings. "They began to wander separately during the day, and this separation came as a relief to them" (Hamid, West 138). The only feeling of closeness in all these months was when

they talked about future, it distracted them from reality. They knew that going back to their birth country was impossible and other countries must be facing native backlash. “Nadia and Saeed, who had run from war already, and did not know where next to run, and so were waiting, waiting like so many others” (Hamid, West 134). They could sense the calm, but it was calm before the storm. They faced Native backlash and Hamid explains that migration is painful either way, for natives and for migrants. Through Saeed and Nadia, he explains how we will feel if our homes were invaded and some strangers suddenly claimed their right on our property. Accepting strangers is not something we have learned or accept; but if someone by force enters our house, we have to leave it as man is nothing without power. Jonathan Joseph states,

It argues that the position of the ruling group is not automatically given, but rather that it requires the ruling group to attain consent to its leadership through the complex construction of political projects and social alliances. (1)

He argues that a group needs to stay in power with the help of political groups. Politics of a country is directly related to its position in the rest of the world. Nadia became popular among other residents of the house as she was young and was active participant in meetings. She was among the elders who helped in solving the issues people had; it was like their own small political group which needs to solve problems and make decisions on other’s behalf. Saeed was not concerned with it “because here in this house he was the only man from his country, and those sizing him up were from another country, and there were far more of them, and he was alone” (Hamid, West 146). Aliche and Govaun state,

The generality of their view is extended by their consistent findings of inferiority biases, that is, the tendency for members of disliked groups to be evaluated less favorably than the group as a whole. (97)

They explain that it is impossible for a person to survive in a group if they feel as less privileged one. A person needs to feel he has a position and exists in a particular group. It is difficult to feel attached to such group where your ideas don’t matter.

Hamid uses doors to show that borders cannot control or stop illegal immigrants. He focuses on Saeed and Nadia as characters to make readers realize that this is what happens when life is suddenly taken over by war. He feels that doors should not be closed for migrants as anyone can be migrant one day. “And advocated a banding together of migrants along religious principles, cutting across division of race or language or nation, for what did those divisions matter now in a world full of doors, the only division that mattered now were between those who sought the right of passage and those who deny them passage, and in such a world the religion of righteous must defend those who sought passages” (Hamid, West 152).

When people migrate, they rise above any physical discrimination and come together as human beings. They have no other option other than acceptance of things as they are. The violence grew in their part of London, and Nadia “wondered whether she and Saeed had done anything by moving, whether the faces and buildings had changed but the basic reality of their predicament had not” (Hamid, West 156). The problems were not ending for Saeed and Nadia, they were in doubts that whether their condition upgraded or degraded by moving; are there any changes or not. This is something that happens when people migrate; they murder their past and risk everything for an uncertain future. There is no biological difference between people, the difference is socially constructed.

The distance between Saeed and Nadia was growing day by day. They did not communicate with each other. It also symbolizes their relations with their home country. “they put their lack of conversation down to exhaustion, for by the end of the day they were usually so tired they could barely speak, and phones themselves have the innate power of distancing one from one’s physical surroundings” (Hamid, West 185). Phones which were used by them to connect in the past were now being used to distract their mind and to avoid any conversation. They started off well with constant connection but all the problems and traveling separated them. Migration had adverse effect on them. Saeed still had strong feelings about his birth country, he was unable to forget. The more he tried to distance himself, nostalgia hit him even harder. “The further they moved from the city of their birth, through space and through time, the more he sought to strengthen his connection to it, tying ropes to the air of an era that for her was unambiguously gone” (Hamid, West 187). He could not take himself out from his country as it was a part of his identity. For Nadia, it was just the same, she did not felt any change “she continued to wear her black robes, and it grated on him a bit, for she did not pray and she avoided speaking their language, and she avoided their people, and sometimes he wanted to shout, well take it off then” (Hamid, West 187). He was affected by Nadia’s choices but believed he still loved her. He wanted to feel for Nadia but “the possible death of his ideal self who had once loved his women so well were like a single death that only hard work and prayers might allow him to withstand” (Hamid, West 188). He felt immense sorrow for the loss he faced, the death of his mother, father and his inner self, all because of war and migration. For Saeed, prayers are a ritual that connected him to his childhood and all his past memories. “When he prayed, he touched his parents, who could not otherwise be touched” (Hamid, West 201).

It was more emotional for him rather than spiritual. Everyone migrates at one point in his life. Everyone migrates, even if we stay in the same houses our whole lives, because we can’t help it. “We are all migrants through time” (Hamid, West 209). There is constant movement in everyone’s life; it can be in any form. Nadia moved out and started to live away from Saeed. She knew that their relationship has lost its meaning. She continued to wear her black robe to

disguise her identity, to fit in society. “Her black robe was thought by many to be off-putting, or self-segregating, or in any case vaguely menacing” (Hamid, West 214). When she moved out, she was judged because of her robe. People have certain perceptions related to physical appearance of a person which are not true. There are n numbers of problems related to Migration such as Alienation, cultural antagonism, inferiority complex, internal conflicts, language problems, identity crisis, and so on. Homi K Bhabha observes:

For at the same time as the question of cultural difference emerges in the colonial text, discourses of civility were defining the doubling moment of the emergence of western modernity lies not only in the origins of the idea of civility, but in this history of colonial moment. (32)

This means that being western and modern is different things. A person should not be judged on the basis of his physical appearance. West portrays itself as progressive and modern, but in reality, it is not. Living a life without illusions and following truth is the real meaning of being modern.

Saeed and Nadia settled in their new lives, with their new partners and new city. The contact became weak as the contact between them and their birth country. Saeed and Nadia represent two different types of persons, one who is desperate to go back to his country and other wanted to travel and live free without looking back to her past experiences. “half a century later Nadia returned for the first time to the city of her birth, where the fires she had witnessed in her youth had burned themselves out long ago, the lives of cities being far more persistent and more gently cyclical than those of people, and the city she found herself in was not a heaven but it was not a hell, and it was familiar but also unfamiliar” (Hamid, West 227)

She felt a familiar unfamiliarity in the city of her birth place, she knew the place but there was something different there; it was not the best, but it was also not worse. She did not feel any connection as it was not the same place it was before she migrated. She felt so much has changed since then that she cannot even feel it’s the same place. Migration disrupts life in every sphere, and it can never be the same again.

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Issue of Gender and Society in Mahesh Dattani's Play
Dance Like a Man

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Abstract

The present paper deals with the issue of gender and society in Mahesh Dattani's play *Dance Like a Man*. It discusses herd mentality of conservatives that fosters that the art of classical dancing is meant only for women. An authoritative father Amritlal Parekh becomes uncomfortable to see that his son Jairaj finds comfort in learning classical dance. To stop his son from furthering perfecting the art, he plays a conspiracy in association with his daughter-in-law Ratna. The paper describes the foul game of Amritlal, Jairaj's failure, Ratna's opposition and then support to Amritlal Parekh, Ratna's involvement in fulfilling her dreams through her daughter Lata and suffocation of all the characters due to presence of each other in their lives. The dominating characters of the play use weak people as scapegoats to accomplish their goals and in the end are caught in their own traps.

Keywords: Mahesh Dattani, *Dance Like a Man*, gender discrimination, patriarchy, classical dance, hegemony, women emancipation

If women hold up 'half the sky', their voices should equally matter in the social history of a country. But is that voice audible in our land? This interrogative statement was replied by a socialist Theresa Rebeck as, "It's time to hear both sides, to hear all voices, to build a culture where stories are told by both men and women. That is the way the planet is going to survive, and it's the way we are going to survive."¹

Rebeck's reply advocates the importance of gender equality to keep human survival balanced and healthy. The issue of gender discrimination is strongly rooted and integrated in Indian consciousness since ages in spite of the fact that Indian women did enjoy equal status and rights during the early Vedic period.

The behavioural pattern of females in India can be traced to the days of Manu of 200 BCE in '*Manusmriti*' which states that, "In childhood, a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent."²

Mahatma Gandhi too expresses his concern for the crippled position of women, "We have kept our women away from the activities of ours and have thus become victims of a kind of paralysis. The nation walks with one leg only. All its work appears to be only half or incompletely done."³

In the light of above expressions, one feels that the mind-set of society and the world at large needs to be transformed. Theatres and other forms of mass communication can play a prominent role to root out gender discrimination from the society. Many playwrights and writers have been incessantly working on this issue. One such playwright of present times is Mahesh Dattani who deals the issue of gender discrimination in his play '*Dance Like a Man*'. The play revolves around the issues of gender discrimination and patriarchy. It was directed by Lillette Dubey. About her experience of the play, she says, "It is beautifully crafted the way it moves back and forth in time, its use of one actor to play more than one role which really tests the actors' talent, makes it as unique as does the strong characterization and the 'seamless' movements in time."⁴

The theme of the play is based on herd mentality that fosters that the art of classical dancing is meant only for women. The historical and socio-cultural factors that led to this misconception are many. In Indian society, dancing by male is not considered a much-respected art. When the men don ankle bells and start to dance, they are put down as effeminate upstarts in an exclusively female domain. One section of the society holds that dance is a delicate and graceful art and hence its domain should be limited to females only. If a man dances delicately and gracefully, he is not given manly respect in the society.

The country may be celebrated on the world stage for introducing a clan of incredible artists in various fields of liberal arts ranging from literature and music to philosophy and theatre. However, humanistic disciplines that were once synonymous to those 'great' and 'intellectual', no longer seem to be a lucrative preference for the young scholars. Besides, there is parental pressure on boys to choose medical or engineering line instead of dance to have a lucrative career. Leela Venkataraman, a dance critic says, "I think by the '80s the space of the male dancer had been completely encroached upon by women. This was very unfortunate as the pressures on these men when compared to women were far greater. They had to earn to support their families through a profession which society no longer had any respect for."⁵

The Indian society hasn't yet fully evolved to a point where it can recognize or easily accept a male pursuing liberal arts course. Certain professions have been linked to either gender, and people find it difficult to deviate from the set guidelines. Unfortunately, those who try to break the web of illusions the society has weaved, are criticized and discouraged to the point where they are completely shattered and broken. Due to all these misconceptions, social approbation and economic sanctions, the art of dancing is considered to be reserved for females. V. Krishnamoorthy, a Bharatnatyam and

Kuchipudi male dancer laments, “Even when I did get the odd programs, the organizers would insist I get a ‘real’ girl along for a duet. There was no scope for the solo male dancer.”⁶

Paradoxically, Indian culture is full of evidences and examples which prove that dance is a masculine art. According to Indian scriptures, the originator of dance, Nataraja, the patron deity of dancers is a male. There are many personages in Indian mythology who were associated with the art of dancing. Shiva is considered to dance ‘*Tandava*’. Krishna was a great dancer and his *raas-leelas* with Radha were quite popular. Arjuna was told by Indra to judge the better amongst the celestial dancers Rambha and Urvashi which gives the testimony of the fact that Arjuna was an expert dancer. In Mahabharata, it is mentioned that Arjuna taught dance as Brihannala to Uttara while he was in exile.

The epics and mythological studies have a mentioning that some of the Indian mythological Gods and Kings like Kamadeva, Ganesh, Anjaneya and even Ravana were all the masters of dance, and music. Bharat Muni, the writer of *Natyasastra*, a treatise on many arts including dance, too was a man. These evidences illustrate that dancing is neither a domain of only females nor of only males. It is an art that can be learnt, performed and taught by anybody irrespective of the sex. A noted classical dancer Johar explains, “Dance is not about gender. Dance springs from a deeper human need. The ‘70s and 80s’ over glamorized the female dancer and she has now become a victim of her own image. Today we have grown out of that fetishised femininity.”⁷

Mahesh Dattani wrote the play in the period when the male dancers had started gaining grounds and respect on the stage and in the society. About the play, he says, “I wrote the play when I was learning *Bharatnatyam* in my mid-twenties ... a play about a young man wanting to be a dancer, growing up in a world that believes dance is for women.”⁸

The protagonist, Jairaj represents a modern man who is an ardent classical dancer. His dominating father Amritlal Parekh is shown to be caught in the false web of socio-cultural norms. He poses himself to be very liberal but advocates gender discrimination. To set an ideal before the society and to earn himself the title of being ‘a liberal’ and ‘an egalitarian, he accepts Ratna, a classical dancer as his daughter-in-law and not because his son loves her. He remains authoritative and wants that his son Jairaj should dance on his fingers and not as a professional dancer. He doesn’t permit Ratna to perfect her dance from Devdasi of temple. Amritlal Parekh is shown to be an embodiment of patriarchal authority who supports gender bias notions.

The dislike of Amritlal for dancing and the immense passion of Ratna for the same create deep conflict in the life of Jairaj. About this conflict, Beena Agrawal states, “The psycho-cultural conflict prepares an intense tragic tension mounting to the disastrous collapse of two gentle persons and consummate artists. The action in the play moves between the past, present and future synchronically dissolving the different time shifts and anticipating the fate of three generations.”⁹

Amritlal Parekh wishes his son to be always under his thumb. For him the individual identity and passion of Jairaj for dance is of no significance. Hence Jairaj leaves home with Ratna to be away from

familial tension. But the couple fails to survive on their own. Hence, they come back to Amritlal to be the victims of his political trap. After understanding that Jairaj can't feed his family without his support, Amritlal makes up his mind to keep Jairaj away from dance. To succeed in his motive, he plays a conspiracy against his son in collaboration with Ratna. He better knows the weaknesses of Jairaj and Ratna. He was sure that if he permits Ratna to continue her dance, she would do anything for it. Hence, he convinces Ratna that if she helps him in making Jairaj a 'manly man', she can continue her dancing. Ratna readily accepts Amritlal's offer to stop Jairaj from dancing. She knows that if she wants to be a successful dancer, she should first dance attendance upon her father-in-law. About this move of Amritlal, Asha Kuthari appropriately remarks, "This is the twist that the playwright gives to the stereotypes associated with 'gender' issues that view solely women at the receiving end of the oppressive power structures of patriarchal society."¹⁰

Amritlal thinks that people would laugh at Jairaj for being a dancer. Hence, he wants Jairaj to adopt his family business rather than dance as his career. He therefore discourages Jairaj and tells him,

"Where will you go being a dancer? Nowhere! What will you get being a dancer? Nothing! People will point at you on the streets and laugh and ask." (CP 397)

Amritlal believes that the men who choose dancing as a profession are not masculine. The very thought that classical dance is strictly a female domain is deeply rooted in Amritlal's mind. Hence, he asks Ratna,

How do you feel? How do you feel dancing with your husband? What do you think of him when you see him all dressed and ... made up." (CP 426)

Amritlal possesses a notion that dance makes a man effeminate and unworthy to be called a man. Asha Kuthari reads Amritlal's fear as, "The underlying fear is obviously that dance would make him 'womanly'- an effeminate man - the suggestion of homosexuality hovers near, although never explicitly mentioned. And hence Amritlal must oppose, tooth and nail, Jairaj's passion for dance."¹¹ Amritlal dislikes everything that a male dancer does and wears. He doesn't like the way Jairaj's guruji carries himself. He therefore asks Jairaj,

Amritlal: Why does he wear his hair so long?

Jairaj: Why do you ask?

Amritlal: I have never seen a man with long hair.

Jairaj: All sadhus have long hair.

Amritlal: I don't mean them. I meant normal men.

Jairaj: What are you trying to say?

Amritlal: All I'm saying is that normal men don't keep their hair so long.

Jairaj: Are you saying that he is not... (Realizes the implication.) Are you saying ... ?

Amritlal: I've also noticed the way he walks. (CP 417)

Amritlal believes that male and female have their separate spheres. If any gender dares to enter the domain of other, it is against the stream. He thinks that it can be acceptable for a woman to enter the domain of man as in modern world it would be accepted and even appreciated but to follow the vice versa for a man narrows his identity and proves his low esteem. Hence, he says,

“A woman in a man’s world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in a woman’s world is pathetic.” (CP 427)

Amritlal plays all the tactics to stop Jairaj from dancing. He strongly believes that if Jairaj is to be made worthy of living by holding his head high, he must be kept away from dancing. He becomes so desperate for Jairaj’s future that he convinces Ratna to follow him,

“Help me make him an adult. Help me to help him grow up.” (CP 427)

Amritlal always brags that his was an instrumental role to make India free from the shackles of Britishers. But paradoxically he doesn’t help his own son to be free from the shackles of wrong customs of the society. Amritlal’s behaviour is quite diplomatic. Mithran Devanesen questions such men, “Are we the liberal-minded persons we would like to believe that we are, or do we blindly kowtow to unwritten laws of family conduct that is the easier path to take?”¹²

Ratna, being smarter and sharper than Jairaj enjoys her short-lived dance career. But she too proves to be a failure as a complete dancer and as a complete wife. Due to the stern patriarchs like Amritlal Parekh, Jairaj loses his art and Ratna loses Jairaj. Ultimately the couple proves to be the losers. However, they both help their daughter Lata to lose nothing.

Ratna wants to fulfill her unfulfilled dreams as a dancer through Lata. Hence Ratna develops intense passion for dance in her. She imprints on Lata’s mind that dance is everything for her. Lata too starts believing what her mother orders her. Hence when Vishwas, her lover asks Lata if her parents were anxious to know about their son-in-law, she replies

“Actually, they couldn’t care less who or what you are. As long as you let me dance.” (CP 388)

Both Ratna and Lata nurture a fear in their mind that the family responsibilities would spoil their art. Hence Lata takes assurance from Vishwas if he would support her in making her career in dancing after marriage. She asks him,

“Vishwas, when we are married—you will let me come here to practice, won’t you?” (CP 389)

Lata doesn't want that due to family pressure, she should prove to be a failure like her mother. She is not ready to sacrifice her art for the sake of family. But at the same time, she doesn't want to lose her husband or child like her mother did. Hence, she feels that it is better not to have children so that she can concentrate on her career. She expresses her fear to Vishwas,

“And we won't have children” (CP 389)

If we analyze the psyche of all the three artists of the play *Ratna*, *Jairaj* and *Lata*, we find that they are caught in the web of societal pressure, family liabilities, their passion for dance and their desires of reaching to the pinnacle of their career. Our society has to go a long way to accept the idea that individual identity and family both are equally important to lead a comfortable and peaceful life. Any imbalance between the two disturbs the life of an individual, particularly of an artist. Hence Mahesh Dattani convinces the idea that if family and art goes hand in hand complementing each other irrespective of gender, one can enjoy the true essence of life.

In the play, Mahesh Dattani depicts that the society is still grappling with the problems of gender discrimination and patriarchy. Amritlal Parekh exercises his hegemonic power over others. He poses to be the controller of the family but makes the weaker section as the scapegoat to continue his authority. Indra, a critic says that such men compare, ‘a woman to a river and a husband to an ocean’ where after reaching the latter, the former completely loses its identity.¹³

Indra thus interprets *Manu* that a woman is expected to submerge her whole being in doing her duty to her husband, irrespective of what he is.

In the play, Dattani prominently depicts that due to the wrong practices prevalent in Indian families, the perpetrators and the victims both suffer equally, and, in the end, everybody proves to be a loser. Amritlal Parekh gains whatever he desires but his son *Jairaj* loses everything.

Mahesh Dattani very delicately depicts the psychology of the victims and the perpetrators of patriarchy. He also discusses in the play that the remedy of woman's emancipation from the social and psychological trap is more in their hands than in man's. They should refuse to adorn themselves for men, including their husbands, if they wish to be their real partners in true sense.

It is interesting to note that Dattani doesn't follow the traditional pattern of portraying the women victims who go on shedding the rivers of tears over her agonies. Instead of portraying women as submissive, silent and weak, he gives fair chance to her women to put forth their say. *Ratna* though falls prey to Amritlal's trap; she doesn't give up like *Jairaj*. She continues her battle and fulfills her dreams through her daughter *Lata*.

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Aesthetics and Fine Arts of the Igbo Culture in *Things Fall Apart*

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Abstract

The novel *Things Fall Apart* is divided into three parts. The events of the story are narrated by the author himself. The events facilitate him to explain the readers the intricate implications arising out of particular situations and circumstances. Thus, he plays the role of an intrusive narrator. The motivation of Achebe's writing *Things Fall Apart* is to respond to the negative images or representations of Africa. He intends to repudiate the Western clichés, stereotypes of Africa and its people. He wants to place an African at the radical center of his narrative, living and breathing in an African environment. Symbols are objects, characters figures or colours used to represent abstract ideas or concepts. It is highly symbolic. The locusts, fire and drums are important symbol used in this novel. In cultural arts such as music, dance, oratory and wrestling. Igbos of Umuofia are rich. The fine arts of Africa are functional and provides aesthetic pleasure. They are for serving the community. So, art is a part and parcel of their life.

Keywords: Igbo Culture, *Things Fall Apart*, aesthetics, arts, Igbo culture, wrestling

African literature forms a major part of twentieth century world literature. African Literature in the final analysis represents the writings of African nationals living on African soil reflecting the African native sensibility and atmosphere. The value of African Literature lies in its Africanness retained in spite of its cosmopolitan origin. Many of the novelists, poets and playwrights either eulogize their glorious past or speak of the devastation inflicted on the native societies by the colonial powers of Europe in terms of protest, conflict, anguish, anger or phobia. They make a fruitful use of the European literary forms in order to voice their strongly felt emotional turmoil, the offshoot of their encounter with the alien rulers.

African writings can be described as two-fold. Firstly, Africa's strange predicament is expressed by African themselves for the first time in a widely accessible medium. Secondly, African writing has the uncanny power of drawing a certain lasting emotional response from the

readers. Chinua Achebe, an outstanding novelist and a short story writer who excelled in depicting the African situation of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era.

Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian writer is truly outstanding among the few writers who excelled in portraying the African situation of the pre-colonial, era. His novels have pervading sense of Africanness and constitute so many chapters in the blighted history of his people. He possesses an effortlessness of story-telling and employs a curiously moulded tone which is at once formal and fiercely passionate. So, his novels and short stories become a rare phenomenon of literary excellence. They appear to contain a potent medicine which takes the reader into those occult zones of unravished beauty and the causes that spoiled it in the saga of African historical becoming.

Chinua Achebe was born on November 16, 1930 in Ogidi, Eastern Nigeria. His father Okafor Achebe was a Christian man and mother Janet N. Achebe was a devout Christian. He was baptized as Albert Chinuabumogu. He attended a primary school in Ogidi run by the Church Missionary Society. Then he attended government college at Umkohia from 1944 to 1947. In 1948, he entered University college in Ibadan, he had studied literature, history and theology at the University. As the first name of Queen Victoria's Prince consort was 'Albert', he dropped 'Albert' from his name and became "Chinua".

Chinua Achebe taught in a school for a year. Then he worked for a Nigerian Broadcasting Company, Lagos. In 1956, the company sent him to study broadcasting at the British Broadcasting Corporation in London. In 1957, he returned from England and continued to work in the same company. In 1961, he was promoted to Director of External Broadcasting. During 1960-61, he was travelled through East Africa on a Rockefeller fellowship.

Achebe has become renowned throughout the world as a father of modern African literature, essayist and professor of English literature at Bard College in New York. But Achebe's achievements are most concretely reflected by his prominence in Nigeria's academic culture and in its literary and political institutions.

He published his first novel named *Things Fall Apart* in 1958. Its impact was electrifying that it was translated into many languages such as German, Italian, Spanish, Slovene, Russian, Hebrew, French, Czech and Hungarian. The novel is multi dimensional in its perspective. It tells the story of an Igbo warrior Okonkwo who single-handedly fought the meddling of white rule in the native life.

The title for Achebe's novel comes from the poem. **The Second Coming** by the Irish poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939). The relevant lines quoted on the title page of the novel are:

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things Fall Apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world”

In cultural arts such as music, dance, oratory and wrestling. Igbos of Umuofia are rich. The fine arts of Africa are functional and provides aesthetic pleasure. They are for serving the community. So, art is a part and parcel of their life.

Music and Dance

For all occasions, Igbos sing songs accompany by dance. During the new yam feast, they sing songs. They spend three days in fun. After that the musicians go to the neighbouring villages to teach new songs and dances. They are in demand there. For these pleasures Unoka, the father of Okonkwo dedicates his life. When he was sent to the ‘Evil Forest’ to die alone he takes his flute Okafu emerges as the winner in a wrestling match; young men sing songs in praise of him. In a marriage function there is a non stop singing. Accompany the singers, musicians play on different instruments made of clay and metal. The Igbo sing songs not only for joy but also for sorrow and mourning. On the death of a village elder they sing,

“for whom is it well, for whom is it well?
There is no one for whom it is well.”

The Igbo continue to sing even after the arrival of the white men. The songs are addressed to the white men and the court messengers. Thus, music is a second nature to them. Drums beat and dances are performed in all wrestling matches. Not only Okonkwo but also his wife Ekwefi are filled with excitement where they hear the drums as a mark of beginning the wrestling matches. Not only Okonkwo but also his wife Ekwefi are filled with excitement when they hear the drums as a mark of beginning the wrestling matches. On hearing the rhythm of the drums her heart beats faster and Okonkwo's feet start stamping.

Flute

Flute is an important musical instrument. The Igbo community is good at making a variety of flutes. Okonkwo's father Unoka was good at playing flute. When he was sent to the ‘Evil Forest’ to die alone he takes his flute along with him. Ikemefuna is talented enough to make flutes with bamboo and elephant grass. Nwoye is much impressed by his skill in making flutes.

Games and Sports

Igbo community gives much importance to games and sport. The spirit of sport increases the sportive nature of the society. In **Things Fall Apart** there are many instances where wrestling match is held, and they are described elaborately. Drum beats accompany the wrestling contests. Okonkwo is an enthusiast of sports. His wife Ekwefi is an admirer of wrestlers. She loved Okonkwo for his wrestling. The whole village of Igbo eagerly expecting the arrival of wrestling match. On the arrival of the match the village becomes alive. Everyone adjusts their work in order to attend the match. Wrestling is so important for Igbo society. Wrestling finds its place in their proverbs. There is a saying ‘you can’t wrestle with your own ‘Chi’. It means you cannot fight against your fate. Fencing is also in practice among the people of Umuofia. Almost all carry a machete. It is a useful instrument in the farm to cut and hack. In the battle field it is a useful weapon. The Igbo sports meet at the New Yam feast every year. It tests the stamina and skill of the community.

Drums

Drums beat in all wrestling matches. Not only Okonkwo but also his wife Ekwefi are filled with excitement when they hear the drums as a mark of beginning the wrestling match. On hearing the rhythm of the drums her heart beats faster and Okankwo’s feet start stamping. A variety of drums known as the Ekwe, Udu and Ogene are used. During the wrestling match drums reflect the excitement of the people.

It was like a pulsation of it throbbed in the air, in the sunshine, and even in the trees, and filled the village with excitement. (31)

The drummers are completely absorbed in the beauty of the drums. The drum is not only an instrument of entertainment but also used to deliver messages. During ceremonies such as birth, death, marriage, wrestling match, title-taking ceremonies and feasts drum beat is heard. In **“Things Fall Apart”** when Ikemefuna is put to death a distant ekwe(drum) is heard accompanied with **‘Ozo’** dance. Thus, drum is a part and parcel of a man’s life in Umuofia. The drums are kept in long baskets. “As the man danced so the drums beat for him”.

An individual fate depends on his life style and behavior. Thus drums are transformed into metaphors of one’s destiny. When Ezendu dies, the drums call the village. During his funeral rites, there is a distant drum beat. Because of its varied uses and functions we can say that drums have a language. It is a fact that percussion instruments have their origin in the jungles of Africa.

Achebe opines that whenever the people are in need of guidance, it is the wisdom stored in the folklore that comes to their rescue. Folklore provides guideline to the individuals and to the society in times of need. Story telling is used to pass long hours in winter or night. They provide a wealth of information. Folklore plays a didactic role. The use of folk lore gives us a chance to understand a particular situation or a character in a better manner. The use of folk tales makes an argument effective, at the same time it serves as a means of mockery and criticism.

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New Social Situation and Domain of Use in Manipuri

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Abstract

The present study contributes to the study of Lexical Development in Social Situation and Domain of use in Manipuri, a Tibeto-Burman language. The word or lexeme or phrase of the old literature (archaic) is changed to new ones due to social situation in modern era. New words are found in vocabulary, morphology, phonology and semantics. New words came in mainly because of social situation and the words are also used according to the domain of use. The language ideology differs in different domains, such as education, administration, market and media. The new words are used according to the domain of use. The paper analyses the changes in the archaic Manipuri words to Modern Manipuri words which enrich Manipuri vocabulary, i.e. lexical development.

Keywords: Manipuri, archaic, modern, social situation, domain, vocabulary and lexical

1. Introduction

Language change is the phenomenon of variation of a language over time whether on phonology, morphology, semantic, syntactic or on other features of language. Linguistic change can also be said to have taken place when a new linguistic element, used by a few speakers within a speech community is adopted by other members of that community and accepted as the norm (Jennifer, 1993; Nettle, 1999; Thomason, 2010).

“Language moves down time in a current of its own making. Nothing is perfectly static. Every word, every grammatical element, every locution, every sound and accent is a slowly changing configuration moulded by the invisible and impersonal drift that is the life of language”, (Sapir, 1921).

“Language, then, like everything else, gradually transforms itself over the centuries. There is nothing surprising in this. In a world where humans grow old, tadpoles change into frogs, and milk turns into cheese, it would be strange if language alone remained unaltered” (Jean Aitchison, 2001).

“Indeed, changes seem to be inherent in nature of language: there is no such thing as a perfectly stable human language” (Milroy, 1992).

According to Labov (2001) ‘changes from below’ explains that there are a lot of changes in which innovations diffuse, not from the highest social class, but from the upper working class or lower middle class, who are considered as having less social impact. It is also observed that there are intricate interdependent relationships between language and culture as well as language and social structure.

According to Croft (2000), language change also takes place through language acquisition. The variations that come from the process of language acquisition are internalized and propagated by the new generation and hence a change may be invited in the language. Language change is mostly in the area of the contact induced. The effects of language contact are varied and dynamic.

As a language is not used in exactly the same way, the unique way that persons speak also fuels language change. The vocabulary and phrases used depend on the where the persons live, their age, level of education, social status. Younger generations use different words and phrases, codes from older generations. Some of these innovations in the speech spread through the population and slowly accepted by other members of the community which, in fact, has become a reason of language change. Language change is caused by a structural aspect of the language (internal factor) or social factor of the speakers (external factor).

Internal factors focus upon structural or psychological motivations that claim linguistic change being motivated by an inherent drive for structural regularity, the removal of marked elements and the analogical spread of regular forms, functional economy or naturalness. Internally motivated change is supported by Martinet (1952).

According to Labov (1972), social factor of language change (external factor) was the variation and change on social context and characteristics (attitudes, affections and aspirations) of the speakers involved in the change.

Language change leads to the enrichment of the language that is the development of lexical items. To facilitate this development, New Social Situations and Domains of Use in Manipuri will be analysed in this paper.

2. New Social Situation and Domains of Use in Manipuri

It is evident from the early literature (archaic) that Manipuri (a Tibeto-Burman language) was spoken in the North-Eastern region of India. It is situated in the extreme North-Eastern border of India and surrounded on the East by Myanmar, on the West by Assam, on the North by Nagaland and on the South by Mizoram and Myanmar) and has changed in vocabulary, morphology, phonology and semantics. The most conspicuous changes in Manipuri are in the area of vocabulary and phonology. In fact, many words disappeared while many new words corresponding to the significant items emerged. In modern Manipuri, words are used as the ways of creating a new word or lexeme, developed by new social situation and domain of use. The extent to which Manipuri has

changed in the last three hundred years can be seen by looking a few passages of the old Manipuri (archaic), (Jhalajit, 1983).

The earliest manuscripts are handwritten in Meitei Mayek (Manipuri script) on agarbak, a paper derived from the bark of a tree. Pens are made out of bamboo. Another technique used was to blacken the paper with charcoal and used a soapstone pencil for writing. There was an organized paper making industry in Manipur by the 1700s (R. J. Singh, 1983). The early manuscripts and inscriptions are yet to be studied by linguists or anthropologists on a large scale. So, I am taking up the difference in Archaic and Modern Manipuri in literature and vocabulary.

The old Manipuri (archaic) words are different from modern Manipuri. The new social situation and domain of use in Manipuri is mainly focused on the archaic (old literature) of Manipuri which is not used in modern Manipuri, but it is used only in the poetic forms and folklore. The vocabulary of the modern Manipuri is quite different from the archaic vocabulary of Manipuri.

There are a number of words in old literature (archaic) in Manipuri. The following data show that lexical change happened in social situations as illustrated in the **Table 1**.

Table 1: Differences between Archaic and Modern Manipuri

Source	Archaic Manipuri	Modern Manipuri	Gloss
Panthoipikhongkul	Ji-nu	Ine	Aunt
	ca-n̄m-t ^h i	n̄m-thib̄-cak	Stinky rice (rotten rice)
	cak- mom- k ^h am-pi	m̄i	Fire
	s̄mu (k ^h ut-t̄)	̄y-gi (k ^h ut-t̄)	on my hand
	k ^h ̄mnuj s̄-wa tan	Siba	Dying
Poireitonkhunthok	̄-ra-p̄-pu	̄-ra-p̄-bu	Bright
	pi-pa	pi-ba	Giving
	̄-si-pu	̄-si-bu	This
	n̄̄-ti	n̄̄-di	You
	n̄-mom-pu	n̄-mom-bu	Your daughter
The manuscript Langpum (a creation myth)	̄aŋ	̄̄aŋ	Child
	Lu	Kok	Head
	t ^h ap	Lap	Far
	Nurabi	Nupi	Woman
The manuscript of pombirol (the knowledge of birds)	Hak	Sa	Body

	Pombi	Ucek	Bird
	Soipai	Yenba	Cock
	soit ^h iŋ	Yenbi	Hen
	Loklao	Isiŋ	Water
Ariba Manipuri Longei by N. K. Singh	cɔŋ	Iŋ	Cold
	tondɔm	ŋɔksɔm	Neck
	kɔceŋ	Thaŋ	Knife
	Hamlen	lɔycin	Cloud
	puren	mɔkok	Head
Manipuri to Manipuri & English dictionary by N.K. Singh	lɔy	lɔybak	Earth
	mɔkiŋ	mɔtu	fur/feather
	lɔm	lɔybak	Land
	konk ^h ei	lɔmdɔm	Place
	Oŋ	Luhon	Marry
The manuscript Chainarol (the art of war)	pɔnt ^h ɔu	mɔpa	Father
	k ^h ambi	Mei	Fire
	Palem	Ima	Mother
	Pari	icanupa	Son
	Haipi	siŋjɔŋ	Axe
Other literary books	ɔtiŋɔ	ɔtiya	Sky
	ɔraŋ	ŋɔraŋ	Yesterday
	unt ^h ɔmt ^h ɔ	int ^h ɔmt ^h ɔ	Winter
	Kay	Ku	Coffin
	k ^h uklu	k ^h uk-u	Knee
	cumit ^h aŋ	cumt ^h aŋ	Rainbow
	moibɔ	maibɔ	Physician, oracle
	lɔmaiciŋ	Nonmaiŋiŋ	Sunday
	k ^h ɔŋsɪnpɔ	k ^h ɔŋjɪnbɔ	Knowing
	t ^h aca	t ^h aja	Moon
	sɔdu	Napi	Grass

Data are drawn from seven selected archaic literature and other literary books. Out of these two are from archaic books, three are from archaic manuscripts and two are from old dictionaries. The seven main sources are taken up for Archaic Manipuri literature and vocabulary. They are described below.

Panthoiphongkul and **Poireitonkhunthok** are old books. These are considered to be written in the last decade of the 17th century (Jhalajit, 1987). **The manuscript Langpum** (a creation myth), **the manuscript of pombirol** (the knowledge of birds), **the manuscript Chainarol** (the art of war) are old manuscripts of Manipur. **Ariba Manipuri Longei** and **Manipuri to Manipuri & English dictionary** are two books of dictionary compiled by N.K. Singh and other literary books. Only a few words have taken up for the study to show the differences in the Archaic and modern Manipuri. It means that there are changes in the words in Archaic and Modern Manipuri. The differences in words enriched Manipuri words and it is used in Manipuri in related domains. By the social situation, the new words are formed. These newly developed words are very useful in the enrichment of vocabulary of Manipuri.

The differences in the phonemes between the Archaic Manipuri and Modern Manipuri forms are shown in the above table. The sound **i** of Modern Manipuri is consistently written as **ji** in Archaic Manipuri. The sound **i** in the initial position of Manipuri words is, perhaps, pronounced as **ji** in the Archaic Manipuri. Other examples, in the table above, show the changes of the sounds **p, t, k** to their voiced counterparts in the environment of voiced sounds, that is, **b, d, g**. For example, the word **∂si-pu** is pronounced as **∂si-bu** in Modern Manipuri. It means that sound **p** changed to **b** in the modern Manipuri.

In the list of the Archaic and Modern Manipuri words there is little difference in the basic words. The most prominent differences in the Archaic and Modern Manipuri words are the changes in phonology due to social situation. The pronunciation of Archaic Manipuri is very different from the pronunciation of Modern Manipuri. Early phonology of Manipuri had only fifteen consonants, six vowels and six diphthongs whereas Modern Manipuri phonology has twenty-four consonants, and the number of vowels and diphthongs remains the same. The development of the sounds /r, b, d, g, z, b^h, d^h, g^h, z^h/ has brought a turning point in the phonology of Manipuri that makes the modern Manipuri from out of the Archaic Manipuri.

The Archaic words are still used in traditional oral literature and poetic forms, not in the modern Manipuri.

3. Vocabulary and Texts in the Manuscripts in Manipuri

Vocabulary and texts in the Manuscripts are used only in poetic or sacred texts in Modern Manipuri. In the majority of cases, the Archaic compounds of Manipuri and the Modern Manipuri words are not phonetically similar and cannot be related to sound change. In cases where the Archaic and modern words are similar, the modern form is a shortened version of the archaic compound. There are a number of compound words in the archaic Manipuri. The data are illustrated in the following **Table 2**.

Table 2: Shortening of Archaic Manipuri Compound words in Modern Manipuri

Archaic Manipuri	Modern Manipuri	Etymology	Gloss
Punujhōyru	hōyru	punuj 'shirt'	Button
wait ^h ujp ^h ōm	t ^h ujp ^h ōm	wai 'where about' t ^h uj 'reach' p ^h ōm 'place'	Destination
Lolu	lu	lon 'weave' lu 'trap'	fishing trap
lup ^h ui	Lu	p ^h ui 'bear/ give birth' lu 'trap'	fishing trap
lol yim	Yum	yim/ yum 'house'	House
paw kōwba	kōwba	paw 'news' kōw 'call'	Calling
soṅkibō	kibō	soṅ 'dense' ki 'fear'	Fearing
p ^h ōmp ^h ōm	p ^h ōmbō	p ^h ōm 'sit'	Sitting
lōṅoymoysōyō	sōmmumōya	lōṅoy 'elephant' lōṅoy 'elephant' moy-sō-yō means moy 'their' sō 'body' yō 'tooth' mō 'third person' ya 'tooth'	Tusk
pa-haṅ	Pa-k ^h ōṅ	pa-haṅ pair- empty	bachelor

The above table 2 shows the Archaic compounds of Manipuri and the Modern Manipuri words which are not phonetically similar and they are a shortened version of the archaic compound.

4. Conclusion

The data from Manipuri literature has greatly contributed to the historical development, mainly lexical development of Manipuri language, the Tibeto-Burman family in general. The comparison of Archaic Modern Manipuri will contribute to the development of theories of language change, cultural and political history. The language structure itself influences and effects language change.

The changing of words enriched the vocabulary in Manipuri. This is due to the social situations and domain of use. Thus, new words are used for the lexical development in Manipuri.

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The Hairy Ape: A Tragic Dilemma of Belonging

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Abstract

Eugene O'Neill was the product of that American society which was beset with class consciousness and growing materialism. Many of his plays focus on the difficulty of life, relation and identity in modern America. This paper aims to delve deep into the question of identity in Eugene O'Neill's Play *The Hairy Ape* which is often considered as a modern tragedy, though it is subtitled as *A Comedy of Ancient and Modern Life in Eight Scenes*. The thrust of the paper lies in its effort to find out to what extent the tragic framework and also the subtitle of the play helps in intensifying the deep sense or dilemma of identity in the play.

Keywords: Eugene O'Neill, *The Hairy Ape*, tragedy, dilemma, identity.

Eugene O'Neill's play *The Hairy Ape*, published in 1922, is concerned with some of the central problems of American society in the first half of the Twentieth Century. O'Neill's acute observation of the American society in the post-war, post-depression era finds a poignant, but a somewhat stylized expression in the play. In the process of enunciation of the problems that concerns O'Neill and his generation, the playwright improvises on the convention of the form and structure of tragedy. And however debatable O'Neill's improvised notion of tragedy may be, his plays raise certain issues quite successfully. O'Neill's contribution, therefore, is two-fold: on the one hand he emphasizes the need to improvise traditional structure and, on the other hand, he is capable of holding mirror up to the American society.

Tragedy, as a rule, concerns itself with lofty ideas, involving characters drawn from high stratum of life, and arising issues that are noble as well as serious. The 'terror' and 'pity' that tragic characters evoke in the mind of audience are projected in such a way as to transform the audience from their familiar, ordinary level to a level from which they are able to grasp the universal order. The flaws in the protagonist in a tragedy, therefore, involve huge consequences, bringing destruction and misery to the world in the play, and this allows the audience to grasp the tragic waste in a death of the ideal hero. The transformation of the audience in power of

realization from a commonsensical order to the universal or comic is one of the ultimate objectives of tragedy. When O'Neill started writing, he was working in milieu in which the presence of the hero of a royal stature was impossible. Monarchy, personal heroism and nobility had long given away to a land of ordinary characters, situations and problems in the democratic America. The generation of O'Neill was faced with the problem of either accepting tragedy as the form of literature at the cost of divorcing their effort from the realities of their time or improvising the form or structure of tragedy in order to evoke new structure of meaning. Therefore, it was imperative for the playwrights of the Twentieth Century to treat ordinary, middle or lower-class citizen and to still retain the basic tragic structure. So, tragedy to the 20th Century playwrights came to mean a dramatic form which involves tragic waste in the death of protagonist. Yank, the protagonist of *The Hairy Ape* is drawn from the lower-class life but his infallible pride in his sense of physicality and his fidelity to believe make him a kind of tragic hero.

O'Neill completely abandons the traditional five Acts structure of tragedy and adopts an eight Scenes structure. The play is chiefly concerned with Yank's exploits throughout the play. Yank's shipmates Long and Paddy are so presented that the development of the theme at the surface level is carried out through their characters. Yank believes in hard physical work, and that is what really determines the quality of life for him. Those who work hard with a sense of conviction of physicality actually run the world and those who sit in the first-class cabin are dismissed contemptuously by him. Yank's firm conviction of physicality is shattered once he confronts Mildred, a lady who belongs to world that Yank is not aware of. Yank is humiliated and for the first time in his life is conscious of a sense of uncertainty. Once lack of belief sets in him, he becomes restless and starts searching meaning of his existence. His world view is completely shattered when he steps out of the ship and sets foot in the New York soil. The humiliation of Yank further continues. His celebration of physicality is contemptuously treated by the urban society and finally in a symbolical moment, in desperation, Yank identifies himself with a Gorilla in a zoo. Unable to find his identity in the human world, Yank tries to befriend an animal, and, ironically, even in that attempt he is thwarted. The gorilla crushes Yank's bone and kills him. What is heroic about Yank's journey in search of meaning is that he never really abandons his set of beliefs and ultimately faces his death because of his fidelity to it.

The tragedy of Yank is heroic first because he is, in his own way, superior, efficient and capable even though he does not occupy any exalted position. Secondly, Yank's tragedy is the tragedy of the universal man. Loss of a sense of harmony and creative joy results in disillusionment, frustration, and tragedy for the modern man as it does for Yank in the play. But the ending of the play becomes more theatrical and melodramatic than truly tragic. *The Hairy Ape* is a powerful tragedy but towards the end symbolism gets out of control of the playwright, and reality and emotional appeal somewhat fade away.

The Hairy Ape is a tragedy about a man who is in complete accord with his world and content in his understanding of love, who comes face to face with a lack of self identification in a world which is overwhelmingly alien, harsh and cold, tempered by the strength of street, curse of capitalism and impersonal mechanism of materialism. Alienation and search for identity are the basic themes in *The Hairy Ape*.

Out of the play emerges the dominant figure of the tragic protagonist who is a stocker in a trans-Atlantic liner, a man who feels he belongs as none to the others. To the other stockers, he is the leader, “their most highly developed individual”, the man who is the symbol of the power and energy behind the ship. This is Yank’s illusion, which originates in what the other thinks of him and is fostered by his brutal strength. While speaking of the capitalist class, he says,

... Dat’s what I’m sayin’. Everything else dat makes de woild move, somep’n makes it move. It can’t move without somep’n else, see? . . . I’m at de bottom . . . I’m de end! I’m de start! I start somep’n and de woild moves! It -- dat’s me! . . . I’m de ting in gold dat makes it money! And I’m what makes iron into steel! Steel, dat stands for de whole ting! And I’m steel – steel – steel! I’m de muscles in steel, de punch behind it! . . . All the rich guys dat tink dey’re somep’n, dey ain’t nothing! Dey don’t belong. (Sc. 1, 180)

We find Yank exultantly expounding his views. Nothing troubles him – no consideration of God or faith or home or society. He totally ignores beauty. These are things immaterial and have no place in his scheme of living. For Yank, the present is of utmost importance, for it is the present which satisfies his ego. Yank’s whole sense of belonging is based on this fact. His imagination makes him identify the impersonal strength of steel with the brutal, primitive strength which he possesses, for it is this strength which has the power to convert iron into steel. This helps to strengthen Yank’s sense of belonging and his idea of mastery. But the confident self image of Yank is soon destroyed by Mildred Douglas, whose father is the president of the Steel trust. Her look of horror when she sees yank, her exclamation, “Oh, the filthy beast!” (Sc.III, 188), as she observes him in all the splendor of his anger, stress, feelings in Yank which is never dripped up. She does not actually call him a ‘hairy ape’, but her sense of shock is aptly conveyed in Paddy’s words: “Sure ‘twas as if she’d seen a great hairy ape escapes from the zoo” (Sc.IV, 191). With that exclamation Mildred has destroyed the very foundation of his being. He, who was so proud of his strength, suffers an indignity at the hands of a woman. In his meeting of two different worlds, Yank has been humiliated in some unknown fashion in the very heart of his pride. All his efforts now move in a single direction and converse in an attempt to escape this self-image. There is a pathetic vehemence in the way he exclaims:

Hairy ape, huh? Sure! Dat’s de way she looked at me, aw right. Hairy ape! So dat’s me, . yuh skinny tart! Yuh whitfaced bum, yuh! I’ll show yuh who’s an ape! . . . sure! I tought

she was a ghost, see? She was all in white like de wrap around stiffs. You seen her. Kin yuh blame me? She didn't belong . . . I'll square wit her" (Sc.IV, 192).

The animal desire for revenge is very strong within him, and it is this desire, almost primitive in its brutality, which motivates him and provides him with an incentive for building up a new image of himself. His search for a new identity and a new sense of belonging will now turn into a kind of frenzy, with a desperation that can only end in self-annihilation.

Yank reaches Fifth Avenue in order to seek revenge on the class of people to which Mildred belongs. However, he confronts there a world which breathes materialism, artificiality and aimlessness. It is here that he realizes that the force which he thought was strength, i.e. steel, was no force at all. It was a prison for him. He had thought that he was steel, that he belongs as steel belongs to industrial world. However, he realizes that the power was not his own but of Mildred's father. He feels that he is a hairy ape in a cage of steel.

His search for belonging brings him to the I.W.W., an organization which attacks social inequality and disparity of the time. Now his aim is to destroy all the steel works, but, even here he is not successful. At this juncture, he realizes that the main source of trouble is not in the society, nor in Mildred, but in himself, and accepts that he does not belong to steel.

Since he can belong neither to steel nor to society, he eventually resolves to withdraw and surrender to the image of the ape. And in his last speech with the ape, we see a Yank who has realized to some extent the significance of the spiritual world, but he cannot as yet belong to it. He lives in an inescapable image which is 'self but cannot even belong to himself because he does not know what 'self' is. He is a part of nature, subject to all her physical law and yet not a part because even though he has a home, he is homeless. He has vision as well as imagination, but this only makes him more aware of himself and of the limitation of his ego. He has no past, no future and he is jealous of the ape which in reality belongs to green woods, the jungle.

In his final attempt to belong to the world of the ape, he pries upon the cage and tries to shake hand with the ape: "Come on brother, shake De secret grip of our order". These are the last words that Yank, in his last endeavour to belong to some other world, utters. But even this appeal is rendered futile for the ape seizes him in a crushing hug and cracks his rib, leaving Yank with final conviction that he does not even belong to the animal world.

Thus, it has been seen that there is a close relation between the tragic framework of the play and the issues of belonging around which it develops. The play is a tragedy in all its manifestations; it is a tragedy of man and his dignity, and at large his identity. The last sentence of the play is highly relevant; "And perhaps the Hairy Ape, at last belongs". With a deep sense of responsibility Yank searches for an image of himself, but he cannot see beyond his conscious

self, and the barrier can be overcome only by death. To the existentialist, Yank is a great man, great because even though he lives in a meaningless world, he does not accept humanity passively. Yank strives to seek a meaning in life which organization or social court can provide. Interestingly, he is willing to do this despite the obvious reward of pain and suffering. He has chosen the path of the rational or sensitive man and treads that path with his despair and dismay. The plight of Yank is well expressed in the following lines:

The gorilla in the zoo looks better in its predicament than a man. It is champion of its world. It belongs, a belonging denied to man. The human world is 'hell' for it which never allows any sense of the self or identity. In a despairing sense of self condemnation, Yank seeks to belong to the gorilla and as if to cement this bond of belonging, he goes to embrace it. But the gorilla simply does not trust Man, a man who is not trusted in his own world. The gorilla crushes him to death in an act of self - defence, repeating the story of man in his world in the world of animals as well. When man cannot belong to man, how can he belong to the animals? (Rachana, 30).

Belonging appears to be highly problematic in the context of modern man, and so was in the context of the ancient man. Belonging is realized in association with one's environment- both natural and social. The primordial man was much happier as he lived a life of total harmony with nature. As civilization set in, man started distancing from nature, often engaging in her annihilation. The modern man or the civilized man has completely distanced himself from nature; he has also distanced himself from his fellow being thanks to his excessive materialistic concern. The ancient man sought civilization for happiness, but got tragic alienation from nature, in the same manner modernization alienated one man from another and has driven the mankind to that extreme where he is also alienated from himself. What could be more ridiculous than this? It is in this sense O'Neill has subtitled the play as *A Comedy of Ancient and Modern Life in Eight Scenes*. Man does not belong to anything nor anything belongs to him; he is born without being asked to; he lives according to circumstances, not by his wishes; he dies without being asked to. In this process where does man stand? Nowhere, in no man's land. And this makes his life comic despite his tragic experience. It is this absurdity of belonging that Yank is faced with. He is made to think what he is, and this drives him from the world of man to the world of animal. This reverse journey is more painful than the journey of human civilization, as Yank realizes that he also does not belong to the world of animal. Yank is the being of no man's land; he neither belongs to man nor to animal, and this makes his tragedy comically metaphysical.

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Female Representation of Sana'a in Al-Baradduni's Poetry

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Abstract

Modern Arabic poetry is fraught with creative representation of major Arab cities specially the ancient ones. The present paper explores the representation of one of the most ancient Arab cities, Sana'a, by the well-known Yemeni poet Abdullah Al-Baradduni. It expounds how this poet represents Sana'a city as a lady with female qualities and characteristics.

Most poems of Al-Baradduni about Sana'a portray it as a woman from different angles and perspectives that reflect the poet's attachment to this city and his attitudes towards the social and political events and changes that took place in Sana'a. This representation also reveals Al-Baradduni's poetic style as realized in his ample use of symbolism and irony.

Keywords: Al-Baradduni, Sana'a, city, representation, symbolism, revolution, Imamate Regime, irony.

Introduction

Generally speaking, Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, is known for its beautiful ancient architecture, weather and its deeply rooted place in history. It is a very ancient city whose importance and beauty have drawn the attention of many travelers, writers and historians since early periods of history. In his book *Al-Ikleel*, Al-Hamdani, the well-known Arab historian and traveller, describes Sana'a as a matchless city on the earth (9). Another historian called Al-Razi describes Sana'a city as the most wonderful city on the earth and the most delightful of all of God's countries due to its extraordinary climate, weather, geography, etc. (*History of Sana'a City* 147).

Abdullah Al-Baradduni is one of the most prominent modern Arab poets known for his poetic creativity and renewal of contents and versification of Arabic poetry (Ezzideen Isma'il, *Issues in Modern Arabic Poetry* 87). His great poetic skills are clearly noticed in the way he represents the topics and themes in his poetry best realized in the portrayal of Sana'a city. When reading Al-Baradduni's poems about Sana'a, one can feel that this city is described and addressed as a real lady with all female qualities and connotations.

Al-Baradduni's Vision of City

Having lived in city for the major part of his life, Al-Baradduni formed a special vision of city in general as can be noticed in his famous poem "The City of Tomorrow". Commenting on this poem, Bahjat Salib says, "the poet is dreaming of an ideal new city. The images drawn in the poem are all hopeful images of life and rebirth" (*Three Contemporary Yemeni Poets* 9). This vision can be seen in the lines below:

Since ages you have been the magic of words
The waited wishes and the dreams of gestures
One day, you will rise up unpromised
restoring brightness to dry plants
planting sympathy in each valley
making a road in each lane. (*Al-Baradduni's Complete Poetic Works* 452)

It is clear that this city refers to the idealistic vision of a modern city and how it should be a place of peace, love and happiness. This ideal city can stand for the poet's quest for the lost innocence, dreams, salvation and wishes for rebirth of a better life. On the other hand, this imaginary city can refer to Sana'a itself since the poet has wishes and dreams of Sana'a city to be in much better conditions.

Al-Baradduni and Sana'a City: Biographical Links

Although Al-Baradduni was born in Dhamar, another Yemeni city, he left it at the age of 13 heading for Sana'a, which attracted him by its beauty, civilization, cultural heritage and learning centres. Since then the poet settled in Sana'a and became enchanted by its beauty and uniqueness; but at the same time, he started to realize its miseries, the obstacles to its progress as well as the suffering of its citizens.

Commenting on the poetry of Al-Baradduni about Sana'a, Al-Maqalih states that Al-Baradduni wrote about Sana'a with a high degree of sincerity and love for this city because in it he found his stability, warmth and respect from its residents (Al-Maqalih, Interview 2018).

This paper is confined to the poet's female representation of Sana'a, giving much emphasis on the major aspects of such portrayal and its thematic and artistic significance. These aspects of the female representation of Sana'a are discussed briefly below:

Sana'a as a Beautiful Lady

Some poems by Al-Baradduni present Sana'a as a beautiful lady with all physical charms. For instance, in the poem "Sana'a in Umayyad Hotel", the female Sana'a is described as having an attractive appearance:

Isn't this Sana'a?
Yes, she is here beaming with her cheerful countenance
and lofty height,
With her dark blue greenness and flavored discourse,
With her hills' freshness and fragrant pastures. (*BCPW* 797)

The poet here succeeds in mingling between the beautiful features of Sana'a the city and Sana'a, the woman by describing Sana'a beautiful appearance, stature, complexion, warm talk and fragrant smell.

In the poem "Abu Tammam and Today's Arabism", AL-Baradduni describes Sana'a city as a beautiful woman but, unfortunately, she is infected with diseases:

What shall I say about Sana'a, father?
A beauty whose two lovers are tuberculosis and itching.
But in her womb never died adoration and rapture. (BCPW 753)

The two diseases, tuberculosis and itching are metaphors that can stand for poverty and ignorance as well as corruption of political systems. Tuberculosis symbolizes internal corruption in the country and itching stands for external corruption coming from other countries (Abdullah Alwan, *Baraddunian Text and Approach* 111). However, the romance and cheerfulness of the female Sana'a are not hindered by her health state.

Sana'a as a Pregnant Woman

Another aspect of female representation of Sana'a is describing it as a pregnant woman as noticed in "Sana'a, Death and Rebirth":

As long as its sleep is pregnant,
Rebirth will never delay
Despite nausea, she longs for parturition,
Her imminent birth delivery is revealed by a bloody twilight and fair dawn.
(BCPW 627)

In these lines, the sleep or slumber of Sana'a is a metaphor of calmness and temporary stability. The portrayal of Sana'a here as a pregnant woman with all these conditions indicates the strong conflicts in Sana'a city among different political powers during the seventies of the 20th century such as the pro-revolution and anti-revolution groups (Alwan 53).

In the same poem, the poet goes on presenting Sana'a as a pregnant woman who is going to give birth to a new important baby:

Yet, despite the shortage of rain,
She is pregnant with Qahtan or Qarib,
Her sad eyes are telling of a coming Yemen,
Like a yearning dream; coming and going away. (BCPW 436)

This pregnant city is expected to have a newborn baby hopefully to become a great leader of the country. Here Sana'a's pregnancy has a political implication as seen in the historical names

"Qahtan" and "Karib". These two historical figures symbolize any successful leader who is hoped to unite and rule the country successfully leading it to prosperity and progress.

It can be noticed that the pregnancy associated with Sana'a in these selected lines indicates the poet's optimism about the betterment and promising future of Sana'a, which stands for the whole country, whether it is realized in the fruit of the revolution or the need for prominent and successful leaders of this country.

Sana'a as a Depressed Woman

Some poems by Al-Baradduni show sadness of the lady Sana'a as can be noticed in the following lines from the poem "Sana'a in an Airplane":

Crying? Nay...
who would feel pity for your depression and sorrows?
Familiarity to miseries makes me see the weeping of women hollow. (BCPW 691)

Similarly, in "Sana'a at an Umayyad Hotel", the poet emphasizes the misery and depression that accompany the female Sana'a:

Her news is foggy, do you know her secrets?
Do you listen? which one of us is aware of his tragedy?
They console us through their trumpets,
As if they were more considerate to our victims than their knives.
(BCPW 798)

This poem expresses the poet's feelings towards his native town, Sana'a, and its tragic circumstances. The trumpets here symbolize world mass media such as radios, TV channels and newspapers that present events and miserable conditions in Yemen. The last line implies the poet's accusation of external intervention of some countries in Sana'a affairs, leading to its miseries.

Emphasizing the same gloomy image of the female Sana'a, the poet in "A City Without Face" describes this city as an emotionless woman whose beautiful and attractive aspect as well as everything around her have become dull and low-spirited:

Even the summer's nights are visionless,
And the spring flowers have become without fragrance,
Do you know that the sun over you can't see,
And your sick nights don't move,
Even love songs lost their passion,
And the verse eyes became void of poetry. (BCPW 603)

This melancholic and depressed picture of Sana'a is a result of frustrating conditions and constant political unrest that Sana'a witnessed during the 70s of the 20th century.

Sana'a as an Old Lady:

In some poems, Al-Baradduni portrays Sana'a as an old lady as seen in "A Song of Wood":

Is that Sana'a?
Her name runs away when inspected,
her lineage howls,
She is an aged woman groaning in the Ice Age,
Wearing the latest things that are brought to her. (BCPW 662)

It is noticeable that these lines have sharp images specially in describing Sana'a as an ageing woman that tries to wear latest fashionable dresses. The fashionable dresses here stand for modernity and openness to foreign cultures.

From another perspective, in the light of 26th September Revolution, 1962, the poet states that this revolution changes Sana'a from an old woman to a young cheerful one:

The aged Sana'a regained her youth,
With soiree lighting up all her parts. (BCPW 469)

This indicates the poet's optimism about the promises of the September Revolution that was made against the Imamate Regime, which ruled Sana'a and the North Part of Yemen before this revolution.

Sana'a as a Maidservant

In another image within the female representation, the poet portrays Sana'a as a maid as can be noticed in the following lines in "Sana'a in an Airplane":

Sana'a, when will you shun?
For it is said you were lofty once.
But as I have become the slave of the slaves,
You too have become a maid of female slaves. (BCPW 691)

Obviously, these lines carry political connotations specially in describing this city as a maid of maids, which can stand for submission and subordination to bad leaders or foreign powers. There is a clear political irony in these lines. The poet indicates that this submission is also shared by the residents of this city as can be seen in the poet's description of himself as the slave of the slaves.

Sana'a as the Poet's Companion

In addition to these female images, Al-Baradduni draws a unique picture of Sana'a as his travel companion:

In the travelling seat you are sitting,
Flying and nostalgic just as I am
Both of us have wooden wishes,
Shaken by violent memories. (BCPW 469)

These lines indicate that the companionship of the poet and Sana'a involves traveling and unachievable dreams. Both of them seem depressed.

In "Sana'a at an Ummayyad Hotel", the poet also emphasizes the same idea of travelling with his female companion, Sana'a:

I thought I got away from this gorgeous lady,
But from where did she come to enchant the epileptic room?
Whispering to me about everything,
asking "Where are departing? Slow down." (BCPW 798)

The poet here wonders how he is joined by his female companion Sana'a during his stay in another country. In a dramatic style, with a blaming tone, Sana'a also asks the poet why he has left her and wanted to be away from her. This shows that both the poet and the city are close friends who can not stand disunion and living away from each other.

Obviously, this imaginary portrayal of Sana'a and the poet as companions during going abroad shows them as two lovers who can not stand being away from each other. The closeness of these lovers can be seen through the dialogue and intimate talk to each other. Moreover, the poet shares eating with his beloved Sana'a as seen in his order of food for two persons not one:

I ordered breakfast for two,
"You are alone", they told me,
"No, Sana'a is with me", I replied. (BCPW 799)

This is a wonderful personification of Sana'a, showing the poet's deep love and attachment towards this city.

Female Sana'a Between Hope and Despair

Due to frequent upheavals and political conflicts, Sana'a sometimes appears confused and distracted between hope and despair. This can be obviously noticed in the following lines in "A City Without Face":

Are you inhaling dawn in darkness,
Without calm or a star indicating dawn coming?
In vain you are appealing to anything rising,
Your eyes are expecting dawn and Night of Power. (BCPW 604)

The poet asks Sana'a how she tries to breathe dawn breeze while darkness is still dominant. Sana'a is expecting the dawn coming but it has not really come. Symbolically speaking, darkness stands for ignorance and corrupt political system. The dawn symbolizes lost waited future and progress of the country after 1962 Revolution which was followed by political and ideological conflicts instead of stability and prosperity (Alwan 72). It is clear that the female Sana'a's dreams of a better life after the Revolution did not come true.

The same state of Sana'a wavering between hope and hopelessness is also illustrated in "Sana'a, Dream and Time":

Without awareness, you are glowing,
Your fire dies down without feelings,
Always dreaming but you have seen nothing,
You just place blames on ages.
Time is still letting you down,
So you rise just to set. (BCPW 586)

These lines imply that Sana'a has recurrent dreams but unfortunately, they are not fulfilled. Because of her frustration, Sana'a lays the blame for her unfulfilled dreams on ages and time. The last line above confirms that it is 'time' that fails Sana'a and acts as an obstacle to her dreams. Obviously, Sana'a's dreams in these lines refer to the dreams of Yemeni people about a good political system based on justice, freedom, welfare and prosperity. The phrase "you rise just to set" can mean that Sana'a revolutions against bad political regimes usually end in failure or the goals of such revolutions are diverted leading to another bad political system.

On the other hand, in the poem "Winds Friend", the poet presents Sana'a with a hopeful note about a good future:

O' dream, can you get a miracle,
That turns pebbles to light,
Sana'a is awaiting miracles,
Dreaming of a typical miracle. (BCPW 824)

The words "await" and "miracle" suggest that those dreams are very great and they require great leaders to achieve them in reality.

Sana'a and Modern Changes

During the Post-Revolution period, specially during the 70s of the 20th century, Sana'a witnessed immense expansion in construction and buildings. These changes and expansion in buildings negatively affected the beautiful architecture of the Old City of Sana'a.

The poem "A Citizen of Sana'a Searching for Sana'a" summarizes the impact of such changes. Written in an interesting dramatic style, this poem shows the (speaker) hero's search for his beautiful old city of Sana'a that has been lost in the new city due to random expansion and investment in this city at the cost of the beautiful architecture and scenery of the Old City. According to Alwan (82), the setting of this poem refers to 1972, the year of political reconciliation between the pro-revolution and anti-revolution groups (the Republicans and Imamate supporters respectively). But there were still ongoing political clashes as shown at ideological and business levels. So during this period, there was an increasing interest in investment in this city in trading and lands under the disguise of bringing development and modernity to Sana'a city.

Through the following lines, the poet summarizes negative changes in the architecture of Sana'a city:

Is this Sana'a?

Sana'a is no longer seen but some old pieces.
Just five years drove away her free Azalian face. (BCPW 372)

The five years mentioned in the line above refers to the period extending from 1967 until 1972 which witnessed openness to foreign culture as well as investment and plots or lands trading (Alwan 83).

Skillfully, the poet summarizes his agony and anger at these negative changes that occurred in Sana'a by choosing a female image of Sana'a; "her Azalian face", which shows Sana'a as a beautiful woman whose beauty is distorted by the acts of others.

The same idea is also emphasized in the poem " Memories of Two Old Men", in which the poet expresses his anger and indifference to the changes that are taking place in society and Sana'a city:

Nothing remained as in the past,
So, nothing is worthy of sadness or happiness,
Sana'a has entered a new gate,
I wish she'd know to where it is leading her! (BCPW 589)

There is a note of warning for the female Sana'a to be aware of this dangerous new gate and route, which refers to new social, political and architectural changes that happened to this city.

Conclusion

To sum up, Al-Baradduni represents Sana'a as a lady from different angles and points of views according to the thematic and artistic nature of his poems about this city. So, for example, when he wants to show the beauty of this city, he presents it as a beautiful lady, and when aiming at expressing his love for it, he portrays it as his companion or beloved lady. The poet also uses this female representation of Sana'a to address historical, social and political issues and changes that happened in this city and in Yemen in general. It is noticed that adopting the female portrayal of Sana'a makes the poems more interesting, vivid, dramatic and suggestive. All these aspects show the thematic and artistic creativity in Al-Baradduni's poetry.

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Historicising Manipur's Social and Political Issues through the Poetry of Robin S Ngangom

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Abstract

History is said to be the narration of significant event that have occurred somewhere in the past. Earlier, it was looked up to as an authentic document of certain period and its veracity was never questioned. The investigation regarding its genuineness is just recent when scholars realized that different historical versions of the same period were available. Each version spoke different stories, often contradictory, about the same period. Now the question arises, how far the history is authentic? Historians write history based on their personal agenda and biasness. Thus the investigation began and up to now the debate still lingers on which version to accept as real and which to discard as unreal. Besides history books, plethora of information about historical facts are available online, therefore, selecting the right version has become difficult. Surprisingly, details of authentic historical events have started reflecting in poetry. The function of poetry has changed drastically since the First World War. Certain sections of poets have become imbued with the reality and pressing issues of their surroundings. They have started representing the reality of the events as it is and this kind of poetry could be seen emerging from the Northeastern part of India. The present paper attempts to explore the historicity as reflected in the poems of Robin S Ngangom and to see how his poem plays a major role in bringing out the social and political issues of Manipur.

Keywords: Manipur, Robin Ngangom, History, Poetry, World War First, Northeast India

Introduction

In a simple word, history is the study of the past momentous events and period of bygone years. It is derived from the Greek word *historia* which means “inquiry, knowledge acquired by investigation.”¹ Merriam Webster defines history as “a chronological record of significant events.”² In the early society history was narrated in the form of oral stories. People relied on their memory to share the events as there was no written form initially. As the human felt the

need for keeping track of the events of the time, recording history began but it is unsure exactly when it began. It is generally assumed that writing history began with the invention of writing but over the span of time new ways of recording history has evolved. History in written form appeared quite later than 5000 years ago in Egypt and Sumer. The Sumerian record was recorded in clay tablet which still survives. After a few centuries, elaborate written chronicles began to appear and became the foundation for historical reference. Written document was seen as solid or authoritative than oral stories because written form did not change once it was penned down. As society started evolving and as people began interconnecting, questioning and comparing different stories, claiming different version of the past began to take hold. Thus, Herodotus also known as “Father of history” travelled far and wide, collected materials systematically and wrote the accurate account. After him Chinese historian Sima Qian wrote an account of the nomadic Xiongnu based on the details and experiences shared by many Chinese travelers who had visited Mongolia. Nevertheless, it is only during enlightenment era in 18th century history based on evidence garnered significance. The 19th century historian Leopold von Ranke was instrumental in bringing out history based on the basis of archival record. But even this had limitation because archive recording was done a few centuries ago and was archived much later. In spite, of all these drawbacks people relied on whatever historical materials were available. However, it is only after the later part of the 20th century people started to question about the veracity of history writing and record. Even in the written records only one side of the history of some noteworthy events were represented and many other side was ignored, unrepresented and unheard. Thus Voltaire wrote, “All our ancient history is no more than accepted fiction.”³ The authenticity of the historical writing about the past is highly questioned at present. Likewise many things that historians piece together at present may be questioned tomorrow by future historians with their new evidence and study. Thus every writing has its limitation and cannot be said complete in itself.

Oscar Handlin in his book *Truth in History* said:

We can never be certain that we have recaptured (the past) as it really was. But the least we can do is to stay within the evidence. History does not recreate the past. The historian does not recapture the bygone event. No amount of imagination will enable the scholar to describe exactly what happened to Caesar in the Senate... History deals only with evidence from the past, with the residues of bygone events (412).

Every historical judgment varies from person to person and there is as such no objective historical truth. At present due to plethora of historical sources available has made people conscious about the materials they are paying attention and reading. According to E.H. Carr, “History means interpretation... Carr contends that historians arbitrarily determine which of the facts of the past to turn into his facts according to their own biases and agenda... It was

impossible to write an objective history because all historical facts were themselves subjective.”⁴

Recently post-modernist thinkers have questioned the authenticity of not only history but every other branch of discipline. They believe that history is what historian has created from their personal experience. They focus on small incidents of everyday life and call for exploring the minute details rather than focusing on large events and under representing it. They questioned the historiography and the historiographer of the past and the present. History is not just an academic discipline, but it is connected to many other disciplines. Literature and history are inseparable and interconnected. Literature is a body of work of a particular period written in the form of prose, poetry, novel, short-story etc. which reflects the social, political, economic tendencies of that particular period. In other words, literature identifies with the history of the time it is written. Both are subjective in its outlook; one gathers information about events and the other reflects the time of a particular period. It is also believed that the first historians had been poets. They did the duty of both poet and of historian. Ancient poetry represented the history of the time and was accepted with little question of historicity. Thus connection between history and poetry cannot be ignored. Thomas Warton in the *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* (1754) said that "They preserve many curious historical facts and throw considerable light on the nature of the feudal system. They are the pictures of ancient usages and customs; and represent the manners, genius, and character of our ancestors"⁵.

Just like history, poetry once was written to document the events of the time. Gradually as the time evolved, many tales of the politically noteworthy figures and the glory, power and victors of the war found place in the poetry. Most of the time essential social, economic factors, and ordinary people who usually made a huge contribution were hardly represented. Steadily poetry writing as a genre developed representing and reflecting the time of the period, but notable development occurred during and after the First World War. For the first time poets like Wilfred Owen, Edward Thomas, Isaac Rosenberg, Charles Sorley, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves were soldiers sharing their personal terrifying experiences through poetry. These soldier poets represented the horrors of the war, some wrote while fighting from the trenches, some wrote scarred by their experiences, some wrote while convalescing. For the first time the stark terror of the war was highlighted. Previously war was celebrated and identified with grandeur, honor, and power in the literature. But Owen declared that his poetry would reveal:

“the “pity of War” rather than the “glory, honor, might, majesty, dominion or power,” which war had acquired in the popular mind... But Owen’s message for his generation, he said, must be one of warning rather than of consolation. He used an unmitigated realism in his description of events: “the true poets must be truthful.”⁶

Poets wrote for the future generation depicting their ghastly experiences so that this form of war should not continue. Their writing was not just a poem but a warning and a proof of what once took place. This kind of poetry was named as “Poetry of Witness” by Carolyn Forché. Her book *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness* (1993) has contributed to better understanding and popularity of the term. This kind of poetry directly or indirectly has greatly influenced the globe. In the present day, numerous forms of poetry are emerging be it performance poetry, slam poetry, digital poetry where the poet expresses succinctly his own experience and the issues prevailing in the society. In India also the trend for poetry is on the full bloom and never has craze for poetry so much seen before as it is now. Digital poetry has stormed the world now, readers online are much higher in numbers and are active readers. Everything is shared, appreciated, discussed, debated, and commented in a fraction of few minutes. Poetry of witness is not an invented story; it is a true details of an events taken place. Today poets from all over the world are highly conscious about their subject matter, the theme they are portraying on the page. They are highly motivated to reach the global audience and share their viewpoints, experiences and ideas for a change and for making the world a better place.

In Northeastern part of India there are several emerging poets who are representing the current issues of their states. Robin Ngangom who hails from Manipur is one among them who writes about the situation of his homeland. He is a witness to the conflicts and thus he represents the issues as it is. At present he is currently serving in the Department of English North Eastern Hill University. He has number of works to his credit which mostly represents the affairs and events of his time. He writes poetry hoping for a change, for peace and for a better time tomorrow. Manipur, a multi ethnic state where different ethnic groups lived harmoniously earlier is not the same anymore. They have their own respective demands and are at loggerheads among themselves which becomes violent at a time. Manipur became a part of Indian union on 21 January 1972. Their demand for autonomy from India still ensues which has led to formations of several rebel groups and insurgents. Due to several issues such as Armed Force Special Power Act, insurgency, ethnic tension, Manipur has seen various forms of conflicts in the recent years. The last few decades have seen thousands of people being killed and displaced in various ethnic conflicts. Thus the poets emerging from the region writes about their individual experiences. In the editors’ note to the *Dancing Earth: Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from the Northeast*, Robin S. Ngangom and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih have argued that:

The expressive concerns of the writer from the Northeast cannot be the same as that of a writer from elsewhere in India. The writer from the Northeast differs from his counterpart in the mainland in a significant way. While it may not make him a better writer, living with the menace of the gun he cannot merely indulge in verbal wizardry and woolly aesthetics but perforce master the art of witness (xii).

Robin shares his experiences and the events that he has personally witnessed. Portraying the scenario of the place he shares how the war has marred the region's peace. The richest are ruling motivated by their selfish interest. The idea of freedom appears to be elusive as the poet says freedom in his region can be felt only when guarded by security forces:

I hear a wicked war is now waged
on our soil, and gory bodies
dragged unceremoniously
through our rice-fields.
That they have
dropped the word "shame"
from the vocabulary,
and the newly-rich are ruling our homes.
I hear that freedom comes there, only
if escorted by armed men. ("Homeland I left" 27-36)

The poet also is a helpless observer of the events taking place, he wants to do something with it and the result is his poetry. He wishes to bring transformation in the society through his verses. His poem doles out the glimpse of the social and political situation of Manipur. In another poem "The Strange Affair of Robin S Ngangom" he presents the scenario of the region during blockades. Frequently road blockades are imposed by different tribes with their different interest and agendas in order to seek the fulfillments of their demands. The bandhs which often lasts for days, weeks or months affects the economy of the state to a larger extent making daily life hard for the common people:

Nothing is certain:
oil
lentils
potatoes
food for babies
transport
the outside world.
Even
fire water and air
are bought and sold. (116-25)

Such bandhs and blockades have had already affected the economy of the state and has caused severe inconvenience to the common people due to the shortage of essential commodities

in the region. For all the internal conflicts in the region the common people are mostly affected. Yet in another poem “To Pacha”, reminiscing one of the Manipuri’s finest poets, Robin recalls:

There are no more tears to shed
In this withered country where they
Kill pregnant women and children; (7-9)

In a way, the poet is paying a tribute to the dead poet and sharing what has consumed his homeland after his demise. He shares there is nothing constructive been taking place as:

Young boys and soldiers are butchering each
other by the dozen, in the hills, the angry
streets, day after day, and too many heroes
and villains are not worth remembering at all. (13-16)

Apparently, the poet seems to be alright with the death of Pacha because he is not alive to witness the region which has gone dry due to ethnic conflicts where young boys and soldiers are against each other lives. It is said that people and organisations are illegally taxed in order to support many rebel groups. The elected leaders keep the public in illusion of false promises. Revolutionaries threaten and extort money and demand free services. If their demands are not met the public are threatened with the dire consequences. The following lines clearly speak volumes about the situation in the region. Describing the incident of revolutionaries coming for free service, the optician had to close his clinic, the poet says even though the situation itself is grim, but this is the truth:

The ophthalmic optician
shut down his clinic
after far-sighted revolutionaries
came for a free check-up”
But that wouldn’t sound aesthetic
even though it’s the truth (“Writer” 16-21)

The poet, instead of contemplating on the situation, feeling bitter and giving up to despairing chooses to write: “You should write when you can still laugh at yourself and the world, before you give up to despair.” (“Revolutionaries” 55)

The poet seems to be looking for peace in the form of simple things as described in the lines below. In order to experience peace he believes that he and his people do not require the

soldiers behind to guard them. In the poem, “We Are Not ready for the Hand of Peace”, the poet tells:

Peace without fear of another vicious tomorrow
is what we search, and not the false dusk of
the seven brandished swords who guard our backs. (6-8)

The poet further says that what he and his people collectively desire is “what we desire is the witness of still winds;/we wish to hear the melodious laugh/ of the cheeks of children, the eyes of beloved women.” (11-13). Peace in the form of life’s simplest things is what the poet wishes for; in other words, he is trying to restore peace through poetry. At least as a poet he is putting his effort by writing and representing his place so that his words reaches far and wide and positive action may ensue:

I want to describe myself again and again
To people who do not know me.
That is why I always look for paper and ink,
Even in the midst of terrible loss,
Or, a dangerous illness
Because someone said
The spoken word flies
But the written word stays (“I Want to Describe Myself”)

He writes to be heard and understood. His poetry itself is enough evidence of his personal experiences and occurrences in the region. His own personal experience of witnessing a number of events led him to represent all of it in his poetry. His intense love and concern for his place and people, made him look for the possible solution through his poetry. But still the poet seems to have no answer to the question of why his people have turned against each other. The poet seems to be in contemplation looking for an answer:

Why do trees weep leaves without warning?
Why do the old choose to die in their mountain hamlets?
Why did his people turn to terror?
Why does love tie him down?

How is he a poet if he’s afraid to look for answers? (“Poet” 1-5)
Possibly his verses could help people to realize and rethink of their actions they have done so far. Greed and corruption in the region have made people blind to the extent of forgetting one’s own blood ties. This reveals the ultimate blow to humanity. What can be a greater loss when

brother buys brother and father sells his son? In the poem “Racial Progression”, protesting against corruption he says:

Here everything is bought and sold
to the highest bidder.
The gunpoint, the hypodermic needle, and currency
notes: these are the only languages we know.
Brothers buy brothers and fathers sell sons
as a way of life. (8-13)

Commenting on the scenario of Manipur, the poet in his essay, “Poetry in the time of Terror” states:

Manipur, my native place in Northeast India, is in a state of anarchy, and my poetry springs from the cruel contradictions of that land. Manipur boasts of its talents in theatre, cinema, dances, and sports. But how could you trust your own people who would entrust corruption, aids, terrorism and drugs to their children? Naturally the Manipur that I ritually go back to every year is not the sacred world of my childhood. (168)

The rapacity of people seeking more than needed is the plight of the present day. Robin poems are the result of the political and social crisis of the region. By pointing out the frailties of his society the poet hopes for a change in the attitude and mindset of the people and reform them so that a peaceful and violence free society can be created. He is specifying at the growing materialism where people are not bothered about humanity and relationships. It is actually a wake-up call for the people and a chance to ponder over their actions. As a poet, he cannot remain mute to the happenings around him, thus, he represents it; at the same time he also laments the past glory which has crumbled with the passage of violent time. In another poem “Racial Progression” the poet says:

We have no illustrious past we can think of,
our history is shrouded in obscurity
We all take pride in our forked tongues
and devious chroniclers.
Our necks and hands shake with perverse lust.
We respect with avarice only the richest new. (14-19)

The poet clearly emphasises that they do not have memorable past because the distorted past is not worthy to be remembered at all. Therefore, the poet wishes to chronicle a new history of the present time by representing it in its numerous shades. Situation in Manipur is gradually changing for the better, what was past is being represented by the poet and what is going to be in

the days ahead will also be represented in a new approach. By representing the region in its entire dimension, the poet is actually trying to tell the reader what is worthy to be considered and what is to be relinquish so that the changes that the people have longed for so long could fructify. Above all, his motive through his writing is to resist the ongoing scenario so that changes may occur sooner or later in the region:

Our election emblems are the bottle and the glass.
The best orators are our secret campaigners at night
and we use great poetry as party slogans.
our guardians give an inch and take a foot
and their promises are the latest jokes. (22-26)

Through the above lines, Robin has harshly criticised the politics in the region. The people of Manipur have been witnessing violence and conflict since long. The imposition of AFSPA in the region led to ethnic tension and formation of several insurgent groups seeking for an independent state and it is said to be one of the main reasons for continuing violence in the region. Thus, poets like Robin have begun to respond to the changing scenario of the present day society. Many poets from the region are occupied with depicting the realities of the place in the hope of bringing transformation. In his essay, “Contemporary Manipuri Poetry: An Overview” he observes:

Many poets seem to be preoccupied with insistent realities such as ethnic violence, corruption, extortion, terrorism, oppression and drug addiction... This is an extremely difficult task reminiscent of Camus’s mission reserved for the writer: ‘whatever our personal weaknesses may be, the nobility of our craft will always be rooted in two commitments, difficult to maintain: the refusal to lie about what one knows and the resistance to oppression.’ (299)

His poetry is the collective voice, anxiety and fear of the people of the region and search for love and peace. His poetry acquaints the reader with the issues of the region. His poems are a testimony of a trying period he has been personally through. He has chosen to historicize it rather than letting it be the way it is, his poetry serves as a reminder to the people about their own reckless actions, it is an eye opener. The present day is enmeshed with numerous issues and events. Everyday witnesses some sort of horror that is being represented by the worldwide media. Due to proliferation of technology recording has become easy and accurate. One cannot lie what happens as the camera clearly records it. Hence, people are becoming more-outspoken and blunt than ever before in sharing their experiences and are unafraid to admit what is wrong and what is right. The world of imagination that helped shaped poetry in the earlier era is taken over by world of reality of “here and now” and is characterized by “immediacy and vividness”

(Ngangom 300). Hence, witnessing, recording and preserving the events in poetry could be a reference of the present times for the future generations. Just like in the ancient Greece, history guided the future actions likewise the issues represented in poetry may give a clue to the coming generations about the social, political, economic conditions of the now. Perhaps it may guide them and set an example of what to follow from the past, what to revive and what to disregard. It may provide them a broader perspective about their own society and help them overcome many societal and political issues of their time in a better way.

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**Delicate Conjugal Relationship: A Study of
Sudha Murty's Novel *House Of Cards***

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Abstract

The paper evaluates the marital relationship of Sudha Murty's character Mridula in the novel *House of Cards* (2013). Sudha Murty projects the images of modern Indian woman in her fiction. In a patriarchal society, woman restrains their dreams and desires for family but when she is ignored and deceived by the husband their conjugal relation becomes delicate and breaks. The present paper illustrates how the insulted, rejected, ignored woman tries to break the conjugal relation and leaves her husband to live her life on her own. Sudha Murty has presented such a delicate conjugal relationship in her novel, *House of Cards* (2013). The author also presents good relation between husband and wife, but it is destroyed by deceitful and selfish behaviour of male character and also due to the value of money and power. False appearance of male character has spoilt the trust in marriage as 'Trust' forms the basis of any relationship.

Keywords: Sudha Murty, *House Of Cards*, patriarchal society, delicate conjugal relationship, honesty

The novel *House of Cards* (2013) is centred on the male domination, subordination of woman, deceitful male and rebel of the woman in such an unsatisfied wedded life.

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines relationship as "a state of being related or a relationship can be said as meaningful only when there is an emotional attachment between individuals".

In search of his pride, a man forgets to appreciate the sacrifices made by his woman. She suppresses herself, consoles herself, and reveals her false face of happiness outside. Most pathetically, all her sacrifices are neither realized nor valued by her man. In addition to that, when the trust is broken it is bound to have a negative impact and that her suppressed emotions may burst

like a volcano. Therefore, family and conjugal relationships at this point becomes meaningless and women wants to be independent and on their own.

Man forgets that there is a soul behind all his success. The worst thing is that when a woman tries to express herself, she is ignored by the actions of her man. At one point, the protagonist of the novel is not able to live normally but merely acts as an obedient being. This suppresses her even more, which leads to make a clear decision for herself.

Most of the Indian women identify themselves as a subordinate individual, as a mere instrument of man. This reduces their confidence level. Their roles began to get stereotyped as an individual accepting for herself as the daughter- wife- and mother images. They suppress their real feelings and it becomes difficult for them to untangle their true self from the existing social roles.

Sudha Murty clearly expresses through her character Mridula that the present age women have realized that she is not helpless but independent. The novel also shows how money, fame and power play a vital role in the life of a man which blinds him to his valuable relationship and results in the failure of marriage.

The aim of this paper is to bring out the delicate conjugal relationship in Sudha Murty's novel *House of Cards* which was first published in Kannada language as *Paridhi* in the year 2004 and was later translated into English in 2013. Sudha Murty describes selfishness and greediness of the male characters in this novel. The author shows how male character changes their attitude when they have more money and position. They behave differently even with their wife. Due to lack of love and ignorance of the male results in the isolation of his better part and thus the marital relation of husband and wife shatters.

Mridula, the chief protagonist of novel hailed from Aladahalli, a small village, was a very splendid and an energetic young woman. She was graduated and pursued her teacher's training at Hubli and joined as a teacher in the Government School at Aladahalli. She was also educated to respect elders, the value of life, the art of sharing and the worthiness of human relationships. It was the destiny that she met Dr. Sanjay her future husband in her friend's wedding and again in Bombay and decides to hold hands and walk in the life's journey. The couple settled down after marriage in Bangalore where Sanjay joined in a temporary job at Victoria hospital and Mridula got a government job as a school teacher in Yelehanka. Both of them were not very ambitious or avaricious during the initial stages of their marriage life. The trouble shoots and Sanjay quits his government job and starts an immensely private practice but Mridula stayed unselfish with her job. As affluence comes the never-ending ambition for more and Sanjay slides inevitably to corrupt practices. When Mridula came to know about the true colour of her husband who had sold his soul the truth hits her hard and thus started the delicacy of conjugal relationship between the couples.

Mridula, a simple woman was more pragmatic and matured enough to handle all crises with a positive attitude. Whereas, Sanjay succumbed to pressure since he lacked and did not have the ability

to handle it. He did not have the strength to deal with determination either the work pressure or difficulties he needed to face in the hospital. In the meantime, Sanjay completed his post-graduation by specializing in gynaecology at Vani-Vilas hospital with the sole help of his significant other Mridula.

Bonding and love go far in reinforcing the relationships among human beings. Individuals need someone in their life to share their delights and distresses, be it relatives or companions. Mridula was friendlier with an understanding nature and who was capable of keeping the relationships going with her easy and simple nature. Mridula might have grown up in a village environment without much exposure to the outside world, however when the occasion demanded, it was she who took a courageous resolution rather an essential one which eventually changed the course of their life. Mridula optimistically encouraged her husband Sanjay to agree to Dr. Alex, Sanjay's friend's proposal to start a new private hospital as a partner. She gave him the rational support and encouragement by saying:

“I know how difficult it is to stay in Bangalore even in my job. We aren't well-connected people. My nature is different, and I don't take life so seriously. But you don't share your feelings with others, and you take everything earnestly. So maybe you can resign and start something of your own.” (109)

She mortgaged her jewels to help her husband economically to invest in his new hospital. As Sanjay developed in his profession came the hunger for name, power of influence and money which until now was not known to him in his life.

Every individual has an ambition and desire in their life. It is just the way which they take to accomplish and achieve their goals, dreams and aspirations without hurting others in their drive for success especially their beloved ones. Sanjay, being a doctor, ought to have understood and realized that his prosperity and success was not just because of his commitment to his medical profession however it was mainly due to the sacrifices of the silent woman who remained behind him in his ups and downs like a rock, Mridula. With success and progression of prosperity in life, came the arrogance, superiority and corruption in Sanjay's life. Mridula was constantly worried with her son's conduct and when she came to know about her husband's misdeeds, it was not only a shock but also brought along the loneliness and feeling of insecurity. Mridula had never hesitated from her duty as an obedient daughter-in-law or open-handed sister-in-law. Actually, it was she who had requested Sanjay to help her sister-in-law Lakshmi's family financially and furthermore, to support her mother-in-law, Ratamma. It was Sanjay who had pretended not to regard to her suggestion and help his mother and sister however without the knowledge of Mridula, he had helped them economically and that too from the second account. When she discovered the fact and realized that her husband had deceived her by keeping her away from confidential financial matters, ultimately, at last, this break of trust broke the foundation of their married life. Her first reaction was:

“How can Sanjay open an account without telling me? The date of the first transaction is five years ago. I’ve been cheated for the last five years and I was not even aware of it. Isn’t this infidelity too? Alex cheated on Anita in one way and Sanjay has cheated on me in another. He’s the one who said, “I don’t want to handle money. You manage it and I’ll manage the nursing home.” I guess the apple really doesn’t fall far from the tree. When my mother-in-law is desirous of money even at this age, what else can I expect from her son?” (183)

It was money that has eventually changed the attitude and thoughts of Sanjay in the course of time. When Mridula comes to know about the reality of Sanjay, she felt he is a deceitful and unreliable person. Mridula lost all her confidence and was unable to accept and believe that her husband Sanjay had cheated her. Mridula saved and maintained the money for his PG degree and his clinic. She lives with an absolute faith. But the trust between Mridula and Sanjay was shattered. Therefore, Mridula shifted her bag to the visitor’s room and locked the door from inside. At the point when her friend Anita came to know about the situation. Mridula explains,

“Anita, it is not about money. Money can be earned and lost. It is about faith that a wife has in her husband. That’s more valuable than money and gold. Faith sustains a marriage and brings joy to the family. Without it we have nothing. How can Sanjay destroy the faith and trust I had in him?” (186)

Mridula thinks that she is deceived by her own companion. She thinks that she is trapped in marriage and defrauded by her husband. She became depressed psychologically and affected by the happenings in her life. At this point, Mridula was forced to consult a psychiatrist, Dr. Rao, who at last helped her to prevail over her problems which were caused due to the mental stress. When Mridula needed the help and support of her husband, he was not there, and she was left alone. The man who had held her hand with a promise to take care of her for the rest of her life failed in his duty as a husband when she needed his comfort, soothing response and assurance. In fact, Sanjay often wondered whether he had made the right choice in his life by wedding Mridula. But for Mridula, her entire existence revolved around only Sanjay and her son Sishir. This draws out the difference in characters and their point of view of a man and woman who had dedicated their life with each other.

The fact that finally made Mridula to take the radical decision of abandoning her husband and her married life of twenty-five years was the point at which she overheard the conversation between her husband, Sanjay and his partner, Alex.

“No, I don’t want to ask her. I’ve known her for almost twenty- five years. She doesn’t cooperate with us. In fact, she’ll create problems because she’s an idealist. Instead of her, I want Lakshmi to be the silent director. She doesn’t understand all this anyway. We can just ask her to sign papers whenever we want and, in return, we can give her some money.” (215)

The man with whom she had lived for twenty-five years did not have any desire to share with her his own personal matters and thought of her as an object of protest who was more of an obstacle to him. This to a certain extent helped Mridula to get back herself to gain self-assurance and take up her life once again. She could able to take a vital decision about her future, the future which did exclude her husband, Sanjay. This prompted her to leave him stranded, paralyzed, speechless and knocked him out entirely when they were to attend their silver jubilee celebration of their married life. When Sanjay asked Mridula as to when she would be back after seeing her with a suitcase, she steadily answered: "Never." When she gave the purpose behind her decision, it was an answer for which Sanjay had no answer to reply. She told him:

"I've spent twenty- five of my most important years with you, and yet, I never felt I belonged to you or your family. I'm still an outsider. My father's house now belongs to Vatsala and I don't want to be a burden on my brother and her. Sishir is independent and you can take care of him better than I can. My duty towards both of you is over. I've fulfilled all my duties as a wife, mother and daughter- in- law. Now, I want to live for myself. I have my job, my school and my village. You don't have to worry about me any longer. You and Sishir can visit me whenever you want." (218)

This answer reveals the disappointment and failure of their life which in point of fact in the later stages, was filled only with deceit and misunderstanding between the estranged couple. A woman who had no helps from either her parents or from her in-laws, had indeed taken a bold path after accepting the reality. Mridula left Dr. Sanjay's house and has her job as school headmistress in Hubali.

Success of marriage depends on the effective working together of both husband and wife and trust is requirement for any relationship. Here dishonest behaviour of Sanjay their relation becomes fragile. Woman can accept anything but not ready to accept disbelief and ignorance of her husband. *House of Cards* is all about the life of Dr. Sanjay and Mridula, the couple whose family life fell like a pack of cards unable to withstand the velocity of the wind. The reason being the ambition of one person, Dr. Sanjay, whose psychological craving for power and money led to the end of their married life. Thus, the article clearly brings out that when the trust not remains the relationship also shatters.

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Sucking the 'Blood' of Shakespeare: Bram Stoker's Appropriation Of Shakespearean Legacy in *Dracula* (1897)

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Abstract

E.J Clery in "The genesis of 'Gothic' fiction" has famously proclaimed that "scratch the surface of any Gothic fiction and the debt to Shakespeare will be there" (30). Although Clery has made this comment in her discussion of the eighteenth-century Gothic fictions in general, a discrete scratching of the textual and generic surface of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) leads the readers to unmask the writer's profound indebtedness to the great Elizabethan dramatist. The present essay endeavours to examine the degree of influence that William Shakespeare exerted on the text *Dracula* which, through its numerous adaptation and appropriation in the popular media, has turned Count Dracula into a universally recognized cultural icon of this century.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, Gothic, textual, generic, adaptation, appropriation, icon

Horace Walpole in his preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, notoriously subtitled as 'a Gothic story', overtly declared that "The great master of nature, Shakespeare, was the model I copied" (66). Despite having created a novel which was an unprecedented blending of ancient and modern romance, Walpole maintained in the same preface that he sheltered his own 'daring' under the brightest dramatic genius of his country and acknowledged to have imitated Shakespeare's 'masterly pattern' in crafting his work. However, following Walpole, a host of Gothic novelists in order to frame their narratives of terror and horror avowedly chose Shakespeare as their model and employed not only quotations and allusions borrowed directly from the Shakespearean oeuvre but also used techniques, devices, motifs and themes which had successfully been dramatized by the Elizabethan playwright more than a century ago. That the Gothic writers of the eighteenth century chose Shakespeare as their immediate predecessor is hardly surprising. For, on one hand, Shakespeare's chequered dramatic realm provided them with suitable material to exploit in their grim tales of evil and, on the other hand, they sought to utilize the cult of the 'National Bard' in defence of

their radical literary adventure in a Neo-classical age. Evidently, the Gothic romances of Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Mathew Lewis, Clara Reeve, Sophia Lee et al are seen to be replete with epigraphs extracted from Shakespeare's poetry. Moreover, the dark and sombre supernatural atmosphere, the ambiguous and ambivalent nature of the hero-villain, the grisly and macabre settings infested with ghosts, corpses, witches and goblins, the intricate plots of murder, bloodshed and rape and the over powering thematic concerns of incestuous relationship, mistaken identity or avenging the assassination of a father all of these ostensibly stem from the vast and fertile world of Shakespeare's drama.

Kelley Hurley in her *The Gothic Body* (1996) explains the Gothic as "an instrumental genre, re-emerging cyclically, at periods of cultural stress, to negotiate the anxieties that accompany social and epistemological transformations and crises" (5). After the emergence and effulgence of the Gothic fiction amidst the late eighteenth century cultural turmoil, it suffered a transient decline in popularity only to resuscitate in the volatile decades of the late nineteenth century fin de siècle. Shakespeare however reserved his centrality in the changed world of the Victorian Gothic fiction especially in such popular writings as Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Gary Taylor observes that in the nineteenth century Shakespeare became "more relevant to the cultural domain and the objects of more kinds of cultural activity. Shakespeare's reputation, like Britain itself, entered a period of expansion and diversification" (qtd. in Wyne 132). Abraham Bram Stoker, an Irish author, theatre critic and manager of the Lyceum Theatre, is commonly known to have gone through Edward Dowden's radical reinvention of Shakespeare in his *Shakspeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (1875). Stoker also highly appreciated Henry Irving's spectacular production of *Hamlet* in 1876 at the Theatre Royale. Irving reproduced *Macbeth* twice at the Lyceum theatre first in 1875 and then in 1888. He also produced Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* in 1896. However, Irving's interpretation of Shakespeare's plays, particularly of *Macbeth*, is thought to have profoundly influenced Stoker's Gothic conception behind the creation of *Dracula* (Wyne 130).

The sub-plot of Seward/ Renfield, for instance, has obvious echoes of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Dale Townshend in his essay "Gothic Shakespeare", incorporated in the book *A New Companion to Gothic* (2012) edited by David Punter, has pointed out Seward's Lear-like conviction (51) in his uttering "that way madness lies" (Stoker 263). Christy Desmet argues that Renfield's demeanour as "a zoophagous (life-eating) maniac" (Stoker 103) "involves the horrid inversion and literalization of Gloucester's lines from Act IV, scene I in *King Lear*: 'as flies to wanton boys, are we to th' gods/ They kill us for their sport'" (qtd. in Townshend 51). Stoker himself once acknowledged that of all the plays that he had discussed with Henry Irving *Macbeth* interested him the most (Wyne 142). Lucy Westerna's character, especially her somnambulistic behaviour as a vampire, has been drawn to a large extent upon Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth. In fact, the major women characters of the novel bear close resemblance with the well-known Shakespearean heroines like Desdemona from *Othello* or Ophelia from *Hamlet*. Townshend has mentioned that "Lady Macbeth and Ophelia furnished Stoker with two competing, apparently mutually exclusive models of femininity, aspects of which are identifiable behind most of the representations of women in the novel" (52). Christy Desmet, however, is of the opinion that Stoker composed *Dracula* keeping in his mind the versatility of the actress Ellen Terry,

who had been famous for her passionate acting of Lady Macbeth and Ophelia in those days (qtd. in Townshend 53).

Bram Stoker employs ample quotations from Shakespeare's plays to emphasise the feeling of sublime terror in the narrative of his magnum opus. Jonathan Harker's direct reference to Hamlet in his comment "this diary seems horribly like the beginning of the 'Arabian Night' for everything has to break off at cock crow- or like the ghost of Hamlet's father" (Stoker 61) is suggestive of the similarity between the two characters. Hamlet's famous speech "what a piece of work is man" from Act ii, scene ii, is provocatively reframed in these lines of the novel "What manner of man is this . . . or what manner of creature is it in the semblance of man?" (Stoker 66). Harker like the Shakespearean tragic hero takes recourse to scribbling in order to ward off horrific events surrounding him as he perceives: "Up to now I never quite know what Shakespeare meant when he made Hamlet say 'My tablets! Quick, my tablets! 'tis meet that I put it down etc.'" for now, feeling as though my own brain were unhinged or as if the shock had come which must end in its undoing, I turn to my diary for repose. The habit of entering accurately must help to soothe me" (Stoker 68). Besides, the name of Van Helsing, the vampire-hunter doctor in Stoker's novel also has a subtle allusion to that Shakespearean tragedy. Helsing, the name, is generally considered to have originated from the name of Hamlet's castle, Elsinore- Helsingor or the island of Helsing. Therefore, it would not be exaggerating to deem Stoker's *Dracula* as a late-Victorian rewriting of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Conclusion

Julie Sanders in her celebrated book *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006) describes adaptation and appropriation as the two distinct manifestations of intertextuality the study of which essentially takes interest in "how art creates art or how literature is made by literature"(1). Julie observes "An adaptation signals a relationship with an informing source text or original" whereas "Appropriation frequently affects more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain" (26). Over the years both the classics i.e. *Dracula* and Shakespeare's plays have separately been adapted and appropriated within the context of contemporary culture. But since the advent of the twenty first century, we witness Shakespearean oeuvre being profusely invoked to unfold the horror of the Draculas, vampires or zombies in popular fictions, television series, films, videogames and cyberspace. Undeniably this phenomenon itself opens up a fertile terrain of academic study.

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A Critique of Afghan Culture in Khaled Hussein's *The Kite Runner*

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Abstract

Afghanistan has witnessed dynamic culture for the last five decades. Defining culture is difficult and it is terser when one needs to define the culture of a country which has seen a variety of changes in its socio-economic-political condition. It is an attempt to analyze and inspect the dynamics of Afghan's culture through the lens of *The Kite Runner* written by Khaled Hussein with focus on its cultural shift, social discrimination, taboos and repressed desires in course of narration of conflict among Hazaras and Pashtuns, father-son relationship and guilt conscious mind.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Cultural Paradigm, Khaled Hussein, Pashtuns, Hazara, *The Kite Runner*

The term 'culture' is broader and complex which comprises the behaviour pattern and social activities of individual or group in particular location. The culture defines the way of greeting, cooking, mannerism, pride, and honour. It is mandatory form human's existence as it is the source of knowledge that permits them to endure in social setup. The human beings are offered "the material with which he or she develops habits, motor skills, attitudes, prejudices, aspirations, and capabilities... Culture controls and regulates the collective existence of society and guides the individual in deciding the definition and order of responses to future experiences" (Panopio and Rolda 30). The Kite Runner is full of the cultural artifacts of Afghanistan but seems the story of everyone. The reader feels connected to themselves as they believe that the plot of fiction is their own story. It can be one of the reasons for its high demand even in Europeans countries. Khalid reveals in an interview, "its themes of friendship, betrayal, guilt, redemption and the uneasy love between fathers and sons are universal themes, and not specifically Afghan. The book has been able to reach across cultural, racial, religious and gender gaps to resonate with readers of varying backgrounds"(Guthmann n.p.). The Kite Runner opens a window to the world where they can relate the existing conditions of the nation. The paradigm shifts from rich culture to the fundamentalist-controlled by extremist group. Regarding this Jefferess says:

The Kite Runner, as much as it provides a window into Afghan culture, also projects back to the western reader the simple moral absolutes that inform the War on Terror as paradoxically both a "war", based on the fulfillment of vengeance or justice, and a humanitarian project of "sharing" western values, such as democracy and liberalism; for instance, saving oppressed Muslim children/women from misogynist, oppressive Muslim men. (398)

The text portrays the account of discrimination exercised on Hazara community from centuries due to their low social status by the extremist people in Afghanistan. Their religious identity is questioned multiple times. They had been dominated by the elites of the region. Afghanistan is a diverse state with many ethnic communities in which Hazara's are Shia Muslims and Pashtuns are Sunni Muslims. Pashtuns consist of 42% of the total population of Afghanistan and other ethnic groups are Hazara, Tajik, and Turkmen. The Majority, Pashtuns had conflict with non-Pashtuns. The "majority of the non-Pashtun population has remained largely aloof from the conflict, the current conflict is essentially intra-Pashtun. However, many among the non-Pashtun ethnic groups, such as the Tajik, Uzbek, Turkmen, and Hazara, populating mainly northern, central and western Afghanistan, have been relatively peaceful" (Saikal 14). Hazaras are described as flat nosed and owner of load carrying donkeys. Assef, the bully boy who hates Hazara, is very cruel towards them as he never misses a chance to insult them. Once he encounters Hassan and greets him by saying 'Aga'. The word denotes superiority in the

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hierarchy. At the same moment, Asef speaks about social hierarchy, "Afghanistan is the land of the Pashtuns... the true Afghans, the pure Afghans, not this Flat-Nose here" (40). Assef and other Pashtuns consider Hazara people impure and their presence on the land of Afghanistan has polluted it. Assef speaks in rage, "Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns. It always has been, always will be. We are the true Afghans, the pure Afghans, not this Flat-Nose here. His people pollute our homeland, our *Watan*. They dirty our blood" (44). Regarding such kind of aggression Freud exhibits:

The existence of this inclination to aggression, which we can detect in ourselves and justly assume to be present in others, is the factor which disturbs our relations with our neighbor and which forces civilization into such a high expenditure of energy. In consequence of this primary mutual hostility of human beings, civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration. The interest of work in common would not hold it together; instinctual passions are stronger than reasonable interests. (112)

The aggression is developed in the mind using several irrational views about the targeted group of the same society. The people are divided on the basis of concerned identity. The dominant one tries to hostile another less powerful. Hence, they are made to believe that they are destined to be inferior and pushed to the periphery. The same fate is destined to Hazara community who always stand on secondary position after Pashtuns even after acquiring better skills and knowledge. The social positioning of Hazara identifies them as low-grade. Amir is a friend of Hassan and lives with him in the same house. Hassan helps Amir many times when he is helpless. The attitude of Amir is also biased towards Hazara and he also speaks in an insulting tone, "What does he know, that illiterate Hazara? He'll never be anything but a cook. How dare he criticize you?" (35). In such a scenario, any person who tries to help the suppressed becomes the target of the same group. Amir faces the rage of the Pashtuns. Once Amir is stopped by Assef in the market and he inquires about Hassan. Amir is grilled for calling Hassan his friend. Wali and Kamal grunted on him. Assef says, "In fact, you bother me more than this Hazara here. How can you talk to him, play with him, let him touch you?" (41). Assef keeps himself involved in hot arguments with Amir:

You're part of the problem, Amir. If idiots like you and your father didn't take these people in, we'd be rid of them by now. They'd all just go rot in Hazarajat where they belong. You're a disgrace to Afghanistan. I looked in his crazy eyes and saw that he meant it. Here ally meant to hurt me. Assef raised his fist and came for me. (45)

The kite flying has been an integral part of Afghan culture from centuries. This festival is a true representation of pride, history, and freedom irrespective of religion. In *The Kite Runner*,

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this festival is predominantly projected that turn the reason for spreading brotherhood and advancing the relationship. Baba, father of Amir; becomes happy with his son as he wins the trophy of the tournament. Amir was in great need of winning the tournament expecting to gain honour from his father who considers him a submissive and aggressive. In the span of twelve years, he is not praised by his father contrary to it Hassan receives the love of his father that becomes the reason for resentment between Amir and Hassan. Amir asserts that the win was the great moment in his life, "I saw Baba on our roof. He was standing on the edge, pumping both of his fists. Hollering and clapping. And that right there was the single greatest moment of my twelve years of life, seeing Baba on that roof, proud of me at last" (66). The win is "key to Baba's heart" (71) for Amir as Baba begins to spend the quality time with him after the tournament. Unfortunately, kite flying tradition was banned as Taliban captured the power and declared it 'un-Islamic' considering it mere means of entertainment. Taliban forbade all the sources of amusement and strict rules were framed for the same.

The concept of kite running is aggressively flying your kite and using the glass coated string to cut the strings of your opponent's kites, the last kite in the air is the winner... Kite flying is more than a pastime in Afghanistan. It is a cultural obsession. For most of the citizens, inhabiting the city of Kabul, kite running is a form of religious expression. It is a way of the Afghan population to express their country's culture, and at the same time preserve a sense of honour in the household. The firstborn son of a family, typically the oldest is the one who participates in the kite running competition. (Santuccio n.p.)

Despite the fact that Hosseini doesn't divide the novel into parts, it very well may be finished by its topic. The initial segment of the novel is totally set in Afghanistan depicting Amir's and Hassan's formative years. The second part is Amir's life in America, his marriage and new climate. The last part is his adventure to the truth, and salvation for his wrongdoings. Both Amir and Hassan, without knowing their fraternity, share an uncommon relationship. Amir remembers, "Hassan and I fed from the same breasts. We took our steps on the same lawn in the same yard. And under the same roof, we spoke our first words" (Hosseini, 10). Hassan, destined to Hazara guardians, was constantly dismissed by society. Segregation among various gatherings in a similar religion represents the most exceedingly bad side of ill will between individuals. There is a long story of competition among Pashtuns and Hazaras. The Hazaras were not given any situation in the public eye. They were not considered as people and were dismissed from the pages of history. Once, Amir discovers a book in which one entire section is dedicated to Hazaras and that shocks him, "The book said that my kin had slaughtered the Hazaras, driven them from their homes, copied their homes, and sold their ladies.

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The book said that my people had killed the Hazaras, driven them from their homes, burned their homes, and sold their women. The book said part of the reason Pashtuns had oppressed the Hazaras was the Pashtuns were Sunni Muslims, while Hazaras were Shia's'. (Hosseini 9)

The honour and sin are also an inseparable part of Afghan culture. In the novel, Baba undergoes the tumultuous experiences that are considered sin. According to cultural values, extramarital affairs are forbidden. The guilty of the same loses the honour in the society. Baba does not reveal the secret of being in a relationship with Ali's wife under the pressure of losing the dignified position. Baba was not having a loving relationship with Amir as it is shared with Hassan. He controls his feelings of fatherhood in the fear that illegitimate Hazara son shall be the reason for destroying the ancestral reputation.

The role of women is fixed in every society and Women are supposed to behave in set patterns. Khaled Hussein illustrates the gender roles in the culture of Afghanistan and discusses the changes after Taliban comes in power. Taliban was an extremist group that imposed many restrictions on the living style of the people. Such practices are implemented to establish a kind of superiority to others. In the institution of family, Women were destined to be secondary, oppressed, recommended the dress code, denial of education and other social norms. The girls did have any inclination to decide with whom they should spend their life as the arranged marriages were preferred in tradition Afghan culture. The ability and potential of women are discarded, and they have to compromise with it to live in the house of the husband. There is no love between the couples before the wedding, but they have to live together. There are some couples as Ali and his wife, Amir and Soraya, Saraya's mother and General Taheri in *The Kite Runner* but women are never treated equally. The pent-up desires are never fulfilled, and it becomes the reason for conflict. Ali and his wife separated after Hassan's birth Jamila is destined with a beautiful voice. She was very good at singing but after the wedding, she could not continue her profession of singing. Amir reveals the belief of society that women need "needed a husband. Even if he did silence the song in her" (Hosseini 155). Even Amir and Soraya were not allowed to meet before their marriage. Thus, women could not sing, dance, drink wine, eye contact to any male, wear the assigned dress and talk to the husband in public. Soraya was fond of drinking, but she consumes liquor in the company of her husband only. She exposes the hypocritical attitude, "Their sons go out to nightclubs looking for meat and get their girlfriends pregnant, they have kids out of wedlock, and no one says a goddamn thing" (Hosseini 156). Taliban rule is defensive of the male figure that allows them to enjoy in nightclubs but restricts women not to wear the high heels and other things that can fascinate the attention of someone. The character of Farjana exhibits the torturous treatment of women under Taliban rule. Hassan's wife Farjana is beaten badly for talking loudly. As a young man observe, he run and hit her

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thighs. She kneels down due to the severe pain. The young boy threatens her to face the rage for not following the rule as a woman cannot speak so piercingly. Amir expresses the behaviour pattern an Afghan woman must follow under Taliban rule. He says, "So courteous she spoke in a voice barely higher than a whisper and she would not raise her pretty hazel eyes to meet my gaze. But the way she was looking at Hassan, he might as well have been sitting on the throne at the Arg" (Hosseini 180).

The Kite Runner exposes the Afghan way life before and after Russian invasion to Afghanistan soil. The encounter turned the culture and tradition; consequently, a fundamentalist group controlled all spheres of Afghanistan. It exhibits the condition of women, oppressed ethnic groups, festivals, rituals, and traditions. The conflict between Pashtuns and Hazara is observed on the basis of their belonging to the different land. The portrayal of different characters in Afghani culture reveals that the honour is attached directly to the landscapes as Baba do not want to do any work in Afghanistan but in California, he starts to work on a petrol pump and run a stall that was against his dignity in Afghanistan. Thus it can be expressed that The Kite Runner caricatures the Afghanistan culture.

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Bernard Shaw's Philosophy of Religion

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Abstract

This paper is an appraisal of how Bernard Shaw, as an intellectualist, being religious in the board sense, formulated a personal philosophy of creative evolution based on secular theories and how Shaw focused on social, democratic and personal problems in his early plays and later he introduced themes such as religion, youth and age, labour and capital, etc. After a deep analysis of all his plays, this paper explains or depicts how Shaw was a practical mystic who saw no remedy in economic socialism or anything else other than developing ones spiritual life.

Keywords: Bernard Shaw, Religion, philosophy, spirituality, Evolution, realism, economic socialism

The first half of the nineteenth century was almost completely barren from the dramatic point of view. Some major poets and other creative writers tried drama, but their efforts never saw the stage. The condition of the professional theatres was in a deplorable state. The respectable middle classes believed it as a place of vice. The standards of the audience also remained low. The popular forms of the drama of the day were melodrama, forces and sentimental comedies, which had no literary qualities. They were poor in dialogue and negligible in characterization and relied for their success upon sensation, rapid action and spectacle. There were also poetic plays which were mere closet-plays, unfit for stage representation.

There was a significant development from romantic and historical themes to more realistic themes towards the middle of the century. This movement towards realism received considerable impetus from the work of T.W. Robertson, who introduced in his plays the idea of a serious theme underlying the humour, and character and dialogue of a more natural kind. He is inseparately connected with the modern revival of English drama. But he never entirely freed himself from the melodrama and sentimentalism prevalent at the time.

Bernard Shaw produced his first plays before the influence of Ibsen. Shaw used the serious drama for a consideration of social, domestic or personal problems. A period – so keenly aware of

social problems was an admirable time for the rise of the drama of ideas. The themes of the drama became the problems of religion, youth and age and labour and capital. In the history of the realistic prose drama, Ibsen and then Shaw, Galsworthy and Granville – Barker were of paramount importance, and they did much to create a tradition of natural dialogue. New psychological investigations increased the interest in character and distinct from plot, and the realistic drama aimed more and more at the impartial presentation of real life, contemporary rather than historical. Shaw's drama means a great deal to the English theatre from the literary point of view. Not only has he brought to the drama, "a new incisiveness of utterance and given what is virtually a new dramatic dialogue, but he has also provided a fresh principle of characterization" (Nicoll 54). The characters in the romantic plays were not so much stereotyped as framed on a false pattern. Shaw has shown men how to draw characters arrestingly and frequently dramatic:

"Instead of timid heroine, we find
intellectually daring women, instead of
strong heroes, men lacking power and
self-will, instead of fantastically model
clergy-men, ministers who feel more at
ease in buff coat and jack boots,
instead of impossible villains, men who
are themselves the tools of society" (P 93).

"Religiously, his family background was protestant" says Collins "but Shaw early rejected the Christian faith" (P 117.) Although he remained an atheist for the rest of his life, Shaw was in the broad sense religious, and he formulated a personal philosophy of creative evolution based on secular theories. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was a pervasive intellectual influence in the later part of the nineteenth century. Shaw saw the implications of Darwin's biological theory of evolution for religion, morality and psychology. He rejected the determinism of natural selection, because it endorsed ruthless competition in society, and because philosophically it denied the possibility of conscious willed intervention in the process of evolution. Instead, Shaw followed Samuel Butler, author of *The Way of All Flesh*, in postulating a will beyond the individual striving for the improvement of the species. Shaw also found support for the doctrine of creative evolution in the writings of the French philosopher Henri Bergson, whose position is the equivalent of Shaw's Life Force or Evolutionary Appetite.

The ideas of creative evolution contribute to Shaw's plays. In *Man and Superman*, the heroine Ann Whitefield is the instrument of the Life Force; her marriage to Jack Tanner fulfils the impersonal biological urge of the woman to reproduce and improve the species. Women in Shaw's plays often possess, restrictive gifts when they are associated with the Life Force: Mrs. George in *Getting Married* has visionary trances; *Major Barbara* is inspired by her faith; and Joan's voices are an expression of her evolutionary appetite. *Back to Methuselah* shows the emergence in the far distant future of a race of superior beings with visionary powers. This cycle of plays and their prefaces are Shaw's fullest statement of the ideas of creative evolution. As G.E. Brown puts it, "....

Shaw was not a Christian he is concerned with the subject of religious belief as it affects human conduct and as we might expect he sometimes looks at things from the point of view of a social reformer” (P 66) Shaw’s plays *Major Barbara*, *Androcles and the Lion* and *Saint Joan* follow this pattern Shaw believed that before man can spare time to afford to luxury of devoting thought to spiritual matters, he must be well fed and decently housed. So, it can be said that Shaw’s religion is centered on man.

Bernard Shaw was considered irreligious, for he was indifferent to conventional religion. Once in a meeting of the Shelley’s society, he declared that he was an atheist. He refused to go to church on Sundays. He believed conventional religions as dark well which cannot shower light to anyone. He was an intellectualist with a penetrating mind, subjecting all faiths, conventions and institutions to the search light of reason. He could not believe in them because he found them wanting. But he was not at all a materialist, an atheist or an agonistic. He was a deeply religious man who substituted his own religion for the old religions. His religions had both aspects; negative and positive, destructive and constructive. He pushes back the old ideas and replaces them by his own new ideas. In this respect, *St. Joan* and *Major Barbara* are religious dramas. The word “God” constantly appears in the lips of the Maid in *St. Joan*. His religious approach is different from science which denies God, soul or mind but close to Christianity. He sees the universe as the chance collection of microorganisms. He did not permit that the ideal state of the future, or the socialist state, should maintain churches or other places of worship for prayer and meditation. He preferred “the monkey gland mind” to “the Daintily mind” and religious rituals like Baptism, confirmation etc., to the ritual of modern science, vaccination etc. One can never find Shaw making any systematic attack on churches. He is for their modernization and not abolition. He stands for rationalism and liberation in religion rather than for the abolition of religion. He discards “the Christian belief in the Resurrection of Christ and Miracles as a mere superstition and as such of no consequence” (Brown 66).

Shaw vehemently and most bluntly denounces the doctrine of atonement of sin by the cross. To him, it is a mean and impracticable evasion of responsibility. It is logically impossible and morally undesirable for any but the sinner to bear the burden of his sin. When the sinner suffers himself, the sin can be atoned, not by the suffering of others. Shaw considers the saying ‘sin can be atoned by the suffering of Christ or any other man’ only as an indirect incitement to sin. It is very rarely that Shaw holds the church dignitaries to scorn. He considers the priests as creatures of flesh and blood like the common people. They are not immune from the human failing of the worst type. Morel is viewed in *Candida* in this way. Shaw treats them with sympathy and often makes an attempt to understand their point of view. There are a number of ecclesiastical characters in *Saint Joan* and the dramatist has stated their point of view clearly and impartially. Though they are responsible for the burning of the maid, their sincerity and honesty of purpose has been left no doubt. The chaplain in the play accepts his guilt saying:

O God, take away this sight from me!
O Christ, deliver me from this fire that
is consuming. She cried to Thee in the

midst of it. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!
She is in Thy bosom; and I am in hell for evermore” (SJ 166)

Christian religion has practical applications and Shaw is in favour of the economic, social and political teachings of Christ though he exposes its errors through his criticism of institutional Christianity. In Preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, he asks, “why not give Christianity a trial?” (Androcles and the Lion 9). Shaw advocates the use of sound political theories of the *Bible* in everyday life. He believed that the only way out of the miseries and sufferings of the present-day world is through a practical application of the way pointed out by Christ. This practical application cannot result through individual effort but through state effort. Christ was a kind of socialist and he advocated a leveling down of the rich and leveling up of the poor. Only through social organization, this can be brought about. He believed that the war occurs where there is a total neglect of the teachings of Christ. Shaw denounces only the irrational and superstitions of Christianity. His theory of creative Evolution is his search for a more rational, more logical, and so more intellectually satisfying and more credible creed. Maurice Colburne says;

“Behind every fight is a faith, and the
Faith behind Shaw’s fight is a fervent
Belief in what he calls creative
Evolution” (Colbourne 264)

This can be briefly regarded as ‘Shaw’s creed’. There is a spiritual power in the universe and Shaw calls it the ‘Life Force’. ‘Creative Evolution’ appeals to Shaw as a religion because he finds it intellectually credible. The plays *Major Barbara*, *Saint Joan* and *Androcles and the Lion* deal with the subject of religious belief and he looks of things as a social Reformer. Shaw does discuss his theory of creative Evolution in *Back to Methuselah*.

Shaw discusses a number of burning social problem in *Major Barbara*. It throws light on his views on a number of subjects, religion and its role as an instrument of social reform, the evil of poverty and its eradication, the value and significance of money, education, contemporary political and social organizations, the correlation of virtue and wickedness, crime and punishment etc., are treated, some merely in passing and some more thoroughly with Shaw’s usual trenchancy. In *Major Barbara*, Shaw has shed light on Christian religion in its more militant aspects. This is done through a presentation of the day to day working of the Salvation Army:

“The play, which has a basically respectful
attitude towards the social work being
done at that time by the Salvation Army,
turns sour in its implicit condemnation
of a society that organises itself in such
a way as to make such work necessary
and there is no doubt that many of the

original audience were offended by what they took to be a condemnation of the Salvation Army” (Brown 67).

Its different characteristics have been stressed through different characters, earnestness and ecstasy through *Major Barbara*, its innocence and courage through Jenny Hill, its practical good sense through Mrs. Baines and its exuberance through Adolphus Cusins. Religion and religious people were considered dull and cheerless, and so he has stressed the exuberance and gaiety of the Salvationists. The Salvation Army preached and gave charity food and shelter – to the poor and wretched. Shaw declared that the food and shelter, even though given out of the pure hearted compassion and Christian fellowship, became in practice, a bribe which led those who received it into a hypocritical pretence of religious conversation in order that they might get the bare necessities of life in this world and the promise of eternal bliss in heaven hereafter. They embraced or pretended to embrace Christianity because they were getting some material benefit here and the expectation of endless benefit to come. Shaw called this as mean bargaining with God. According to Shaw, this is the Army’s Central weakness. It encourages hypocritical and false confession like those of Snobby Price and by suggesting that a criminal act may be undone by confession. So, poverty must be eradicated first, and religion and salvation in the real sense come afterwards. Shaw condemns poverty as the worst of crimes and the greatest of social evils. He also shows its evil consequences. In Act II, which occurs in the Hamlet Street, shelter of the Salvation Army clearly brings out the fact that the poor are not only dirty and diseased, they are also hypocritical and dishonest.

The play *Major Barbara* ends on a rising note with the themes of religion and social reform closely connected once again. Barbara indicates that people are put on the earth to be useful and she recognises that her father was right when she challenged her to try to save his well-fed workers:

“I have got rid of the bribe of breed.
I have got rid of the bribe of heaven.
Let God’s work be done for its own sake:
the work he had to create us to do
because it cannot be done except
by living men and women” (Barbara 107).

Major Barbara is a great religious play, an expression of Shaw’s realism and not of pessimism. In the words of Harold Bloom,

“Nothing is got for nothing and Shaw makes Barbara pay the price for his extravagant triumph of the religion of Power” (P 18).

Shaw has subjected religion to the search light of reason, exposed its many weaknesses, made his readers think, and thus paved the way for religious and social reform. He has focused on Shaw and affectations which at present war religion and its total dependence on capitalists, like Bodger and under shaft, so that by having a look at the worst, one may find a way to the better. The Central theme of *Androcles the Lion* is that men must have something worth dying for to make life worth living, in other words, an end outside oneself - a religious objective is essential for decent existence. Shaw regarded religion as something to inspire people to strive for a better world – world where everyone would be able to use his individual aptitudes to the full for the common good, unhampered by any forms of class or racial restrictions. Shaw was not concerned with the theological creed or dogma of any particular religion, and his view on Christianity implies clearly that he regarded Jesus as a social reformer and that the main lesson of the New Testament is concerned with modes of god conduct rather than religious observance and ceremonies. *Androcles and the Lion* is a picture of Christians thrown to the lions by the Romans for the sake of their faith and how simple faith saves them” (Purdum 111). While Androcles, a humble Greek tailor turned Christian, is journeying through a jungle in Africa accompanied by his Shrewish wife Megaera, he encounters a savage lion with a wounded paw, from which Androcles extracts a large thorn. Later, Androcles is seized with a number of other Christians and brought to Rome to be thrown to the beasts. Androcles is thrown to the lion because the audience must be denied all pleasure, but the tailor finds himself face to face with his jungle friend, who saves his life. The Emperor is so amazed that he pardons Androcles, together with the other prisoners. Of the three main Christian characters who remain at the end of the play, only Androcles seems to keep his belief unchanged. *Androcles and the Lion* is the most amusing of Shaw’s religious plays, while both *Major Barbara* and *Blanco Posnet*, through comic in parts, were essentially serious dramas. The play is important for the light it casts on Shaw’s attitude towards religion. The very long ‘Preface’ to the play deals in stimulating fashion with Shaw’s thought on the Gospels, but one can get some idea of his beliefs from an examination of the conduct of Lavinia, Androcles, Sphintho and Ferrerious in the play itself. Those who have positive attitudes are rewarded, even though their conduct may not be specifically Christian. Ferocious, for instance, acts according to his nature, and decides that he ‘must serve the Gods that are, not the God that will be (Brown 86). To some extent he remains one of under shaft in *Major Barbara* in that both man Shaw seems to be approving of any positive belief so as long as it is strongly held.

Shaw is concerned with the question of Christian belief and its effect upon those who believe in *Saint Joan*. His primary interest is in showing the differences between Joan’s idea of Christianity and that of the Church, and he makes the print in his preface that, given the situation at the time in which Joan lived, the church had no option but to deliver her up for burning as a heretic since she would not do as the church told her. The alternative was to allow her unprecedented religious freedom and in spite of all she had done to free her country from England’s invasion, this was unthinkable. What Shaw does incomparably is to present the most notable warrior Saint in the Christian Calendar in the triple role,” as the first martyr to Protestantism; as an apostle of nationalism; and as a pioneer of realism in warfare” (Ward 59). Joan, at bottom, declaring herself a faithful daughter of the Church, is a puritan, like Shaw himself affirming her own life impulse, her unshakable, her even tyrannical will to live, by accepting death itself. Joan has great resemblances to

Jesus. She listens to the voices of the blessed saints, Catherine and Margaret, who speak to her every day. Joan's battle cry:

“Who is for God and His Maid? Her last words before she is put off stage. His ways are not your ways. He wills that I go through the fire to His bosom; for whom I am His child, and you are fit that I should live among you. This is my last word to you” (Joan 96).

Makes it clear that Joan is a substitute for Jesus of Nazareth. To conclude, Shaw was a practical mystic who saw no remedy in economic socialism or anything else unless one developed his spiritual life. He wants the religion to be realised, not on a vague hour or every Sunday, but every day, vitally every hour of the week. He presents and justifies his religion as a force in the social institutions.

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Gender Awareness – III
Detoxification of the Home: Return to Family Love

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Abstract

The modern times have witnessed the break-up of the family, under the pressure of modernization and the new culture of individualism that has swept the globe. Home has been a casualty of progress in the west already, but this 'progress' has affected the value system of our country in a big way now. India is a country with a continental visage, but it is a strange paradox, that we people think that in going western lies our redemption, while the westerners are turning to India for spiritual bliss. However, as times are changing, for better or worse, Indian mindscape is being westernized and it is also losing its spiritual charisma which it used to hold for the westerners. We took a friend from Italy to a Mall in Gurgaon, and when she wanted to purchase some nail polish and lipsticks, we offered to take her to an international branded shop. But she said, this shop is just in front of my house in Italy. I want something ethnic. Then, we had to hunt for an ethnic corner. This is how India stands now, externally changed, and changing internally at a bit slower pace. And the most affected part of our life in this internal change is the home. The external transformation has caused a lot of toxicity in the family life also. This article aims at studying the impact of this toxicity, and the need for a reversal to stable family values if we want to have a happy living.

Keywords: family, happiness, toxic, gender, home, family love

Introducing the Modern Myth

In my book *Geet: The Unsung Song of Eternity*, which is a sequel to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, there is a scene in which Dr. Faustus and Mephistopheles are shown discussing the terms of

their contract. In Christopher Marlowe's drama: 'The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus', the terms of the contract are that Faustus will never utter the name of Christ during the twenty-four years of contract, and during this period, the devil will be at his beck and call. But after 24 years, his soul will be taken to Hell for eternal damnation. In *Geet*, however, the terms of the contract change. The devil says: We have no objection if you visit shrines, or even take the name of Christ. We already have our sway over these places.

'Only, Faustus, thou shalt not love. But, thou shalt marry'

Even Christ had told his followers "to multiply". But here was a different dimension of that old issue. Devil further says that the greatest threat to the Empire of Evil comes, not from religious shrines, but from Love. It was Love which was the cementing force between Adam and Eve. And it was because of their Love that they fell. And, now, says the Devil, we want Love to be subtracted from the lives of sons and daughters of Adam. Instead of love, they shall marry. And, marriage has to be a union of unknown, undesired, unloved people, so that we have a whole host of bastards from these unions. In this way, he wanted the bastardization of the entire human race so that there is marriage, but no love between the spouses.

No doubt, it seems too much a figment of imagination, and a travesty of that great contract, but an in-depth appraisal of the institution of marriage and its fall out confirms how this world is being run with a vengeance. And how love has taken wing, and how family, the cradle of civilization, has been bastardized. Everything falls in the realm of the myth. Let it be the modern myth, not about the origin of humanity, but about the conduct of human life, thereafter.

Home and the Second Sex

If we look back, during the last 10000 years of human existence, world has been continuously getting into a highly organized form, and people have been living in closely knit groups, the most original of which, has been the family. If we look back a century over our family system, it is not difficult to discover that the home had a great role in the formation of human life. The role of the mother, the father, sisters, brothers, sons and daughters, - all together, formed a formidable unit, held together with mutual love, respect, and fear of the head of the family in addition to the myths in which we as a unit, and as a society, believed. These were the times when women were mostly illiterate, and the dominant philosophy was male chauvinistic. Male was the head, and woman, not his partner, but his sex slave at home, meant only for producing children. Five six, eight, ten, twelve, most of whom died, and three or four survived. Girl child was unwelcome. They wanted boys because the girl went away along with dowry, while boy brought the both in, the dowry and the bride which helped in the process of procreation and continuation of the family line.

In this arrangement, the woman remained subdued. She had no will of her own. She was forced into slavery at home. She was cursed by the in-law's family. But, economic considerations of being dependent on man for living, forced her to stay in the home, even if her dignity was at stake. In fact, they were forced into marriage, so that she has a claim over the man, who was found transgressing the marital bond, and have physical relations here or there, unchallenged of course. It was a man's world. Woman was a mere shadow, confined to the four walls. These were the times of utter exploitation of the female gender. They had no voice before their fathers and brothers, and then, in front of their husbands and parents-in-law. They had a suppressed personality, pushed to the brink. They took pride in being subservient to men, in upholding the customs which denied them their freedom, joy, and their voice too. Our family system, which has now broken, was a system which provided stability to the family, and an environment in which men were assured of good servicing at home. The elderly people were taken care of. Widows were taken care of. Overall, it was not a bad system of holistic care, except that it treated woman as the second gender. She had no rights. Even after the govt promulgated laws of equality, women still do not enjoy equality with their brothers. As of today, our society is still male dominated. People still want boys. People still kill girls. Girls go for higher education. But there too, they remain under threat of rapists. No woman can freely walk at night even in highly advanced cities. *Courtesy Nirbhaya.*

The Modular Kitchen

So much has changed. Yet, so much remains the same. From home, we have slipped into flats. From dung cakes, we have shifted to gas. From cylinders, we have shifted to non-stop gas supply line. We have no verandahs, in which birds would come and chirp. We don't have grains to scatter, nor any vases to put some water for pigeons. We have a modular kitchen and a rich gas stove. But we do not cook anything. We have servants for impersonal cooking, and we eat the food thus cooked with minds absorbed either in office politics, or in the fire sprouting news channels. By the time we have eaten, there are no loud acknowledgements from our stomach. Because, digestion is a big casualty. We carry along undigested matter, which goes on piling up. We go out for a walk in our car, we have health systems inside our houses. Still, we suffer from obesity. Indigestion. Heart trouble. BP. Physical disorders leading to mental disorders. We are actually a race disturbed in body as well as in mind.

This toxic atmosphere of the house has a very dangerous dimension also. It is the loss of values at home. What are homely values? We begin with Trust. Loyalty. Frailty, thy name is Helen. Where is Love? Have we ever allowed people who love to marry and live happily ever after? Look into the stony eyes of brothers who have killed their sisters for honour. This society has killed girls in the womb. And tortured brides for dowry. How many have been set on fire? How many are rotting with their parents? What a system we have developed? Home, where we need love, and

nothing but love, is used like an animal farm, to bring people like cattle, purchased from a fair (read www.matrimony.com).

Can we live our life with just anyone who resembles a man or a woman? Is procreation the only function of man and woman coming together? Even then, are they concerned only with numbers, not with their quality? The children in broken families have a harrowing experience while growing up. The U.S Center for Marriage and family released a study in November 2005 that shows broken family structures consistently lead to education difficulties for children. “When it comes to educational achievement, children living with their own married parents do significantly better than other children.” (www.tldm.com).

These are shocking details which we have to find out while discussing a marriage. A home cannot have aliens. A home cannot have people who do not love. A home cannot tolerate people who doubt. A home has to be an abode of trust and love. If we think we can build a home without love, we are inhuman. At the most, we can have a travesty of a man. And the procreation too is a distorted vision of reality. This world has brutalized home, and all the holy assumptions that went into its conception. Four walls make a prison for the woman, not a home for a loving heart.

The Ultimate Purpose

The people of this world think that marriage or no marriage, love or no love, home or no home, kitchen or no kitchen, we can work it out with fast food. Sex too is considered as fast food available on wayside shops. Heart has been dumped into the dust-bin, and men and women count their gains in relationships. Home, dear home is breaking apart, in the absence of love. Understanding is no substitute for love. Still, there are people who think in the traditional system, marriages were enduring. But it is a fallacy. Traditional marriage is a loveless arranged marriage, based on grave compromises by the woman. She has to lead a life in which she has no choice, and with unwanted undesired partners, with the result that the offspring that she has from such a partner is too shorn of the milk of human kindness. This is what we lack in our present world. Milk of Human Kindness. Empathy. Love. Compassion. Forgiveness. Charity. All these virtues are found abundantly in scriptures, which remain unread, and scarcely acted upon.

Detoxifying the Home

How can home be detoxified? First of all, we have to detoxify our minds. They have to be taken out of the gears into a neutral position. What to aspire for? This the most important existential question for mankind. If our aspirations are for worldly possessions, we are damned. If our passions are for spiritual bliss, even then, we are misfits into this life. What and how much? This is important. When alive, nobody can relinquish his body. And body, in order to remain alive, needs food. Of all kinds. Deny it, and you are damned. While living on this earth, you are imprisoned in this body. And, we must listen to its music. If it needs water, here it is. If it needs

tea, here it is. It needs sleep, we can't deny. Nor can we deny it its urges. Our philosophies of morality, and immortality, often overlay our souls with the dust of unnatural perceptions. We start denying certain physical truths. And, this messes up our body, and then our mind. And when this happens on a massive scale, we have a society, which is messed up inside out.

So, the first condition to detoxify the mind is to know what to aspire for. Worldly success is not the ultimate for man to desire. And to achieve your aims, it is easy to employ short cuts. Pay bribes. And get the positions at any cost. Everybody wants to be a doctor. Ask them is it because a doctor's is a noble profession? And, they can serve society. Never. It is for the sake of wealth. People enter politics. Is it a noble profession? Is it a service centre? No. It is entirely self-service. Join any job. The purpose is: to earn money. And if the bucks are easy, it is a prized profession. These ideas toxify our mind. We grow up with a false sense of reality. We aspire for things which actually do not matter. Wealth is good only to an extent. When we gather it so that our sons and daughters enjoy good life, we end up destroying our next generation. Our aspirations. Our thoughts. Our wishes. Our means. Our sense of right and wrong. And, finally, what we want out of this life. These are most important things which determine what type of a family, home, offspring, and parents we going to be.

Fast families, fast food, fast living, ... These are the fast [albeit false] truths of our emerging life style. In the pomp and show of our life, and the glittering reality that strikes us, we have no time to look back. We are not leading our lives; we are just living. We have no time for ourselves. We have no time to have kids. We have no time to rear them up. We have no time for our ageing parents who need our attention. What type of men we are? Are we leaves who do not belong to any branch, nor to any tree? This is what is toxifying our family systems. We need a return to familial love, family responsibilities, and boys and girls, while growing up, has to be taught in their academic syllabus what is home, how to set up a home, how to belong to the earth, how to produce kids, why to produce them, and how to rear them up.

Today, young girls who aspire for rising career options, are never nourished on any moral diet. What they learn from parents, is success. Success. Success. Success is a bitch goddess. Once it rises to the head, all else goes dead. They have no idea that, if they want to marry someone, marriage means a home, and a home means love, and love means kitchen, and food served with joy. If these things do not interest you, better remain single. Do not produce children. Have lovers, but no family. Home is a far cry from such mental paradigms.

A few words on what constitutes a home. Home is composed of an eagerness to live with a partner, have sex, and children, and bring them up. It looks very simple. But things get complicated when we go after finding partners. The most essential component of a family, or even a home, is mutual love. I wonder if we can find from matrimonial columns, people who love. What

we get in this bargain is people who tolerate each other. And how long? Very soon they find out the incompatibilities and apply for divorce. Which again, in India, is a Hobson's choice. Life during the marriage, and after the marriage is derailed if the couple has got a child too.

My honest contention here is that those who do not love, need not marry, and must not set up homes, and they should forget about having kids. Because, children from copulation in which love is absent, and scheming and hatred are the active participants, have a criminal bent of mind. Since this practice is in vogue for centuries, our world too is topsy-turvy. We cannot stand the idea of love. We arrange marriages, and religious rite are considered to be the binding force. We yoke unwilling partners together, who have no scope of personal rapprochement. They live in eternal contradictions. So is our life today. A paradox. A contradiction.

So, we need love to form couples. Only then, we can detoxify this relationship. Girls often think that they work like men and must not be forced into kitchens. It has to be agreed that they are working in offices and come home broken. Love will rebuild their passion in having a good kitchen, serving the family with love. This is the healthiest tradition which must be followed. Men can definitely help. If they love, they will never lag behind.

A home means copulation. Whatever work pressure, couples must not starve themselves of sex. Sex neutralizes the toxicity of the body and the mind and brings both the partners in a balanced neutrality. They can thereafter concentrate on higher aspirations of their life. But if their sex life is disturbed, they will start looking out of the windows. And, they may jump out too. Modern life is full of such instances where moral transgression has claimed millions of lives. A woman must not feel threatened in the family of her husband. It can never happen unless both of them are lovebirds. And we adopt certain norms which we have never thought of.

It needs a great courage to suggest to a traditional society that love among young people needs to be encouraged with parental care. Lovers must not be subjected to torture by the families, if they register with the authorities their will to marry. If we want a happy society, we need to detoxify our family, and immunize our home from artificial aids, like property, wealth, education, status etc. We have to come clean, be natural, and remember that home is the most fundamental unit of social progression, and it needs love to nurture best souls for the wellness of our society.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it can be safely concluded that if home is the centre of modern living, and man woman relationship still holds the balance, it is essential to recreate the modern living paradigms in such a way that family life revolves around love. Forced or organized marriages must become a thing of the past. There are two ways to respond to the present dilemma: one, if we find it difficult to go back, or bring about the old family system, in which woman was

at the receiving end, and man, the master of all ceremonies, we must bring in changes commensurate with living patterns of today. We don't like women to work in the kitchen. We don't want old parents in the home. We have already provided for pick-up of infants by day care centres. In the same way, we have to re-think why we force outdated family models on modern living. For example, in a modern marriage, you will find women, who generally wear jeans and tops, get into a huge *lehanga*. Our heroines too, when getting into marital bond, wear costly traditional costumes. Tradition, in this way, is only a fake show of love for the past. Actually, they are thoroughly westernized. And, once the day of marriage is over, these *lehngas* and *churidaars* are never worn again by the couple. This is the formal side of living. We should be true to ourselves. If we have changed, the change must be visible in the way we behave. We have no respect for the rites by fire. Then, why we go after it. We have no respect for the husband and his parents. Why show it off? Men and women must leave off the show, or the façade of being good to old practices. Best, they come out of it, and live their lives in the new environment, based on their own mental set up. The other way is to develop a new ethos. What was institutionalized five hundred or thousands of years back, how does it hold good today? Why we think every girl grows up to marry? Why every boy thinks, he must marry? Is marriage such a necessity? If career is everything, where is the need for marriage? Live-in relationship is the best. And, there is another option. Live single. And copulate wherever you like. Live from day to day. No need for kids. Let joy be unlimited.

The final answer lies in the final question: what we want from life? If we want success, everything that we are doing is in place. But if we want happiness, and beyond this, if our aspiration is for redemption, we have to redesign our priorities. We shall have to return to home. And, build it up with love.



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**The Personal and the Political -
Critiquing Khaled Hosseini's
*A Thousand Splendid Suns***

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Abstract

Khaled Hosseini's *Thousand Splendid Suns* is a historical saga of the people who brave their domestic struggle with great resilience in the war ravaged Afghanistan. The novel offers several sites of contestation to debate about Politics, religion, culture and patriarchy. The personal struggle is entwined with the national struggle and the study reveals how men and women become the victims of this historical upheaval and assert the supremacy of humanism.

Keywords: Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Religious conservatism, Political turmoil, Patriarchy, Ethnic diversity, Education for women

The *Thousand Splendid Suns*, the titular phrase has been taken from the Persian Poet Saeb-e-Tabrizi's poem signifying the beauty of Afghanistan. Predominantly, the novel traces the lives of three women Nana, Mariam and Laila along with two men Rasheed and Tariq who desperately try to define their lives. But women try to champion their struggles with their domestic and political issues. The novel shows the evolution of the Afghan women by re-creation as the political scenario changes and the reaffirmation of their identity. Though the hopes of these Afghan women are crushed by political turmoil and patriarchy, the bonding between them promises that humanism could never diminish till the women inhabit the earth. The thousand splendid suns behind the veils are Afghan's metaphor who continue to preserve the quality of humanity amidst the oppressive situations. The paper analyses how politics, religion and culture has deprived even the basic rights for women and highlights how these ordinary women with the contesting forces of men emerge as radical forces surging ahead to meet the shocking realities of their home and nation.

Nana and Mariam suffers because of religious conservatism and social neglect while Laila suffers due to patriarchal assumptions and political insurgency; The irony of the whole situation is how they remain ignorant of the turbulent political situation and yet it disturbs the

lives of these women. Though the soviet forces, communists, Talib Conservatives dictate the women's submissions, their rebellion is entirely personal. As Kate Millet puts it, Society is an oppressive one, in which all human beings are socializing to strict and limiting sex roles, regardless of their individual potential.(40)

Mariam is kept behind the veil bearing the abuse of harami when she was six years-old – the time. She did not know what the word harami-bastard meant. Nor was she old enough to appreciate the injustice; to see that it is the creators of harami, whose only sin is being born.” (4) The little girl Mariam and Nana's life is contrasted with Jalil living happily with three wives and nine legitimate children. Nana stands as a victim to the practice of polygamy licensed by the patriarchal society. Nana's euphoria could be perfectly understood by the humiliations she receives from the neighbourhood and Jalil's wives.

Nana who worked as a housemaid was driven out after hearing about the illegitimate connection with Jalil.Jalil escapes the rancour because religion licences polygamy but Nana was made a social outcast by the rich wives of Jalil. Nana was a devoted wife, but the lack of social and economic recognition turns her insane with her daughter. She feels so worried though we understand Jalil's affection for Mariam.But Jalil fails in his familial obligation to give social honour for the little child Mariam who is mocked as a "harami".

Mariam loves to see the minarets, orchards, wheat fields which her father described during his visits, but their social isolation denies her such delightful sights. The admiration of Mariam for Jalil's description reverted to a bitter sense of betrayal for abandoning her mother and casting her out of his big fancy house. Nana refers to him as 'rich man telling rich lies' .Starting her life as a house maid in Jalil's house ,she was just driven out of the house because of her low economic status.But innocent Mariam decides to visit Jalil's house much against Nana's pleading to avoid it.Anticipating the shame and pain that Mariam would undergo in Jalil's house, Nana commits suicide before hearing them. Mariam returns with humiliation to face the corpse of her mother. After her mother's suicide, Mariam remembers Nana's words:

A man's heart is a wretched, wretched thing Mariam, It is not like a mother's womb. It won't bleed, it won't stretch to make room for you.'

Learn this now and learn it well, my daughter. Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always.' (7)

Nana anticipates the ugly situations Mariam has to face when she socializes with the outside world. Hence, she does not prefer to send her to school. She denies education for her as the mother believes her education is to learn only one skill and that is tamul – endurance.

Mullah Faizullah, the gaunt, stooping old man with white beard serves as a soul companion and counselor to whom Mariam confides her secret aspirations. She expresses her desire to go to school, a real school and not just to be tutored Quran by the Mullah. She pictured herself in a classroom with other girls of her age, longed to place a ruler on a page and draw important looking line Nana dismisses.' (17)

At the age of fifteen, she is married to Old Rasheed by her illegitimate father's insistence. Jalil is the victim of religious fundamentalism but his unforgivable betrayal to give Mariam in marriage to old Rasheed submitting to the dictates of his wives shocks us. His humanism is killed in his act of denying basic rights for the 15 year old child who believes him. Mariam's stoic endurance which her mother taught her to practice bitterly comes to light. Mariam could see, She [Mariam] was being sent away because she was the walking, breathing embodiment of their shame." (48). But, she does not fail to stab Jalil, "I thought about you all the time. I used to pray that you'd live to be a hundred years old. ...I didn't know that you were ashamed of me." (48)

From rural Afghanistan she moves to liberal reformist Kabul where she is mystified by looking at the modern women. They made her aware of her own linen, her plain look, her lack of aspirations, her ignorance of so many things. But the gift Rasheed gives her is a burqa saying, 'it is to preserve her nang and namoos, their honor and pride'. (69) "Where I come from, a woman's face is her husband's business only." (70) Men had their own moral codes licensed by the Afghan society and these women have to personally confront it. Rasheed who feels burqa is god's gift to preserve the nang and namoos spends his idle time leering at the nude pictures of young girls in pornographic magazines. Justifies, "I have friends who have two, three, four wives. ... what I'm doing now most supremacymen I know would have done long ago." (p. 215) Ironically, Rasheed cared much for her honor and she felt prized by his protectiveness. Treasured and significant. (80) But Mariam's life takes a drastic turn and she dares to challenge and protect herself when she has to share Rasheed with Laila. Rasheed Justifies, "I have friends who have two, three, four wives. ... what I'm doing now most men I know would have done long ago." (p. 215)

The novel unfolds the story of nine year old Laila in Kabul in the year 1987. Her life spans along with the regime of Communists, Soviets and Najibullah.

The life of Laila with Babi has its share of happiness. We understand that as an urban girl, and with Babi's liberal attitude, Laila is encouraged to go to school. Even in later years, he advises Laila, "I know you are still young, but I want you to understand and learn this now. Marriage can wait but education cannot. (114)

Added to his father's affection, Tariq the one-legged boy is her companion for life. Khadim harasses her by spouting warm water which smelled foul and "she yelps, howls and runs home frantically digging her fingers into her scalp, whimpered with disgust". Tariq challenges the ugliness around Laila and removes her veil to see the splendid sun.

But the political situation worsens and Laila learns to live amidst people who 'learned to walk with a milk bottle in one hand and a gun in the other. (174) When they decide to move out of Kabul, Babi recites Saib-e-Tabrizi's poem

One could not count the moons that shimmer on her roof
Or the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her walls. 186

Before they could leave, the house was bombed and Babi dies. Laila was badly hurt, and Rasheed picks her up and the family tends her to wellness. Rasheed's slyness in caring for Laila is revealed sooner when Mariam's life is to be shared by Laila who seeks refuge in Rasheed's house. With much woe and misery of Mariam, Rasheed marries Laila. For the sake of survival, the already impregnated Laila (by Tariq) manipulates the identity of the child Aziza. According to Afghan culture, men are responsible for maintaining discipline in the family. Hence Rasheed was very keen on helping Laila only as his wife and she is trapped within the confines of the walls.

The truant Rasheed plays to impress Laila which results in mockery and humiliation for Mariam. Mariam cries that 'I am too old. Too old for you to do this for me.' He dismisses it as melodramatic and taunts her in front of Laila. "We are city people You and I, but she is a dehati. A village girl...Have you told her Mariam, have you told her that you are a harami? Mariam is shocked to hear the word harami which she despised, and it hits her hard. After a long time, but it hits her too harshly and paralyzes her. He continues, "But she has good qualities. If she were a car, she would be Volga and you a "Benz". (216) And "One would not drive the Benz as he does Volga and its foolish". He outwits Mariam when he says that 'Mariam will be my eyes and ears when I am away" (218) to guard Laila. As Simone De Beauvoir remarks, "The drama of women lies in the conflict between the fundamental aspirations of every subject and who always regards the self as essential-and the compulsions of the situation in which she is inessential".(207)

Mariam was visibly shaken and gets ready to spit her vengeance and retaliate against Laila and not Rasheed. As Kate Millet explicates in *Sexual Politics*,

Through the multiple advantages of the double standard, the male participates in both worlds, empowered by his superior social and economic resources to play the estranged women against each other as rivals. One might also recognize subsidiary status categories among women: not only is virtue class, but beauty and age as well. (38)

They share the domestic chores but with arrogant command from Mariam; and Laila understands that she has unnecessarily made Mariam and the child of hers as victims. She knew that what she was doing was dishonorable." Dishonorable, disingenuous, and shameful. And spectacularly unfair to Mariam. ... Laila already saw the sacrifices a mother had to make. Virtue was only the first." 219)

In spite of the queasy feelings and endless quarrels, Mariam and Laila shared love, fellowship and developed a personal niche to fight against the brutality of Rasheed, the patriarch. "... for the first time, it was not an adversary's face Laila saw but a face of grievances unspoken, burdens gone unprotested, a destiny submitted to and endured." (p. 249) On the scale of his religious diktats, Rasheed takes good care of the ladies but never encourages them to live for themselves. In Afghan society, Women are considered as their property and is taken extreme care by them. As Rasheed says, "... I am your husband now, and it falls on me to guard not only your honor but ours That is the husband's burden." (223)

Rasheed drifts away from Mariam after the death of their child and expects Laila to fulfill his desire. But Rasheed's disappointment with Laila for bearing a daughter makes him insane and brutal. Women are seen being baneful to the order in the society. Their suggestions are immediately dismissed and feel they are disruptive and unintelligent. Further, he subtly understands that the child belongs to Tariq and throws his fit of anger at everybody. But, for Mariam, "... she marveled at how, after all these years of rattling loose, she had found in this little creature [Aziza] the first true connection in her life of false, failed connections." (252)

The novel identifies as Simone observes that the 'masculine prestige is far from extinction, resting still upon solid economic and social foundations. (207) Deprived of education and sound economy, even the reproductive or creative experiences of motherhood is dominated by masculine thoughts. Women are seen in the confines of religious fundamentalism and patriarchal perceptions. Nana and Mariam suffers due to these inadequacies of education and economy.

Ethnic diversity influences the relationships of the people and their thoughts and results in inner strife. One finds Rasheed as a Pashtun but yet he Speaks Parsi; Mariam is Tajik and the list is exhausting. But for Laila "To me, it's nonsense—and very dangerous nonsense at that—all this talk of I'm Tajik and you're Pashtun and he's Hazara and she's Uzbek. We're all Afghans, and that's all that should matter." (130)

We understand that sisterhood between two women poses resistance to Rasheed's patriarchal conduct. Though women is treated as a symbol of honour, Afghan men always

conditioned and also protected them. Laila decides to run away seeking a free life and she fondly calls Mariam to leave this wretched life and accompany her for “A new life: a life in which she would find the blessings that Nana had said a harami like her never would see.”. We understand that Rasheed takes care of economic welfare and discusses politics, but women could go out only with a male. Rasheed’s life has been patterned on the exegesis of what his religion has supplied him as moral codes. Gender roles are clearly differentiated, and lines drawn.

But this journey of emancipation did not last long and Rasheed is killed in the eventual fight with them."It seemed worthwhile, if absurdly so, to have endured all they'd endured for this one crowning moment, for this act of defiance that would end the suffering of all indignities"(300) Mariam is executed by the Talibans while Laila joins Tariq. Political scenario changes and Kabul’s penance has arrived too late. (398) Laila rebuilds a tiny part of Afghanistan with a school and a orphanage. Laila reminiscences that “Mariam is never very far, She is here, in these walls they’ve repainted, in the trees they’ve planted...in these pillows and books and pencils. She is in the children’s laughter...But mostly Mariam is in Laila’s own heart, where she shines with the bursting radiance of a thousand suns”.(402) As Laila pays homage she was leaving the world as a woman who had loved and been loved back.” (p. 370). This is a great tribute to Mariam.

Tarif, an example of war victim who lost his leg in his young age due to bombing emerges uncrippled with his resilience. After encountering the public taunts and national struggle, he remains steadfast in his love for Laila. His acquaintance with Laila from childhood is fortified stronger till he leaves to Pakistan along with his parents. His indomitable spirit to fight his life becomes successful when Mariam kills Rasheed. This paves way for Laila to resume her life with Tariq and joins her in rebuilding Kabul.His steadfast affection for Laila is contrasted with Rasheed. Though Rasheed features as a man reflecting his society and religion, nang and namos, which actually didnot help his wives to live happily. Humanism fails at the cost of religious fundamentalism and adherence to the patriarchal supremacy.

One finds very kind and reformist characters like Mullah Faizullah who champions the cause of Women education and tutors Mariam with Quran. He often counsels Nana to foresee future of Mariam with good education. We meet Laila's father Hakim who encourages his daughter to remain educated.Though these men adhere to religion ,they are not conservatives.There is much admiration for these men to have surpassed with humanism and accepting a society of gender equity.Any religion places humanism as its major principle upon which foundations are the other things built.We see Laila and Tarif reconstructing a new Kabul.

Tossed by the wave of politics, but with no tall talk about female emancipation and demand for govt policies, these thousand splendid suns behind the veil wage their domestic

battle. Amidst the rattling of guns and tossing of shells in the war-torn country, the angry outbursts of these women is a war cry for change. The novel stands testimony to the social institutions in Afghanistan, the concept of marriage and motherhood, personal rebellions amidst religious conservatism and political conundrum. Mariam and Laila shine as splendid suns representing the glory of humanism. As Khaled Hosseini puts it in postscript, he tried to speak through the novel, the ordinary humanity behind their veils, their hopes, their longings and their disappointments.

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