

dialog

NO. 32 (AUTUMN2017)



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURAL STUDIES
PANJAB UNIVERSITY CHANDIGARH

dialog: a bi-annual peer-reviewed journal

No. 32 (Autumn 2017)

ISSN 0975-4881

Editor

Deepti Gupta

Associate Editor

Surbhi Goel

Editorial Board

Abhijit Roy, Jadavpur University, Kolkata

Dinesh Dadhichi, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra

K P Jayasankar, Tata Institute of Social Sciences , Mumbai

Meena T. Pillai, University of Kerala, Thiruvanthapuram

Pankaj K. Singh, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla

Saugata Bhaduri, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Vanashree Tripathi, Benaras Hindu University, Varanasi

Cover

Design and photograph: Gopal Singh

All inquiries pertaining to this issue should be addressed to:

Editors, dialog

Email: editordialog@pu.ac.in

Website: <http://dialog.puchd.ac.in/>

(All the updates, CFPs are now current and available via the website)

MEMORABILIA OF KASHMIRI TANGIBLE HERITAGE: COUNTER-NARRATIVES OF KASHMIRI NATIVES

سکيا ہم کبھی دوبارہ کشمیر میں آباد ہو جائیں گے۔ مجھے ایسا احساس ہوتا ہے کہ دوبارہ بھی ایسا موقع نہیں آئے گا۔
کشمیر دنیا کا جنت ہے۔ اس کا ساری انسا میں جنت کا تمام بچا کشمیر میں ہی جنت پر قریب
کشمیر میں کوئی فرقہ ایسا وغیرہ کی ضرورت نہیں ہے۔ کشمیر میں پنکھوں کی ضرورت بھی نہیں پڑتی ہے۔

("Will we ever reside in the Valley of Kashmir again? I doubt we will ever have the opportunity to return home. The world has bestowed upon the title of Paradise on Earth on Kashmir. After looking at the beauty of the valley, I believe, it is justified. In our homeland, we did not require air-conditioners or fans, neither did we have to search for wings.")

-Shri Roshan Lal Suri

Narratives of Partition were usually placed within the territorial boundaries of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab and West Bengal. The land of Kashmir, which was physically torn apart, has been divorced from the literature of nationalism. The divided land has been

represented as a token of beauty to evoke nationalist yearning. To maintain this trope of desire, the land has been divorced from the struggle of its own natives. However, Kashmiri natives adopted alternate ways of representation to present their struggle.

Locations, space and time acquire multiple meanings when diaspora decides to 'write' home. The cultural nuances that have been imperceptibly imbibed, internalised, and often fretted against are highlighted and remembered through the act of self-analysis, self-discovery and relocation. However, when the right to 'write' home is snatched from the migrants, they are compelled to adopt alternate modes of expression through tangible heritage to challenge the dominant representation of their land and community. Kashmiri shawl is one such commodity that has represented the beauty and tales of Kashmir across the world, over the centuries. The Migrants used the space of *Shaal*¹, or Shawl, to express their discontentment and resentment with their representation in the popular imagination. The stock images of Kashmir include a "canopied *shikara*² on the Dal Lake", and "a boat silhouetted against the mountains poised on the lake's tranquil waters." These images divorce the territory of desire from the *Kashmiriyat* of its inhabitants. The meta-cinematic memory evoked by these images invokes the Valley as a site of pleasure, and simultaneously divorces it from collective unrest and political aspirations generating a collective unconsciousness among the masses. *Kashmiriyat*, according to Chitrakha Zutshi (Zutshi 329), is symbolised by religious syncretism existing within the territorial boundaries of Kashmir. Z.L. Kaul³ recalls, "In early forties, at an all- India gathering of Urdu

¹ Shaal is the root word for shawl, a square, triangular, or oblong piece of wool or other warm material worn, especially by women, around the shoulders, or the head as protection against chill or dampness.

² A type of wooden boat found on Dal Lake and other water bodies of Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, India. Shikaras are of varied sizes and are used for multiple purposes, including transportation of people. A usual shikara seats half-a-dozen people, with the driver paddling at the rear.

³ Kaul ZL, *Kashmiris in the Service of Urdu*

scholars, the delegates were asked to draw a panel of names of people who wrote correct idiomatic Urdu. Surprisingly, the panel which consisted of four names, included three Kashmiri Pandits. The panel comprised of Maulvi Abdul Huq, of the *Anjuman-i-Taraqqi-i-Urdu*⁴, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Raja Narendra Nath, and Pandit Brij Mohan.” The politics of Partition and inculcation of Nationalism was accompanied by disruption of local culture. The events surrounding Partition became pillars for strengthening the notion of “imagined communities”⁵ based on religious beliefs. As the shadow of Partition fell over Jammu and Kashmir, over one million Muslims were uprooted, and thirty thousand were massacred in Jammu province alone between September and November 1947. The local web of harmonious existence was replaced by bifurcations and divisions rooted in ethnic differences. The dynamics of displacement was accompanied by social, political, psychological, and spatial loss. Ilyas Chattha⁶ recorded a statement of a well-educated Muslim refugee who had escaped from Jammu to Sialkot, “Thirty lorries carrying Muslim evacuees out of Kashmir state were attacked by Dogra troops at Satwari in Jammu. Most of the male members were massacred, while women were abducted.” *Kashmiriyat* was pushed out to accommodate religious fascism, which further led to events of Exodus. The practice of “ethnic cleansing” observed during the events of Partition and Exodus, instead of being regarded as a result of internal turmoil, is often seen through the lens of external instigation that left the hybrid

⁴ *Anjuman Taraqqi-i-Urdu* is an organization working for the promotion and dissemination of Urdu language, literature and culture in Pakistan and India

⁵ Imagined communities is a concept coined by Benedict Anderson. He believes that a nation is a community socially constructed, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group. Anderson believes that national and ethnic communities are based on territorial or institutional affiliation to a common space. People imagine themselves as connected to others who share similar affiliations and construct symbols and tokens of expression to support the idea of unity of the community.

⁶ *Partition and Locality: Violence, Migration, and Development in Gujranwala and Sialkot, 1947-1961*

idea of being a Kashmiri in tatters by introducing communal divides.



Figure 1: The stock image of Kashmir. Photograph by Danish Yaseen⁷

K.B. Prakash's sociological study documents the experiences of people venturing into the new world of both problems and possibilities. Having once lived midst open spaces, the migrants were compelled to adjust to makeshift arrangements within extremely limited and confined areas. The refugee families were also forced "to break away from the age-old system of joint family living." The migrants tried to preserve their tangible heritage as a coping mechanism. Not only did it become symbolic of their survival strategies, but it also became a medium to recount their memory of their homeland. These alternate narratives interrogate the whole concept of a united nation when they present critiques, internal divisions, and external aggression, one fragment of nation and convergences of languages, cultures and histories. These artistic representations become extensions of *Self* and interrogate the stable cultures. Pashmina Shawls have become symbolic of this extension of *Self* and express the fragmented nature of methodological nationalism. Memory expressed through these shawls acquires a double layer. The recollection is of an event seen through a time

⁷ Photograph by Danish Yaseen: www.facebook.com/danish.yaseen.3.

lapse, which at the same time, also constitutes as a reminder of unknown, but hopeful, future. Pashmina has become an inevitable conjunction between two lines of vision and seems to be a symbol of yearning for the “imaginary homeland” as well as the dawning of new hope in the new land. In this paper, I shall try to understand the process of production of Pashmina, its distribution, and consumption of desired Kashmir through this token. The craft of Pashmina is a reminder of lost *Kashmiriyat* that urges a shift in our ethical and political imaginations by reminding us of ways of living together that went beyond the political and juridical contract ensured by law, the constitution, or any kind of state or military apparatus. Pashmina shawls evoke “double vision” by juxtaposing ‘what is’ with ‘what had been’.

Role of Pashmina Shawls in recording the “memory’s truth”

Different threads of wool are woven together to form a historical tapestry in which ideas and memories are recounted. Shawls have emerged as biographical and autobiographical spaces to explore and express various facets of one’s life. Lorelei Vashti in *Dress, Memory* (2014)⁸ wrote “memory, like a lighthouse, shines the most vivid moments back to us, over and over, and these stories become the myths we stitch together” (p. 11). Weber and Mitchell (2004)⁹ have labelled these sorts of narratives ‘dress stories.’

“... whether or not they are ‘true’ in their details, whether or not they really happened (or happened the way they are remembered), bear traces of our past experience and provide insights into how we perceive and make sense of our lives. Dress stories reveal much more than we may realise about who and how we are in the world and what sort of culture we are living in. (p. 4)”

Pashmina Shawls have become a token of remembrance and

⁸ Vashti, L. (2014). *Dress, memory*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

⁹ Weber, S., & Mitchell, C. (Eds.). (2004). *Not just any dress. Narratives of memory, body and identity*. New York: Peter Lang.

re-establishment of Kashmir and its cultural nuances in the host land. These shawls are layered with meaning since they have the power to act as memory prompts. Woven into the fabric are traces of past experiences and embroidered upon it are links to people who have been loved and lost.

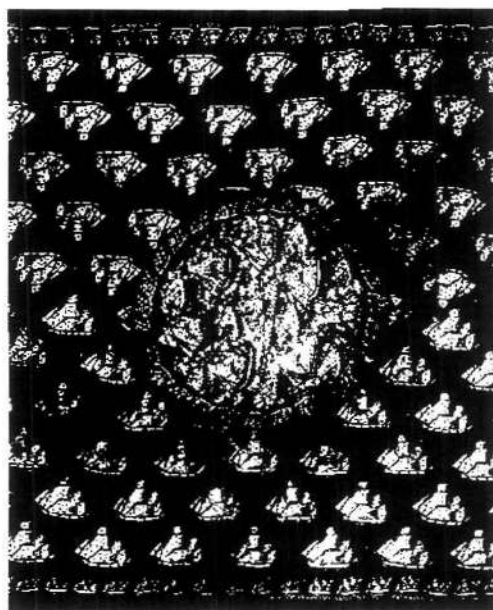


Figure 2: Kashmiri Wool Twill, Embroidered in silk, metallic thread and spangles. Preserved in Western India. The mountain in the centre, a reminiscent of Kashmir, is more clearly seen when the page is turned with the top to the right.¹⁰

According to Barone (2001)¹¹,

“... memory, that easily maligned process, nevertheless plays a vital role in binding together a selfhood. Memory, however fragile and untrustworthy turns out to be ‘self-serving’ in more than its tendency

¹⁰ Taken from *Two Indian Embroideries* by Stella Kramrisch. Source: *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 52, No. 251 (Autumn, 1956), pp. 14-18

¹¹ Barone, T. (2001). *Touching eternity: The enduring outcomes of tea ching*. New York: Teachers College Press.

to skew reality according to a particular set of interests. It also serves the self in its construction. Memory is the glue that holds meaning together, that allows a life story to be fashioned and related. (p. 165)”

On the one hand, these dress-stories, or counter narratives of Kashmir, may be scrutinized through the lens of unreliability of memory, while on the other, these marginalised stories can also be addressed as an amalgamation of fact and fiction in an attempt to record and re-visit the past. Thus, Pashmina Shawls have become symbolic of autobiographical narratives “rooted in sensory and emotional associations”, and further emerge as spaces for re-telling these narratives of Kashmiri natives. Kashmiri tangible heritage plays a crucial role by acting as a memoir for desired homeland as well as an alternate, widely available space for recounting.

Production of Pashmina Shawls

Pierre Bourdieu¹² has raised the subject of aesthetics and pointed out that art and literature have a direct relationship with the place of stay and the surrounding cultural patterns. Diasporic community occupies a double space, of memory of their homeland and experience of the present. The community is visible on grounds of race and economic status, but it is invisible in terms of social recognition. This complex position encourages one to look at their attempts to retain their identity by attempting to preserve a token from their homelands. Pashmina Shawls have become synonymous with Kashmir (*cashmere*) and have become a way to assimilate a fragment of the lost terrain. The shawl industry originated in the fifteenth century, but it was not until the Mughal period that it achieved its full potential. Mughals brought workers from *Andijan* (Turkestan) to Kashmir to upgrade the industry there. The artisans

¹² The Historical Genesis of the Pure Aesthetic

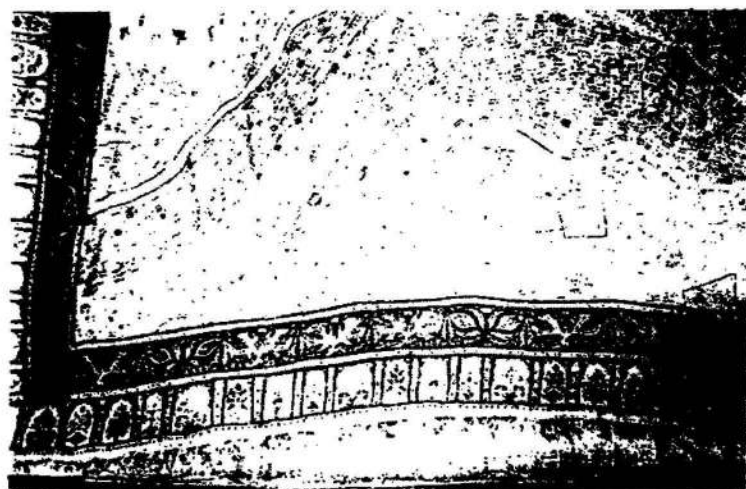
evolved *jiugha*¹³ design together and accomplished in creating a better-quality fabric. Francois Bernier¹⁴ states, “These shawls are about a yard and a half long and a yard broad, ornamental at both ends with a sort of embroidery, made in the loom a foot in width.” Maharaja Ranbir Singh, during 1876 commissioned the production of a shawl that had an intricate street map of Srinagar to be presented to the Prince of Wales. Maharaja Ranjit Singh commissioned a shawl that represented all the achievements of his era. The industry received its first setback during the Afghan period with the establishment of Dagh Shawl Department under the governorship of Haji Dad Khan(1776-1783) which imposed a crushing excise tax on shawls. This was followed by a major famine in Kashmir in 1878 and 1879. Along with these two factors, the decline of industry took place due to three other reasons. The first one was loss of the French market due to Franco-Prussian War. Secondly, the loss of the upper end of the north Indian market because the Maharajas and Nawabs were displaced by the British. The third factor was impact of mechanical production after the Industrial Revolution that ensured cheaper products. The revival of this declining industry started after the migrants expressed their mushrooming desire to retain a fragment of their identity through preserving Pashmina and Kani Shawls. The government, along with various NGOs, supported by the migrants started allocating funds for welfare of artisans and the declining industry was brought back to life. A step in revival is taken by Craft Design Institute, Srinagar where six Kashmiri handicrafts including Kashmir Pashmina, Sozini Embroidery, Kani Shawl, Khatamband, Walnut, wood carving, and Papier Mache have been registered under GI to ensure welfare of the artisans and protect their rights.

¹³ Almond shaped jewel worn on the turban

¹⁴ Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656-1668



Figure 3: Kashmiri embroidery pattern



3. Shawl showing map of Srinagar. Chitralekha Zutshi's collection.
Source: Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar.

Figure 4

Pashmina Shawl is made from *Pashm* wool, procured from *Capra hircus* goats found at the altitude of 14,000 ft. This species of goats is found in Ladakh and resides in the cold valleys where the temperature is as low as minus thirty degrees. The hair of this species of goats is collected through the process of de-hairing, usually performed using machines. After collection of the hair, the process of combing is done to segregate finer hair from coarser guard hair. This is followed by the process of sorting to gather the finer Pashmina threads, or *Phamb*. Followed by this are multiple rounds of combing before the fibre is placed on a yarn for spinning. These multiple stages of segregation, performed manually as well as mechanically, ensure that *Phamb* is made of threads below sixteen microns. The process of spinning, which takes place next, is usually performed by women. These fibres are spun on a yarn, or a *charkha*. After spinning, the fabric is often dyed into different colours. When the process of spinning and dyeing is completed, the fabric is sent for weaving. The Shawl has a variety of patterns woven on it manually. The Pashmina Shawl is a hand-spun and hand-woven commodity that usually reflects the landscape of Kashmir and culture of its inhabitants. The fabric as well as patterns of weaving act as markers of desired homeland that the diasporic community of Kashmiri Migrants wishes to preserve in their memory. After the process of weaving is completed, the shawl is tweezed and washed. The final stage of creation of Pashmina Shawl is called the finishing of shawl, where it is given finishing touches to enhance its beauty and appearance.

The patterns of weaving and embroidery depict a variety of motifs that symbolise the life of Valley viewed through the tinted glass of desire. Designs are drawn from landscape of the Valley and memory of the alluring past. Some characteristic woven designs include *hazara*¹⁵, *gul-ander-gul*¹⁶, *shikargarh*¹⁷, *theridar*,

¹⁵ Hazara literally means thousand flowers, and describes a pattern that attempts to display even conceivable flower found in the valley.

¹⁶ Flower within a flower pattern of embroidery

¹⁷ Hunting scenes

*bulbuldar, guldar, badambar*¹⁸, *kalka*¹⁹, and chinar leaves (Chinar is an important tree of the Valley and holds an equally important position in the embroidery and weaving patterns). The base colour was cream, white or pastel shades. Colours of yarns for weaving and embroidery were derived from natural sources. A wide range of colours are used by Kashmiri embroiders for the embroidery yarns including crimson (*gulnar*), scarlet (*kirmizi*), white (*safed*), green (*zingari*), dark green (*siahsabaz*), light blue (*aasmani*), blue (*firozi*), yellow (*zard and sharbati*), purple (*uda*), and black (*mushki*). The *ruffel/raffal*²⁰ base is interwoven with dyed pashmina strands by the *rafoogar* to create *kani* shawls. Ghulam Muhammad Kanihama was renowned for revival of this dying art. One intricate *Kani Shawl* takes two artisans, working for ten hours everyday, approximately two and a half years to complete. The dyed strands could also be embroidered as *Amali*²¹, *Dor-dar*²², *Bottey-wallah*, *Vatta Chicken*²³, *Sozni*²⁴, *Zari*, *Chikin-doozi*, *Jalik-doozi*, or *Reizgari*²⁵. These designs woven or embroidered on Pashmina Shawls are circulated throughout the country and migrants purchase and preserve the token of memory as a sign of lost home. The Valley which had been reduced to being viewed as a pastoral space divorced from its narratives, is now being woven with the lamenting narratives. Expression through Pashmina sheds light on the contrasting nature of Memory and History. Memory is a personal, selectively recorded and recollected narrative that individual re-visits and retains through his tangible heritage, while history is a critical collective memory created after undertaking the process of selection, elimination, and creation to develop a single strand of vision and perception. This "new history" of people's experiences had been largely overlooked because of tendency of

¹⁸ Buta resembling an almond

¹⁹ Flame shaped motif

²⁰ Base of wool, and/or synthetic yarn, particularly nylon, added to wool.

²¹ Little stitches

²² Embroidered at two extreme ends only

²³ Shawls with perfunctory and scanty embroidery

²⁴ Embroidery done in strips along the edges of the shawls.

²⁵ Richly concentrated embroidery in which threads are firmly embedded in the shawl.

historians to knit one collective narrative which is now being dismantled by weaving of multiple, often conflicting, narratives of memory and experience.

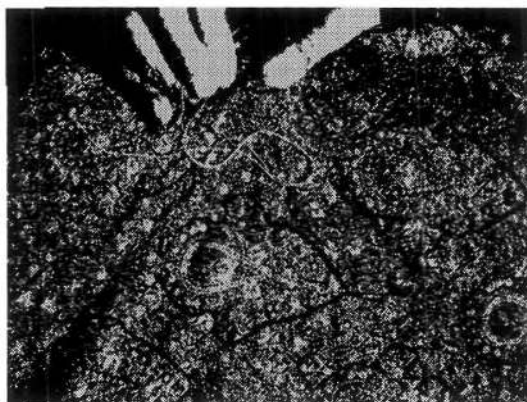


Figure 5: Embroidery on Pashmina Shawl



Figure 6: Process of creation of Pashmina Shawl



Figure 7: Weaving of *Kani Shawl*

Distribution of Cashmere

The word culture fluctuates between being a noun, an adjective, and a verb, implying impositions, design and education. There are four stages of this journey of transformation, the point of origin, distance traversed, set of conditions of receptivity (or resistance and the measure of transformation required by the new location. Kashmiri shawls, after migrations, have travelled beyond the territorial boundaries of the state to reach its former inhabitants. The distance between displaced community and their “imagined homeland” is covered by Kashmiri *feriwallahs*²⁶ (hawkers). *Feriwallahs* bridge the gap between migrants and their homeland and soothe the diasporic community who is mourning for lost homeland and simultaneous loss of innocence. The *feriwallahs* are not just crucial for their role as connecting links to the Valley and its beauty but are also symbolic of the endangered *Kashmiriyat*. The

²⁶ Kashmiri shawl traders and hawkers who sell shawls in different cities outside the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Kashmiri Art Union claims to carry a variety of edible and non-edible commodities intrinsic to the Valley and its people like *rajma*²⁷, *ver*²⁸, saffron etc. which they distribute among the migrant communities. The *feriwallahs*, thus, establish a link between the distance traversed and the point of origin. Along with the *feriwallah* community, the *rafoogar*²⁹ community is also attempting to bridge the gap too. The art and importance of *rafoogars* was depicted by Priya Ravish Mehra's project *Making the invisible visible: the art ofrafoogari*. At the material level, expert darning is about repair being made seamless, ensuring the invisibility of this labour. The project sheds light on the art of displaced *rafoogars*, from the valley of Kashmir to Najibabad, who "reweave the structure of damaged fabric once again, not on the loom but with a needle and thread." Kashmiri *rafoogars* are called the *Ustaad of Rafoogars* for their expertise in repairing Pashmina Shawls, which is one of the most delicate pieces of clothing. Kashmiri *Rafoogars* moved to Najibabad and began establishing a centre for repair of Pashminas for bounding and bridging of gaps. The town of Najibabad was central to the trade of *feriwallahs* and provided space for establishment of a revival unit of the Kashmiri culture through labour of *rafoogars* in a distanced landscape. The displacement of communities of artisans and traders acknowledges dispersion and fragmentation of Kashmiri culture and is attempting to join strands together and weave a new narrative that represents an evolved culture. The Fanonian argument of facilitative processes often resulting in 'a concentration on a hard core of culture which (becomes) more and more shrivelled up, inert and empty as it resists the impact of outer forces' advocates the need for organic evolution and fusion of culture. Kashmiri Migrants have understood the need for organic evolution and their culture has imbibed outside influences but presence of links like *rafoogars* of Kashmir and

²⁷ Kidney beans

²⁸ Typical spice cake prepared in the Valley of Kashmir.

²⁹ Darners

feriwallahs becomes integral to preserve a fragment of native identity.

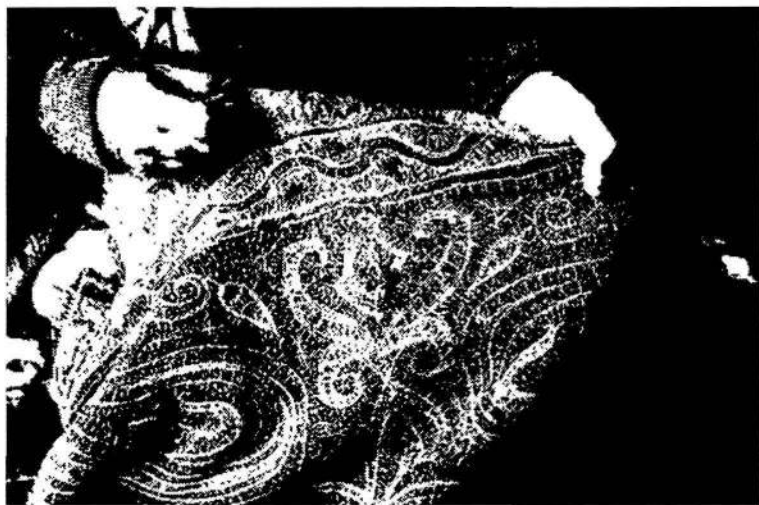


Figure 8: Pashmina Shawl being repaired by *rafoogar* (*darner*)

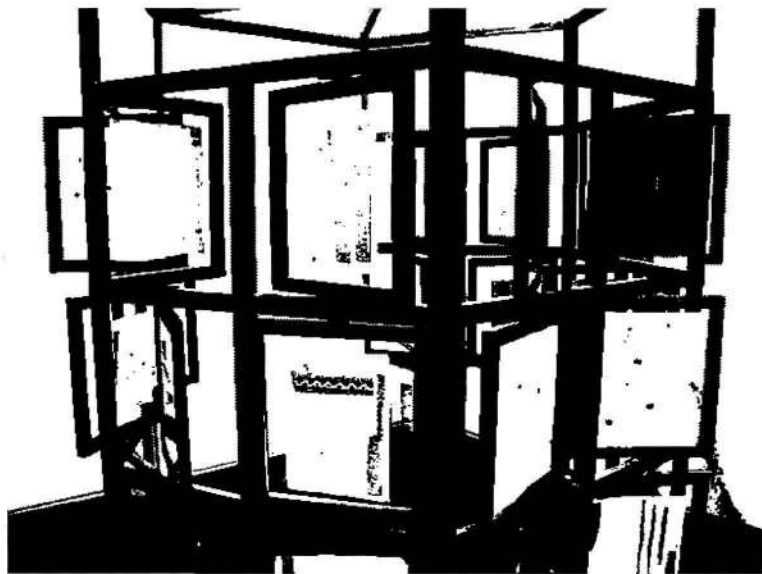


Figure 9: Priya Ravish Mehra's project being exhibited

Consumption of Cashmere

Carl Jung regards individual's home as the universal archetypal symbol of the self. Jung's "dream house" reflects the collective unconscious of the diasporic community that preserves the lost history through Shawls. Pashmina had become synonymous with the territory of Kashmir. The Kashmiri Migrants had formed an "imagined community" united by common symbols to express their affinity to a common territory from which they had been displaced. In order to retain and inculcate their culture, the Migrant community decided to incorporate their cultural practices within the everyday. Food and clothing became metaphors of the existence of fusion of cultures. Food practices like drying of vegetables before cooking (common in Kashmir as a preservation technique) are still being practiced by the diasporic community. Similarly, the creations of Kashmiri artisans like *pashmina*, *kani* and *jamawar shawls*, papier mache, walnut wood carving etc. adorn the wardrobes and homes respectively. The patterns on Shawls have been inspired by motifs integral to life in Valley, prominent historical and mythological figures, and designs on ancient miniature paintings. Gillian Rose regards equating the self with a place as a non-ideologically innocent association. The "humanist conceptualization of a place" is practiced by Migrant communities to instil aspects of home within the present life. The practices of remembering and recollection adopted by Migrants also shed light on the "memory's truth" they are struggling to revive, colour and imbibe in their present. Salman Rushdie has coined the term "memory's truth" for that selective mode of recollection which "creates its own reality" around noteworthy events and aims to store this subjective narrative in popular memory.

The Migrants have distant memories of their homeland that they are trying to re-live through tangible and intangible heritage they have preserved. Various preservation techniques are adopted by Migrants to retain their Pashmina and Kani Shawls. Pashmina Shawls are placed in rice sacks to preserve the delicate fabric. Hand-woven Pashmina is free from nylon strands making it softer, warmer, lighter, but weaker than its mechanically produced counterpart. The delicate piece is stored between rice to ensure that the lustre and quality of *raffal* is maintained. Further, with the

- Dewan, Parvez. *Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh*. n.d.
- Gibson, Robyn. *The Memory of Clothes*. Sense Publishers, 2015.
- Ishrat Yaqoob, Asif H Sofi, Sarfaraz A Wani, FD Sheikh, Nazir A Bumla. "Pashmina Shawl; A traditional way of making in Kashmir." *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge* (2012): 329-333.
- Jain, Jasbir. *The Diaspora Writes Home; Subcontinental Narratives*. Rawat Publications, 2015.
- Kabir, Ananya Jahanara. *Territory of Desire; Representing the Valley of Kashmir*. Permanent Black, 2009.
- Kumar, Priya. *Limiting Secularism; The Ethics of Co-existence in Indian Literature and Film*. Permanent Black, 2004.
- Mehra, Priya Ravish. "Making the invisible visible; the art of rafoogari." n.d.
- Sharma, KL and Renuka Singh. *Dual Identity; Indian Diaspora and other Essays*. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2013.
- Trust, Craft Revival. "Crewel Embroidery." (n.d.).
- . "Textiles of Jammu and Kashmir." (n.d.).
- Yaseer Ahmad Mir, Mushtaq Ahmad Darzi. "Kashmir pashmina - A journey of standardization through geographical indication." *International Journal of Applied Research* (2017).
- Zutshi, Chitralkha. *Languages of Belonging; Islam, Regional Identity and the Making of Kashmir*. Orient Blackswan, 2003.

**ROOTS AND ROUTES: EXPLORING RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN MOBILITY, PLACE AND IDENTITY IN
MRINAL SEN'S BHUVAN SHOME**

Mobility involves flow of people, ideas, goods, culture and information in and across the places. It is a process that liberates the symbolic boundaries of culture which, otherwise, seek to confine it to geographical and territorial spaces. The exposure to new cultures and ideas create a cognizable shift in cultural distinctiveness of the place. Hence, it is pertinent to understand the identity of place as a product of its relation with elsewhere.

The complex relationship between the two metaphors of roots and routes thus, becomes, a significant way of thinking how cultural identities are constructed and reconstructed in and across places. Liisa Malkki in "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," elaborates the metaphor of 'roots' and 'soil' as a link of people to places that suggest organic—thus natural—connections. She states that people are often thought of, and think of themselves, as being rooted in place and as deriving their identity from that rootedness (27). In its most simple expression, place is often equated with locality that plays a central role as an anchor of cultures and the identities associated with it. It implies stability, familiarity, and belongingness. Through this perspective, relations of people to place are naturalized in a fixed set of meanings and practices which have achieved a settled continuity over time. It is within this set of meanings that cultural identity of place is formed and makes it internally homogeneous.

Arjun Appadurai observes that such identities signify the "spatial incarceration of the native" (qtd. in Malkii 29). He claims that such identities conceive natives to be persons who are not only "from certain places, and belong to those places, but they are also those who are somehow incarcerated, or confined, in those places" (29). Nevertheless, in the critical essay, "The Production of Locality," Appadurai views locality to be "primarily relational and contextual" as something that has to be continually produced and reproduced, relations being created, sustained or abandoned (Modernity at Large 178).

Stuart Hall observes in "New Cultures for Old?" that cultural identities are often understood as 'placed' in at least two senses: first, we associate 'place' with an actual location where many different relationships have overlapped over time, producing a dense, richly textured sense of life. He further states that such cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes, which provide us, as 'one people,' with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of references and meanings. Hence, he asserts that the role of the cultures, in general, is not to express the unitary feelings of belongingness which are always there in the culture, but to represent what are, in fact, real differences as a unity. Here, it is significant to insist on the profound differences which persist and which these shared cultures have constantly had to negotiate in a place. Secondly, the cultural connections between homelands and new lands are complex combinations of continuities and breaks, similarities and differences that give rise to new identities. It breaks an individual from a coherent whole subject into a collection of various cultural identifiers (Oakes and Price 265-274). Thus, stressing on the subjectivity that existed in the past, but also what one may be in the process of becoming. The processes of becoming, changing and dynamic cultural mixing, are a direct, indirect, incidental, accidental result of constant mobility.

Doreen Massey also advances the notion of a 'progressive sense of place' in "Global Sense of Place." She suggests that places are not homogeneous entities, but produced through

connections with 'elsewhere' and therefore are more about routes than roots (Oakes and Price 258-263). As cultures become porous and exposed to external influences it is difficult to preserve cultural identities of the place intact, or to prevent them from becoming weakened through cultural infiltration. Established traditions and customary ways of life are dislocated by the flows of capital, commodities, ideas and people. As a result, the subject previously experienced as having a unified and stable identity gets deterritorialized. In order to understand, as part of research, it is important to deconstruct and to move beyond naturalized conceptions of spatialized 'cultures' and to explore the production of difference within common, shared, and connected spaces.

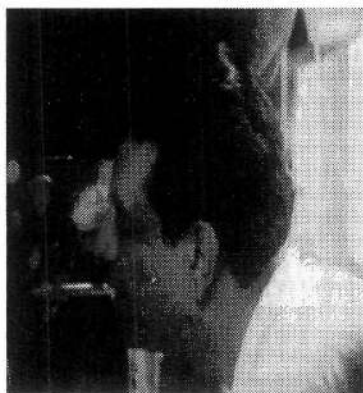
Here, I intend to state a dialogue of two concepts "critical spatial identities" and "critical of spatial identities," sketched by Ulrich Best and Anke Struver, in which they talk how politics are aligned to place and identity. In brief, as stated by them, "critical spatial identities" can be imagined to be the outcome of an adherence to critical values, connected with a localized culture, firmly linked with a place or a locality. This serves as the material basis, the home range of the critical group. All this is connected with the notion of identity, the belonging of individuals to these groups and ideas, linked with the place as spatial identity. On the other hand, "critical of spatial identities" can be understood as there is no such thing as a place or a community per se, but these are mere constructions of discourses and practices. These are always tied to positions of power and are embedded in the systems of exclusion and inclusion. Nevertheless, this position does not deny the existence of spatial identities, but criticizes it's often essentialist character by emphasizing on underlying power structures (Best and Struver).

Another way of framing the new relationship between culture, place and identity is to study on the people who will never, literally, be able to return to the places from which they originated, migrated or travelled from; who have to make a difficult settlement with the new oppressive cultures with which they are forced into a contact with; and, who relocate themselves

and fashion new kinds of cultural identity by, consciously or unconsciously, drawing on more than one cultural repertoire. Arjun Appadurai defines “deterritorialization of identities” as “the loosening of the hold between people, wealth and territories” (Modernity at Large 49). Appadurai’s theoretical concept of “deterritorialized identities” depicts the complexities of cultural productions and the existence of alternative spaces of belonging. I contend that the deterritorialized subjects’ reposition themselves spatially, culturally, ideologically, socially, and economically. Therefore, to think in terms of “deterritorialization of identities,” without taking into account processes of reterritorialization, is to limit the possibility for radical changes in people’s social conditions. Deterritorialization and reterritorialization processes are studied as metaphors of changes under way, in the relationship between social life and its territorial moorings.

The geographic techniques deployed in *Bhuvan Shome* expand the idea of identity, by breaking the idea of ‘place,’ turning Bengal into a territorialized entity for the audience. The geographical techniques include historical docu-montage, a collage of news footage of Calcutta street-demonstrations as well as a declaration of a strike by workers of Bengal’s film industry. The voice-over opens this section of the film with just one word, “Bengal” (00.08.17). And the pronouncement is immediately followed by a range of images from Swami Vivekananda to the communist agitation. The first shot in this section is a photograph of Swami Vivekananda (as in frame 1). In the second shot appears Rabindranath Thakur (as in frame 2), the viewers get to hear the words ‘Shonar Bangaal’ (Golden Bengal) and see a photograph of the Nobel laureate doing a painting on a piece of paper. In the third shot, the viewers witness the maker of *Pather Panchali* (1955), Satyajit Ray (as in frame 3) who is looking through a camera, and the voice-over synchronizes the action with the phrase ‘Mahaan Bangaal’ (Great Bengal). In the fourth shot Ravi Shankar (as in frame 4) takes over the screen. We see the world-renowned sitarist playing his instrument, followed

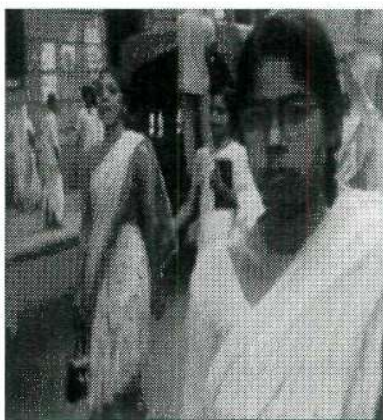
by a sound of explosion and we hear the narrator says, 'Vichitra Bangaal' (Peculiar Bengal) (00.08.17-35). Mrinal Sen's use of these popular icons are a similar cartography exercise which Satyajit Ray has used in the *Memory Game* in *Aranyer Din Ratri* (1970). This exercise depicts and represents ideas, concepts and phenomena, as explained below.



Sibaji Bandyopadhyay states that the Bengali middle class

was enchanted with the essentially old-fashioned phenomenon known as the 'Bengal Renaissance,' the glorious past. He further adds that Bengalis have elevated the Bengali icons to the rank of the 'tutelary gods' (187-188). The symbols —Shonar Bangaal, Mahaan Bangaal—construct a territorialized entity, in which the place works culturally to present itself as a natural scale at which belonging and identity resides, representing a community or locality. Here, the natural scale implies in which the past glories often aim to produce a unified culture by binding up differences and cementing the place in the present. But, through the historical docu-montage, Mrinal Sen mocks at the way the iconoclasts' ideas and attitudes are provincialised and parochialised. Swami Vivekanand was an Indian Hindu Monk and a key figure in the introduction of Indian philosophies of Vendanta and Yoga to the western world credited with raising interfaith awareness. It was with Satyajit Ray that Bengali cinema acquired an international status and used the resources that the international cinematic medium provided. Similarly, as stated before Rabindranath Thakur and Ravi Shankar were open towards the world and their ideas extended beyond Bengal.

Here, the docu-montage breaks the idea of Bengal as a territorialized entity by foregrounding both the political turmoil of the time, the restrictive nature of the Bengali middleclass, intelligentsia and the constant attempts to take refuge with cultural 'icons.' It is pertinent to point out that the explosive chaotic political Vichitra Bangaal, where the violent agitations contest the reified and naturalized images of Bengal — Shonar Bangaal, Mahaan Bangaal. The collage of Calcutta streets, agitations, demonstration shows that the city of Calcutta has many faces. For example, as seen in the film, the frenetic street reverberating with slogans of Inquilaab Zindabaad (Long Live Revolution!), speeches, resounds with a clash between the red festoon marked with a sign of the sickle and the wooden police lathi (as in frames 5-10) and strike by workers of Bengal's cinema karamchari (as in frame 6) (00.08.35-09.40).



The images of mobilized masses, protest of people on the streets and demands of cinema karamcharis reflect the desire of radical changes i.e. to dismantle unequal societies and against the vested interests of the establishments operating as authority. All this signifies that Bengal may have a character of its own, it is absolutely not a seamless and coherent identity, or does not have a single 'sense of place' which everyone shares. Herein, the evocation of Bengal as 'Shonar Bangaal' (Golden Bengal) is demystified and the heterogeneous character of Bengal becomes especially relevant in this context as also shown in Satyajit Ray's other works like *Pratidwandi* (1970) and *Jana Aranya* (1971).

In the introductory scenes of the film, the narration alternates with Bhuvan Shome's psychology, a senior bureaucrat of the Indian Railways. The voice-over tells the viewer about something of his inner life (accompanied by freeze frames of Shome's close-ups) stressing upon the quintessential nature of his Bengali roots, despite having lived all his life outside Bengal. His deeply felt relation to 'the land' continuous to inform and inspire Bhuvan Shome for determining his existence. The ochre-robed image of Vivekananda with his arms tightly folded across the chest is effectively juxtaposed by a shot of Bhuvan Shome in similar pose, identifies him with the cultural elite. The voice-over mocks him to be a 'Vishuddh Bengali' a pure unadulterated Bengali, who's 'Bangaali-pan' is intact (00.09.41-55). This signifies that his cohesion with the geographic place 'Bengal' with which he attaches his language, religion, and culture to, is 'learned' and 'habituated'. Consequently, in the light of the sequence of docu-montage, the declaration that Bhuvan Shome is a pure unadulterated Bengali who has never forgotten his Bangaali-pan assumes deeply ironic proportions. In one fell sweep, Shome becomes part of the same Bengali middle class and its *bhadralok* predecessors that the film implicitly critiques.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* explains that people's attachment to place is learned and habituated. *Habitus* is a product of social conditioning. It is a distinctive set of meanings that each social class passes on through the generations shaping

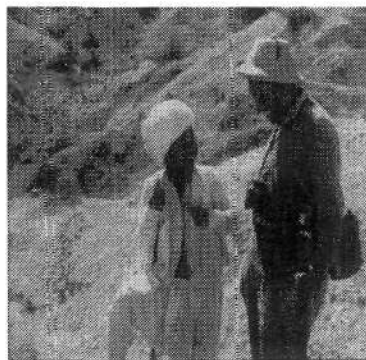
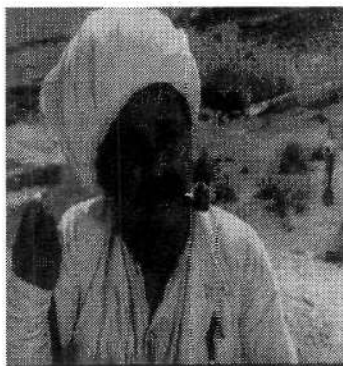
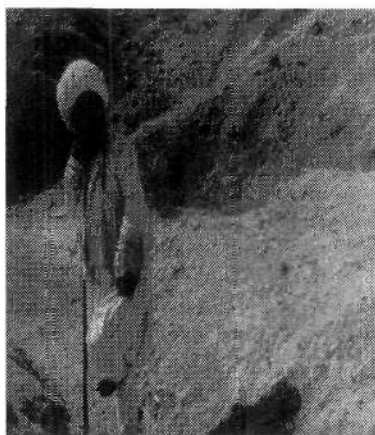
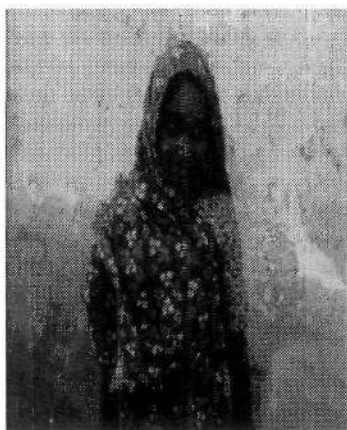
the thoughts and actions of individual class members. *Habitus* makes itself known through individuals' reflections of their everyday experiences, or maybe in their ways of talking, dressing or moving. Bhuvan Shome is a representative of the *bhadralok* class. The Bengali *bhadralok* community belonged to the upper and professional middle class. They had access to formal Western education and were an essential part of the nation's literary, cultural and intellectual elite. At the beginning of the film itself, it is seen that Bhuvan Shome is clad in the usual western office-suit smoking a cigar like a British officer. Bhuvan Shome's parochial attitude is captured through his idiosyncrasies, his acquired habits, attitudes, style of standing and moving, dressing (cap and military attire), habitation, eating, in ways of speaking (idioms as well as accent) and so on. It is interesting to note that the notion of physical well-being and exercise is one of the most defining aspects of the *bhadralok*, also depicted vividly in Pramathesh Chandra Barua's comedy *Rajat Jayanti* (1939). At the 20th minute of the film comes the clue that convincingly connects the upright Bengali exercising his limbs in the veranda and moving from the left to the right and from the right to the left in the corridor of a government bungalow. In one of the interviews, Mrinal Sen claims the association of hunting with *bhadralok*'s notions of leisure and as a form of masculine self-fashioning has been a long one (Montage 122). These distinctive features can be understood in context of Michel Foucault's "Right of Death and Power over Life," in which he claims, "these factors of segregation and social hierarchization are crucial to the sovereign exercise of power exerting their influence...guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony" (The Foucault Reader 263). Here, what makes it interesting is that the bureaucrat does not go for the traditional practices of hunting big game or even predators (as the montage of mounted animals would suggest) but is on *cheediyamar abhiyan*. His admission to himself of the dangers of hunting tigers, though not fully articulated, is nonetheless a biting comment on the figure of the sophisticated, Bengali middle-class bureaucrat.

Here, it is also significant to bring forth Pierre Bourdieu's ideas that the social actor, in the schema, acts out of pre-reflexive knowledge rather than through rational calculation ("Habitus" 696). For Bourdieu, people develop their 'habitus' within specific fields such that their sense of themselves can seem entirely attuned to the world in which they exist. Thus, 'ways of being' are cultural forms turned into nature. In other words, it is through habitus—routinely exercised and embodied—that cultural distinctions come to seem natural. Pierre Bourdieu states that individuals are always positioned relative to others, but rather than these positions being fixed forever, they vary at different times and in different places. According to him, a field is a social space with a set of objective power relations that impose themselves on all who enter the field and that are irreducible to the intentions of the individual agents or even to the direct interactions among the agents. ("Habitus" 695-696).

Mrinal Sen makes an effective cut to the arid and barren landscape of village where Shome intends to take a holiday. The transition to an alien environment helps to understand how Bhuvan Shome is differently positioned to the informal, unspoken rules of the new environment. According to Diane Reay, when people enter an alien field, the lack of fit is deeply felt within the self. It also potentially generates new social forms since fields are determined by habitus, which are in their return determined by fields ("Habitus" 696).

Being positioned in an alien field, Bhuvan Shome begins to look increasingly incongruous in Saurashtrian landscape with his solar topi and military attire. Bhuvan Shome's lack of fit in the landscape can be seen through the curious gaze of the natives (as in frames 11-13). Undoubtedly, the lack of fit is also deeply felt within the self of Bhuvan Shome, but at the same time he relocates his self by being one with the natural landscape (as seen in frames 14, 15 and 16). In this world, his past becomes ostensibly irrelevant. In order to fit in as a hunter, in order to not stick out of the field, Bhuvan Shome alters his appearance, changes his garb and dresses himself according to the place he

has landed up in (as seen in frame 17). Gauri helps him change his appearance and reasons that he would otherwise look like ajnabi (an outsider/stranger) to the birds who will never come near for him to take a proper shot. He also learns when to say avjo and bhale. He even disguises himself as a tree—the ultimate sign of being absorbed and becomes a part of the rural landscape. Eventually, he develops the competence to deal with the new culture. Visual dimension of the transformation shakes up and softens the bureaucrat's body through subjection to a series of unfamiliar movements. Will these newly acquired abilities last for his lifetime? The question is left open by Mrinal Sen.



Frames 11-14



Frames 15-17

Here I must bring another point of view, where the ‘culturally unitary group’ in Saurashtra also provides an alternative framework for thinking about territorialized communities. Due to the representations and practices of place in which people establish or imagine organic connections between themselves, result in essentialization of identity that suppresses heterogeneity and legitimizes power hierarchies. But, the coherent and homogeneous community of Saurashtra is set against the fragmentation and disruption of ‘time-space compression’ that disrupts their territorialized identity. The urban civilization has reached the rural folks apparently through Hindi songs and films as is apparent from the refrain Singdana, the cart driver, keeps singing *Chahe koi mujhe jungle kahen* (00.15.07-20). It is pertinent to point here that Singdana subtly contests modernity by singing the refrain in his own distinctive style. Nevertheless, he emerges as a collection of cultural identifiers, as he comes in connection with different people who visit this part of the world. Singdana has not physically crossed borders, but is

detrerritorailized by the increasing cultural diversity in their local landscape challenging cohesive people of the region. Their contact with modernity is through interactions with people such as Bhuvan Shome. This signifies that it is not only the displaced that experiences a displacement. For even people remaining in the familiar and ancestral places find the nature of their relation to place changing, and the illusion of a natural and essential connection between the place and the culture breaking down.

Thus, mobility has played a critical role as mediator between familiar and unfamiliar territories, including those between tradition and modernity, self and other, real and imaginary. The protagonist's journey, in the selected film, is pictured, as traversing geographic barriers, metaphysical encounters with the self or fantastical forays into imaginary land. It is observed that the concept of 'place' no longer refers to a fixed cultural geography. Place becomes an act in itself, which is aligned with the politics of space, economical transformation and human behaviors. Places do not have boundaries in the sense of divisions that frame simple enclosures. Secondly, places do not have single, unique 'identities'. They are full of internal conflicts. Thirdly, the specificity of place is continually reproduced, but it is not a specificity which results from some long, internalized history. There is the specificity of place which derives from the fact that each place is the focus of a distinct mixture of wider and more local social relations. Finally, all these relations interact with and take a further element of specificity from the accumulated history of a place, with that history itself imagined as the product of layer upon layer of various sets of linkages, both local and to the wider world.

Works Cited

- Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
- . "Putting Hierarchy in its Place." *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1988, pp. 36-49.

- Bandyopadhyay, Sibaji. *Sibaji Bandyopadhyay Reader: An Anthology of Essays*. Worldview Publications, 2012.
- Best, Ulrich, and Anke Struver. "The Politics of Space: Critical of Spatial Identities and Critical Spatial Identities." N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Apr. 2016.
- Bhuvan Shome. Directed by Mrinal Sen. Performance by Utpal Datta, Suhasini Mulay, Vijay R.
- Rao, Ultra, 1969, DVD.
- Foucault, Micheal. *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow. Pantheon Books, 1984.
- "Habitus." *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture*, edited by Dale Southerton, vol. 2, Sage, Publications, Inc, 2011, pp.
- Malkki, Liisa H. "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees." *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1992, pp. 24-44.
- Oakes, Timothy S., and Patricia L. Price, eds. *The Cultural Geography Reader*. Routledge, 2008.
- Sen, Mrinal. *Montage: Life, Politics, Cinema*. Seagull Books, 2002.

ANAHATA NADA AND DHRUPAD; COMMUNICATION THROUGH RAGA- RASA

In diverse fields of human interest such as that of humanities, sciences, religion, art, environment (noise), polity (ultrasonic weapons) etc., the study of sound is contextual, multi-dimensional, therefore, defined relatively. For instance, in the field of Physics, sound is defined as propagation of an audible mechanical wave of pressure and displacement through a medium such as air or water, whereas in physiology and psychology, sound is treated as the reception of such waves and their perception by the brain. Similar to this notion, for astronomers, the sound emanating out of different bodies of the universe is defined in terms of different theories related to vibration. For instance, throughout history, the notion of *Musica Universalis* or Music of the Spheres has engrossed philosophers, mathematicians and other interested minds. This notion is also called Harmony of the Spheres; it regards proportions in the movements of celestial bodies- the Sun, Moon, and planets (earlier considered ten spheres) – as a form of music, based on movement and vibrations. The Pythagorean concept of “Music of the Spheres” has referred to vibration systems, or sounds, that are inaudible which is analogous to the Indian concept of *anahat nada* as delineated in *vedas* and Indian musicology.

Pythagoras perceived the cosmos as a vast lyre (he himself played lyre and was of the opinion that Music and Mathematics

can explain various hypothesis of serious merit), with crystal spheres (celestial bodies) in the place of strings. He propounded that the Sun, Moon and all the planets moving (rotation and revolution) with rapid motion in their respective orbits, produced enormously great sound. The distances between the planets were deemed to have the same ratios as those between musical pitches that produce harmonious sounds as in a plucked string of lyre. In Greek mythology, lyre is the creation of Hermes with which he confronted Apollo's ire. Krishna could mesmerize animals and hypnotize *gopis* of Vrindavan to the music of his flute. Many Indian Gods and Goddesses such as the flute playing Krishna, the *veenavadini* Saraswati, exemplify universal notion of attributing transcendental sound to the divine, having magnificently pacifying attributes.

To the later Pythagoreans (such as other scientists like Kepler), the solar system consisted of ten spheres revolving in circles around a central fire expressed in proportion. Each sphere produced a sound depending on its distance from this definitive center. Just like the scales depending on where 'Sa' or in western terminology 'Do' is fixed, in order to trace other succeeding notes from it. The closer spheres produced lower tones (lower frequencies) while the farther spheres moved faster and produced higher pitched sounds, all combining into a beautiful harmony, that is, the Music of the Spheres- but this music is imperceptible. Analogous to it, when the Sufi Muslim ascetic dervishes, swirl into a mystical trance slowly by chanting and whirling, it is thought by some scholars to recall the same deep-rooted belief in extraterrestrial music- the Music of the spheres. This can be only heard by attuned souls. This ceremony is known as *Sama*, meaning listening.

Although these notions can be considered ambiguous, hypothetical or mystical concepts, every movement is known to generate a vibration as proven by modern science and advances in Physics now. These may or may not be audible through our limited auditory mechanism but the whole universe thus, can be said to

exist as 'pure sound'. Apropos to it, Schaffer believes that world exists as a macrocosmic musical composition (Schaffer 96). He says:

In the Apollonian view music is exact, serene, Mathematical, associated with transcendental visions of Utopia and the Harmony of the Spheres. It is also the *anahata* of Indian theorists. It is the basis of Pythagoras's speculations and those of the medieval theoreticians. (Schaffer 98)

This understanding of the universe directly corresponds to what the ancient thinkers, philosophers, astrologers and scientists imagined- the inaudible music- the mystical link between metaphysics and physics. It is through this connect that the universal laws and their multiple applications could be understood through ages, implying a timelessness. Interestingly in contemporary research, scientists have discovered that sound exists in space much as ancient philosophers had intuitively speculated as discussed above. NASA's satellite-borne Chandra X-ray Observatory detected ripples in the gas filling the black hole in the Perseus cluster. The January 2016, LIGO's project "Black hole blues" also strengthened this claim. The scientists involved in the LIGO project (Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory found that the wave form of gravitational oscillations resemble a brief, low frequency noise like a chirp. (The Space Review: A thump in the night by Jeff Foust. Monday, February 15, 2016).

Albert Einstein's gravitational wave theory has been confirmed with production of sound of two black holes colliding. In musical terms, the pitch of the sound generated by the black hole translates into the note of B-flat at a frequency over a million times deeper than the limits of human hearing. The sun is a vast ball of gas vibrating at various frequencies, some of which are within the acoustical range and others are within the electromagnetic range. Sound as a medium is contextual, it is both temporal and spatial and it blurs the

distinctions between concepts of time and space. And sound characteristically resonates beyond its immediacy as something physically sensed and heard in the present moment, to an existence in memory and as a trigger for future psychological and associative meanings and behaviors.

The ancient Indians believed that the cosmos itself was created from the sound akin to 'aum'. In the early civilizations of India, China, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece cultures and traditions virtually all conceived the concept of inaudible sound vibrations, such as the Vedic concept of *Anahata Nada*, as a basis of universal harmonic structure. Music (sound or vibration patterns) was understood as the numerical structure that was capable of synthesizing a correspondence between the imperceptible abstract principles and the perceptible (visible) world. In most of the religions of the world, sound is believed to be the medium to connect with God. Whether it is hymns, *mantras*, *shabads*, *azaan*; all are aimed at making Him hear. It was only in the age of Renaissance that God became 'visible' through portraiture and print. Mostly, all societies from primitive to advanced envisaged him as a sound or vibration (example, Indra as rain/ thunder, scriptures were considered word from God and prophecies, animism based on vibrations of Africans etc.). In Zoroastrianism, the priest- Srosh, represents the genius of hearing and transmits the divine messages to humanity. Like Narad, the Indian sage who travelled realms to convey news and enlightening wisdom. Genealogically speaking from the Indian context, from almost two thousand years, sound has been used in the cultural region of India to convey sacred knowledge and inspire devotion by both religious and heterodox sects. The epic scriptures (such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata) were learned and transmitted through repetition and recitation of chants based on ritual sonic patterns composed in *shlokas*. *Dhrupad*, the most ancient form of Indian Classical Music, evolved as a unique sound art form that is structured on meditative sound patterns such as *om nom trim trom* arising

from the rendition of these *shlokas*. The connection between metaphysical principles, such as *anahata nada* and physical reality, that is the notes of music, can be reconstructed in the music of *Dhrupad*.

To elaborate this further, in one view, cosmic sound (*nada*) is the cause of the material universe and it is also identified with the *Brahman* of the Upanishads. *Nada* is synonymous with *paravakas* explained by Pandit Omkarnath (Mukherjee 83), and it comes in two forms: *ahata* (perceptible sound), and *anahata* (unstuck or absolute sound). Music is the elevated form of *ahata nada* (the sound we hear in nature or man-made sounds, musical and non-musical). The two kinds have a close relationship, and a *shruti*, a small interval of sound represents their joining. *Dhrupad*, as a science in listening, is an embodiment of this *Nada Yoga* (sound is god) based on the artful play of these *shrutis*. Its principle approach is that the universe and all that exists in the universe consists of sound vibration; *nada*. A quote from Hazrat Inayat Khan in anthology of his writings, *The Mysticism of Sound and Music* shows the historical underpinnings of this belief:

“In the Vedas of the Hindus we read: Nada Brahma—sound being the Creator. In the works of the wise of ancient India we read: ‘First song, then Vedas or wisdom.’ When we come to the Bible, we find: ‘First was the word, and the word was God.’ And when we come to the Qur’an we read that the word was pronounced, and all creation was manifest. This shows that the origin of the whole creation is sound.” (Lavezzoli 17)

Dhrupad, the most ancient form of Indian Classical music is an embodiment of this principle embodied in the practice of *Nada Yoga*. Its principle approach is that the universe and all that exists in the universe consists of sound vibration; *nada* and which can be perceived by listening attentively. This genre of music, fundamentally has the ability to lessen the experiential separateness between source

and listener due to its similarity to naturally occurring sounds, which gives the sound of *Dhrupad* its power to create an internal musical space. The inbuilt mechanism of *samvad*- communication between the musician and the listener in *Dhrupad* anticipates a feedback and *rasavastha*; in the absence of which it cannot be termed as music. It is based on *Shruti* (the tradition of listening). This process of listening is not so well defined in any other musical practice around the globe. It is significantly lacking in present day concept of music which is primarily meant to entertain, such as muzak, lounge or background music, continuous jingles of you tube and internet usage, songs played while gyming, driving, partying- that is, a means to an end not the end in itself. Indian classical music, in this context is said to emanate from (through *riyaaz*) and instil deep states of consciousness (*rasavastha* through rendition). This concept of soundscape explores sound in its complexity, ambivalence, meaning, context and incorporates both the conditions and purposes of its production and reception.

Gundecha Brothers explain that '*raga*' is a tool through which *nada yoga* can be achieved and the different *ragas* are but different manifestations of one's energy. Raga is the Mantra, Body is the Yantra and your own energy and voice generated by *aum* or *aakar* is Tantra. (11) The appreciation of *Dhrupad*, requires attentive and participative listening. As it is based on *ragas* which embody endless permutations of *shrutis* (microtones), the listener must be an active participant in musically perceived space rather than a passive consumer. With digitization, inundation of schizophrenic sounds, mechanical reproduction, repetition and resultant sonic overload, such oral and mnemonic cultures based on acuity of natural sound are being reconfigured. This impact is visible in the structural and institutional transformations such as on their praxis, pedagogical changes such as in the *guru-shishyaparampara* becoming virtual, impacting *gharana*, *taalim*, audience etc.

Classical Music, especially Indian Classical music has relevance

for supermodernity in context of identification and relation through listening abilities. Lawrence Kramer is of the view that Classical music trains the ear to hear with a peculiar acuity and therefore, it ought to be explored, not just heard. "It trains the ear in the sense of pointing, seeking: it trains both the body's ear and the mind's to hearken, to attend closely, to listen deeply, as one wants to listen to something not to be missed: a secret disclosed, a voice that enchants or warns or soothes or understands, a faint echo of the music traditionally said to hold the world itself together in a kind of harmony.... Such listening is perhaps particularly important at this historical moment, the very moment that seems to be most in danger of losing it" (Kramer 79). In order to achieve this successfully and meaningfully, responding to it requires concentrated attention from beginning to end. In some ways it is comparable to an immersive novel or film. Few skipped, missed chapters or any sort of distraction may lead to disinterestedness; losing the plot or the narrative coherence. This organism is achieved by Classical music through meaningful listening. When listeners try to seek meaning in music, they perceive its importance in lives as sounds that signify entities or ideas within a soundscape. *Dhrupad* is a unique art form that embodies both the *ahata* and *anahat nada*, in its *raga-rasa* based on meditative sounds which can be communicated only to an attuned *rasik* entering *rasavastha*.

Works Cited

- Kramer, Lawrence. *Music as a Cultural Practice, 1800-1900*. University of California, London, 1995.
- Kumar Prasad Mukherji. *The lost world of Hindustani music*. Penguin Random House India Private Limited, 2006.
- Lavezzoli, Peter. *The Dawn of Indian Music in the West: Bhairavi*. New York, London: Continuum, 2006. Print.
- Raja, Deepak and Suvarmalata Rao, ed. 1999. *Perspectives on Dhrupad*. Baroda,

Bombay: Indian Musicological Society.

Ranade, Ashok Da. 2008. *Perspectives on Music: Ideas and Theories*. New Delhi: Promilla & Co., Publishers.

_____. 1997. *Hindustani Music*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, India.

_____. 1990. *Keywords and Concepts: Hindustani Classical Music*. New Delhi: Promilla & Co., Publishers.

_____. 1984. *On Music and Musicians of Hindoostan*. New Delhi: Promilla & Co., Publishers.

Sanyal, Ritwik and D. Richard Widdess. *Dhrupad: Tradition and Performance in Indian Music*.

Delhi: The Oxford University Press, 2008.

Schafer, R. Murray (ed.) 1977/1994, *The Soundscape: Our sonic environment and the tuning of the world*, Destiny Books, Rochester, Vt.

The Space Review: A thump in the night by Jeff Foust. Monday, February 15, 2016 www.thespacereview.com/article/2924/

1

REAL/REEL WORLD “CITIZENS”: LOCATING PEOPLE AND VOICES IN IMAGES

In 1950, when constitution of India came into effect and democratic government system was established it proclaimed to guarantee its citizens in article 14 that, “the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.” Specifically, in the context of marginalized sections, the Constitution mentions several rights to safeguard their interests. In article 342(1) a special provision is provided to one such section i.e., the Scheduled tribe. Ironically, even after six decades, despite such provisions, the tribals, as Cliff Alum mentions, are one of the most excluded communities of India who face extreme poverty, poor access to health care, education, and employment opportunities (xiii).

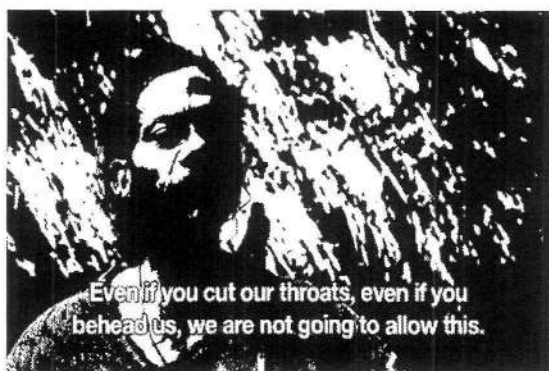
As far as the issue of granting them one of their basic rights is concerned, it took almost 50 years to pass a legislation to give the right to forest in 2006, under the Forest Rights Act, which provide the *adivasis* the right to protect and manage their lands and forest. Regardless of this act, one of the major issues the *adivasis* face is of their displacement from the lands and forests since the Multinational Corporations (MNCs) along with the state governments come up with the justification of providing the development to extend their industrial projects; the tribal on the other side, claim their rights

over the resources and they protest against such encroachments.

Taking the case of Odisha's Niyamgiri *adivasis*, the Dongria Kondh, this paper dwells on the issue of citizenship rights of these people as represented in the select documentary films and the appropriation and exploitation of their citizenship rights. An attempt is made to study the inevitable disjuncture in the process of representation when the voices of the *adivasis* pass from the real to the reel world.

Odisha is considered as one of the most underdeveloped states of India, notorious for its poverty, lack of health and educational amenities. In the state, according to Dr. N.C. Saxena, the political power has been concentrated in the coastal region, whereas the poor western and southern regions particularly *adivasis* have remained voiceless and ignored (xv). Especially in the post-liberalization period, the environmental degradation and displacement due to the industrial projects has also aggravated the miseries of Odisha. Niyamgiri, a hill range situated in the south-west Odisha belongs to Dongria Kondh, who opposed one such project by a multinational company Vedanta Ltd. The Kondh depend on these hills not only for their livelihood but also for the identity and faith. Any prospect of displacement for any developmental project is likely to generate a sense of loss and suffering for these people. Vedanta Ltd. along with Odisha Mining corporation, established an aluminum refinery in Lanjigarh, which is situated in the foothills of Niyamgiri, the bauxite required for the project was to be supplied from the sacred hills of Niyamgiri. Several protests against the mining of Niyamgiri took place and the degradation of health and environment in the Lanjigarh region became a live example and one of the reasons for the Dongria Kondh to strongly oppose this project. An NGO Survival International shows in the film "Mine: a story of sacred mountain" that the people of Niyamgiri when saw the miserable condition of the displaced people of Lanjigarh they became more determined to not let any such destruction take place in their

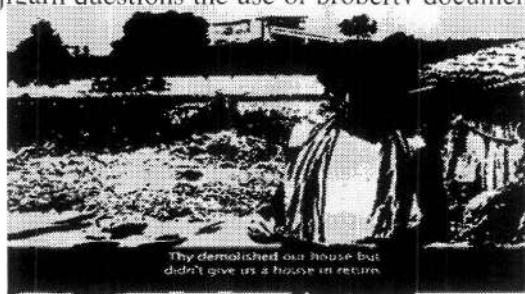
habitation.

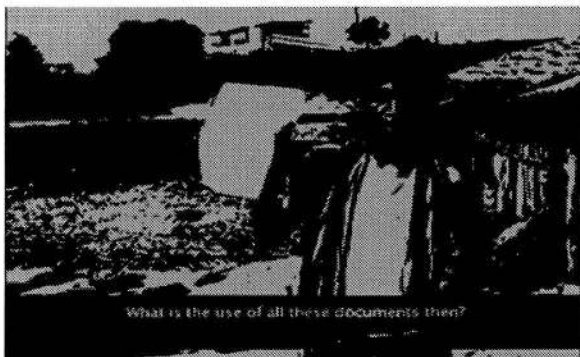


(A still from the documentary, “Mine: a story of sacred mountain” where a local shows his resilience for the struggle)

On the other hand, the government and Vedanta Ltd. claim to develop the Lanjigarh area through this project and make promises of eradicating the poverty. The locals on the flip side refute and claim to expose any such promises and represent the same in the documentary “Mountain of Law.” It represents the degraded situation of those whose houses have been bulldozed for the refinery project but nothing has been provided in return. In the following still from the documentary a local person from Lanjigarh shows the legal documents of his land and claims that he did not receive anything in the name of “rehabilitation.”

(still from “Niyamgiri: the Mountain of Law”: a displaced person from Lanjigarh questions the use of property documents when he



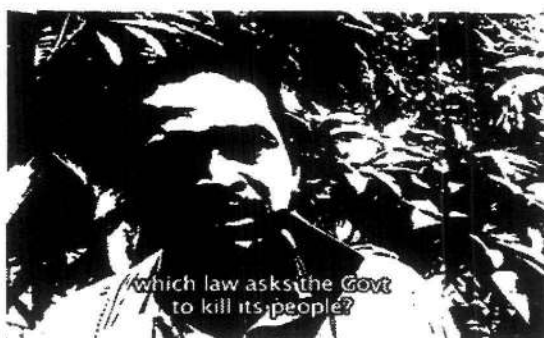


was not given a house in return. For his house was demolished for the project work)

Despite the fact that the tribals won in 2013, in a referendum ordered by Supreme Court, the tribals' fight and struggles continues to be. The local activists claim that the Company and the police forces continue to build pressure upon people through different apparatuses (The Commons). The torture and harassment of local activists by police force in 2017 from Niyamgiri is presented by the grassroot filmmakers in the film "midnight abduction." A local leader Lada Sikaka in interview with Samdursti Television shares his experience and opens up about the torture and killing of the *adivasis* by police forces in the name of naxalism.

Such labelling and false accusation, in words of Arundhati Roy "is designed largely by the government to open up India's forested heartland for mining corporations." (xii). Amitabh Patra, a journalist and filmmaker, in a 24 minutes long observational documentary, "when the cuckoos stopped singing" portrays the random police terror in Kondhs' everyday life by depicting the encounter of *adivasis* with the police in a marriage ceremony. Such treatment which is full of contempt and condescension by the Indian state towards the *adivasis* is one of the biggest tragedies they face as citizens.

(A still from an interview of the local leader Lado Sikaka by Samdarsti Television, where he questions exploitative working of the



Government against the tribals and their mountain)

When the *adivasis* are represented in the documentary world, they are extracted from the *real* world into a *reel* world. The reality, in this world, get filtered through the human intervention and it is constructed, altered and fabricated at various levels which is fundamentally contingent upon the ethical and ideological underpinning of its makers. The political responses of the filmmakers to the issues can be traced through the study of the narratives which emerge out of the film. Though, it cannot be overlooked that documentary filmmaker cannot control all the events, since much depend on how people react to camera, how the events unfold in a particular moment but the claim of representing the 'reality' remains speculative since the filmmaker has many choices of manipulation and fabrication. For instance, a single shot may be, "framed differently and carry a different meaning depending on the frame"

(Aufderheide, *Introduction* 11).

This creates an inevitable disjunction in the real and the reel world. The disjunction, in Nichols' words, largely takes place because, "representation amounts to making a case in a convincing fashion" (Nichols 111). The *convincingness* can be put in to the filmmaking process at various steps involved in completing a film, like selection and exclusion of events from the pro-filmic space, camera movements, later, the editing process which involves specific framework for different cuts, the use and fabrication of music/sound, sub-titles, and voice-over, together they make visible the intentional presentation of the reality with certain assumptions and intention of its makers. The intention of the filmmaker and the politics of representation reflect not only the political stance of the maker but, her responsibility in raising the social issues and the subjects makes her accountable to its viewers as well for, "an ethical obligation to deliver accurate and honestly told stories" (Aufederheide et al, 15). While emphasizing on the filmmaker's responsibility towards the subjects, Selmin Kara and Camilla Møhring Reestorff put forth that, "understanding of the film subjects as exploited, violated, or falsified by the filmmaker" (1) raises ethical issues. But when the filmmaker intentionally misrepresents the subjects it involves the ethics, politics, and ideology of the makers (Nichols, *Introduction* 139).

When the Dongria Kondhs are presented in the documentary films, they are subjected to a new visual discourse which largely works within the ideological framework of its makers. In which the citizenship rights of the tribals are defined, redefined, appropriated and exploited differently by the NGOs, mainstream news channels and the grass-root filmmakers as per their ideologies.

The NGO Survival International puts forth a direct case in the documentary *The Real Avatar: Mine - Story of a Sacred Mountain* against the human rights violation and condemns Vedanta Ltd.'s attempts at encroachment in the lives of the Kondhs. The film

focuses on the struggle and standpoint of the tribals, the Dongria Kondhs vis-à-vis the Niyamgiri Hills and the surrounding forest areas. The plight of the tribals is amplified in the film through certain set binaries and audio-visual techniques including stunning visuals, voice-over commentary, and interviews of people, sound as well as music. The film raises the issue of denial of rights of the displaced people of Lanjigarh and their pathetic condition is contrasted with the Niyamgiri's Dongria Kondhs. The Kondhs fear arrival of company and with its arrival the possibility of having the same fate as that of people in Lanjigarh. However the Kondhs are presented rather romantically, as living a contented life in the forests and hills. Vedanta Ltd. is represented as a sort of evil force, looking greedily at the contented people of the forest. The film etches presentation of the Kondhs at the level of quasi-fictional tale about a bitter struggle between the innocent and the evil. It uses both audio-visual and musical exaggeration for this purpose. Such techniques help the NGOs attract larger viewership which also fits into their exponential search for 'publicity' and 'donor support' as one of the prominent politics of the NGOs mentioned by Clark P. and Mount P (1).

While stating the rupture in the representation by the NGOs, Felix Padel says that the NGOs represent all the movements 'through certain formula that reduces each tribe's situation to more or less the same story, removing the complexity' (522). In this film as well, the authenticity of the representation of local reality certainly has certain lacks. In a clearly drawn two sides, the company and the people, the other agents such as the government, law courts, local administration, the issue of their poverty, health, education, police terror etc. are completely ignored.

In this way, the film reduces an otherwise complex tribal reality to create a moral fable relating it to a struggle between the good and the bad. In the context of the romantic representation of the subjects, Nichols discusses about the unequal relationship of the filmmaker and the subjects. The subjects, whenever represented

romantically, are not presented as the self-determining agent of change but the stage is set for, “politics of charitable benevolence” where the tribal are not given any agency but they are suffering from plight, that others should do something about (139 Introduction). On the representation of subjects in the film as mere victims, sufferer or deprived, Kara and Reestorff assert that, “A politics of pity is not necessarily productive in calling for commitment because it situates the sufferer as passive and the one who observes the suffering as obliged to act . . . this not only undermines the agency of the sufferer but also potentially results in despair” (5).

The documentary by RSTV, *Special Report: Battleground Niyamgiri* discusses the tribals and their issues with different evidences and viewpoints through interviews. It puts forth the question of Government’s challenging act in creating balance between the development in the area through bringing in the investors, while preserving the tribal culture and their rights through rehabilitation. Largely the documentary focuses on the need of development in the area with the argument that Niyamgiri is a place entrenched in poverty. This is contrasted with the development of Vedanta Township in the Lanjigarh area and presents the people of Lanjigarh as those who consider rehabilitation as a source of blessing.

The film by locals i.e., “Mountain of Law” is different from the mainstream media documentation, since it is closer to the local realities and raises the often-ignored local complexities in the movement. In the interviews, the locals express their views fearlessly, in front of the camera and speak against the concerned authorities. The grounding of the film in the local politics is visible in the discussion when locals and activists speak about the measures and actions of the Government and authorities while sharing their experiences of exploitation as also about how the system terrorizes and threatens them:

(locals from the Lanjigarh and Niyamgiri questioning the authority

for their working in cahoots with the company)

The “development narrative” presented by RSTV is countered by the grassroot filmmakers when the locals state that all these schools and hospitals exist in papers and the advertisements of

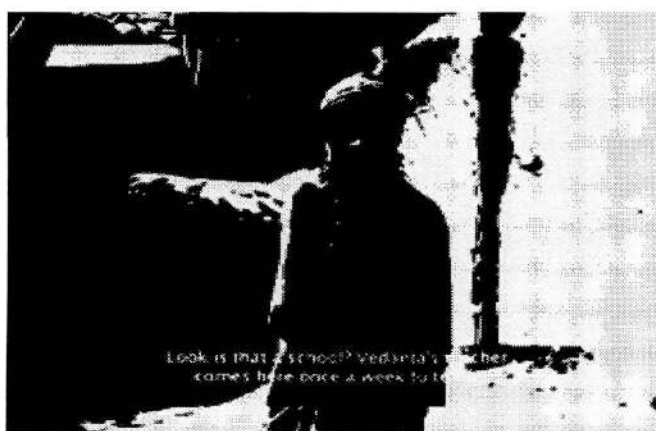
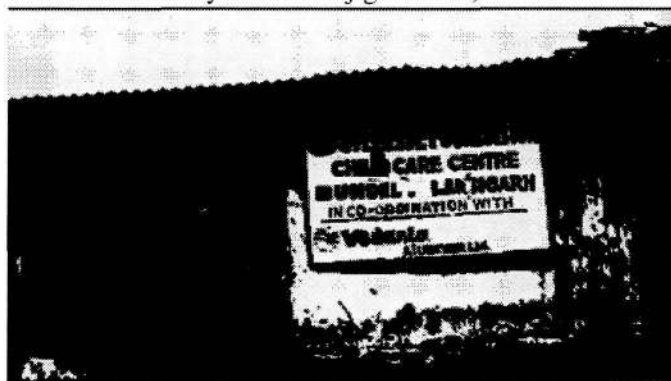


Vedanta Ltd. only. Vedanta is referred to as the largest foreign investor which works for the development of the area and the documentary presents *captivating* visuals of the Vedanta school, a super specialty hospital, the greenery and huge buildings of Vedanta offices. Though, the local filmmakers present the same issue differently in their documentary, *Niyamgiri: Mountain of Law* with

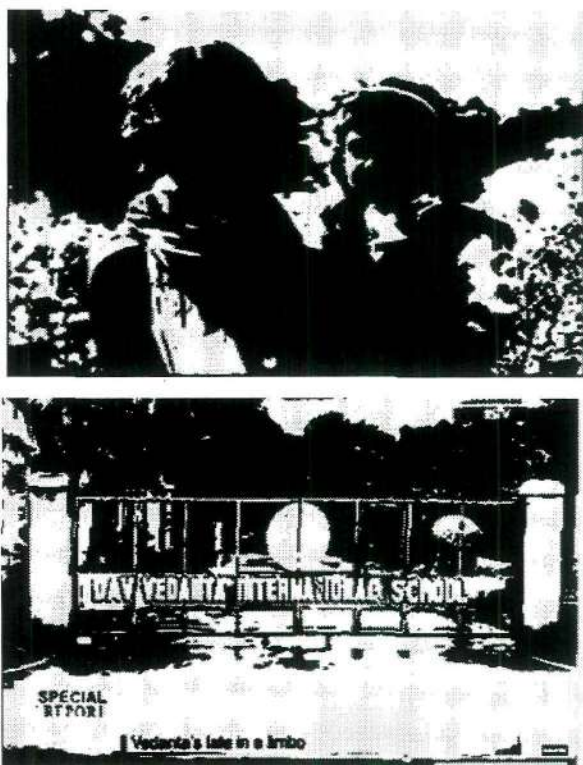
the claim of showing the ground reality. Following are the two stills taken from both the films:

(local filmmakers representing the reality of Vedanta school where the Vedanta's teacher comes once a week to teach)

(The progress and development shown by mainstream media: Vedanta's promotional advertisement, and the Vedanta School shown in RSTV documentary in the Lanjigarh area)



The recurrent theme in the RSTV documentary is to encourage the foreign investors, and inflow of foreign capital, sidelining all the



detrimental effects of the industrial project, which largely fits into the ideological framework of the state but in that set-up the voices of the tribals remain either appropriated or if presented then through the political agendas of the institutions. Not only this, these documentations reflect and influence the public opinions differently. Since these are the narratives which reach out to the majority public through mainstream media, Noam Chomsky refers to them as, 'elite media' and 'agenda setting media' which set the framework in which everyone else operates. He asserts, this is because "the press is owned by wealthy people who only want certain things to reach the public" (Chomsky 2). This re-feudalization of power, in Habermas' words, creates an illusion of public sphere, which discourage the dialogue and active engagement of the public and give sanctions to

the decisions of the leaders. Similarly, in *Survival international's* documentary, the critical discussion is undermined when it reduces the local reality to simplified good versus bad moralizing which ceases its audience to participate in the act of citizenship.

In this way, despite the fact that the documentary representation of the Niyamgiri issue does sometimes raise certain important issue regarding the citizenship rights of the people, but we find that the representation is mediated through certain other existing discourses and thus the voices of the people is not always foregrounded.

Works Cited

- Aufderheide, Patricia et al., "Honest Truths: Documentary Filmmakers on Ethical Challenges in Their Work." *CMSI*, 2009, archive.cmsimpact.org/sites/default/files/Honest_Truths_-_Documentary_Filmmakers_on_Ethical_Challenges_in_Their_Work.pdf.
- Chomsky, Noam. "What Makes Mainstream Media Mainstream." *Z Magazine*, October, 1997, chomsky.info/199710/.
- Clarke, P. and Mount P. "Non-Profit Marketing: the key to marketing's "mid-life crisis"?" *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 2001, pp. 78-91.
- Cliff, Alum. Forword. *State of the Adivasis in Odisha 2014: A Human Development Analysis* by Harishwar Dayal et al. Skillshare International India. Sage 2014.
- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Kara, Selmin and Camilla MøhringReestorff. "Introduction: Unruly documentary activism." *Studies in documentary film*. 2015.
- "Midnight Abduction, Illegal Detention & Forced Surrender in Niyamgiri." *YouTube*, Video Republic, May 26. 2017, www.YouTube.com/watch?v=4wuEYEZRmt4&t=15s.
- Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. Indiana University

- Press, 2001.
- . *Representing Reality*. Iupress, 1991.
- Niyamgiri Dongrias: When Cuckoos Stopped Singing*. YouTube, directed by Amitabh patra, 5 July 2016, www.YouTube.com/watch?v=PYpLu6anobQ&t=8s.
- Niyamgiri: The Mountain of Law*. YouTube, directed by Jitu Jikaka et al., Video Republic. 2008, published on April 23, 2016, www.YouTube.com/watch?v=-k7qGmkOwdI.
- Padel, Felix and Samrendra Das. *Out of this Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel*. Orient Black Swan, 2010.
- Roy, Arundhati. Foreword. *Out of this Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel*. Orient Black Swan, 2010.
- Saxena, Dr. N.C. Preface. *State of the Adivasis in Odisha 2014: A Human Development Analysis* by HarishwarDayalet al. Skillshare International India. Sage 2014.
- Special Report- Battleground Niyamgiri*. YouTube, Rajaysabha TV, Aug. 26, 2013, www.YouTube.com/watch?v=KuP7ltXtYos&t=1090s.
- The Real Avatar: Mine - Story of a Sacred Mountain*. YouTube, Survival International, 31 March, 2009, www.YouTube.com/watch?v=R4tuTFZ3wXQ&t=159s.
- The Commons. "Niyamgiri People's Resistance in Odisha, Independent Filmmaking- an Interview with activist-filmmaker Surya Shankar Dash." March 9, 2015.

**DEVISING AN ELEMENTAL AND INCLUSIVE
LANGUAGE: A STUDY OF NEELAM MANSINGH
CHOWDHRY'S THEATRE**

My paper will examine the multiple levels and languages of signification implicit in the theatre of Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry. Her theatre goes beyond the merely verbal and speaks to the audience through a much more symbolic, emotive and inclusive language which emphasises the body, material culled from the everyday, songs, the folk and colour. My paper will discuss this use of 'elemental language' which leads to a rich layering of the performance text. Another important aspect of her theatre that I will be discussing is the encoding of the body, especially the female body in the context of violence, sexuality and desire. She foregrounds a strong feminine sensibility and experience in the spatial dynamics of the everyday, thereby creating narratives that resonate with the rhythms of life.

Theatre is a space where one can witness the coming together of many 'spaces': the performative, literary and temporal, as well as languages: both verbal and non-verbal. However, at the same time being a highly gendered and contested space, it also matters in theatre studies as to who occupies and speaks in that space. It is a known fact that the field has been dominated by men since its very inception whether it was playwrights, directors, actors and in ancient

Greece, even the audience. The dismantling of the literary canon has allowed for the emergence of many voices in the theatre especially those of women playwrights, directors and actors making it richer and more vibrant. This paper focuses on the oeuvre of the Indian director, Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry who is known for her very unique theatre style. It discusses the key aspects of her theatre which comprise an interesting synthesis of the verbal and non-verbal, the emotive use of material and a nuanced depiction of the body giving rise to an elemental and inclusive language going beyond the confines of the 'word' or text. This layering of the performance text through both the verbal and non verbal gives rise to multiple levels of meaning and signification which very powerfully depict the inner state of the characters and not just their physical actions.

Chowdhry's productions are primarily in Punjabi, occupies a unique space in the realm of Punjabi theatre, as someone who is both within the world of Punjabi theatre in terms of language and rhythm and outside in terms of her vision, style and choice of play-texts. This paper discusses her directorial style by situating her both within the regional domain of Punjabi theatre and the larger canon of Indian women directors.

Neelam Mansingh's relation with Punjabi theatre is one fraught with many complexities and a discussion on this requires a background of Punjabi theatre first. Modern Punjabi theatre is a young entity which emerged in the early part of the 20th Century, marked by several influences: classical Indian theatre, western theatre and indigenous performance traditions. However, the rise of the genre was rather late in Punjabi literature due to several reasons: the near absence of a folk theatre tradition in spite of several other performance traditions, the relatively late interaction with English theatre and the late adoption of the genre by the writers of the time to name a few. A brief look at the history of Punjabi theatre reveals that rather than depicting an organic growth it revolves around personalities, the origins of the genre themselves being tied

up with the iconic names of Norah Richards and I.C.Nanda. Early Punjabi plays, such as *Chander Hari* (1909) by Bawa Buddh Singh, *Raja Lakhdatta* (1910) by Bhai Vir Singh were written primarily for a didactic purpose and there are hardly any records of their performances. Later, Norah Richards and I.C. Nanda gave Punjabi theatre the much needed fillip required to popularise the genre both in terms of writing and performance practice. The literary output in subsequent years has been quite prolific and is marked by various styles and modes which not only show an influence of western drama in the initial years, but also an indigenous sensibility which involves the contemporary reworking of traditional myths and legends of Punjab leading to some very powerful plays focussing on issues of gender, caste, violence and identity in the context of Punjab. My paper 'Punjabi theatre: Spaces, Icons and Culture' discusses Punjabi theatre in terms of a four part division. Along with the accepted 'social, psychological and political' thematic division, I have added the performative as well since this is also an integral part of Punjabi theatre, though not as emphasised as it deserves to be owing to a history of dominance by the written word over the performative. Balwant Gargi, Shiela Bhatia, Gursharan Singh, Harpal Tiwana, Neelam Mansingh, Kewal Dhaliwal are some names that stand out in Punjabi theatre in terms of the performative. Since they are all very diverse in their practice and style, they have tended to gravitate to their own personal vision of Punjabi theatre. Chowdhry herself states "There is no such thing as Punjabi theatre. At best, we are individuals working in Punjabi language. Beyond this there is no similarity in context or content. We all work from our own points of view" (Singh). This individualistic nature of Punjabi drama/ theatre may probably stem firstly from the "absence of a traditional folk base of theatre which could have provided a sense of collective cultural consciousness to Punjabi theatre and secondly from the prevalence of varied external influences which different individuals brought to their own versions of Punjabi theatre, thereby leading to a variety of performance styles under the bracket of Punjabi theatre" (Aurora 281).

This brings us to Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry's style of theatre practice which is distinct from mainstream Punjabi theatre at many levels: from the choice of text, the process of linguistic translation as well as that of transporting this text onto the stage through the verbal, non-verbal and the symbolic. In the first rather than using plays from Punjabi drama, she mostly uses Punjabi translations of Western and Indian classics such as *Phaedra/Fida* (1997), *Yerma* (1991), *Kitchen Katha* (1999), *The Suit* (2009), *Nagmandala* (1989), *Stree Patro* (2010), and *Sibo in the Supermarket* (2002) which are translated by the Punjabi writer Surjit Pattar. In the second, she employs a lot of material for emotive value as part of her onstage language. These are not just props but an integral part of the act of conveying life as a sensory experience that can be witnessed and experienced on stage. Her productions are thus marked by a "synthesis of Western and Eastern sensibilities that she achieves by recreating the text in Punjabi, employing the folk element of Punjabi performance culture — the *Naqqals* (female impersonators), and by devising a visual language which is rooted in the context of the regional" (Aurora 279). While her plays are dominantly steeped in the Punjabi language and culture for many of her plays, she does not fit in with the more conventional style of Punjabi theatre as she has consciously opted for a more experimental style which showcases the influence of various other theatrical forms and styles. Her plays have a larger cosmopolitan and at the same time regional appeal as they provide a fascinating intersection of linguistic translation, cultural transposition and performance practice.

Moving beyond the regional, it is also important to discuss some aspects of direction, contextualisation and reception/perception in the theatre of Indian women directors in order to emphasise the uniqueness of their theatre. According to Kirti Jain, a director herself, the documentation of women's theatre in India, "needs to be done not by way of comparison to men's work, but as an independent exploration of what they are doing to the language of their creative

idiom which stems from their own perception and way of looking at life" (151). It is important to understand this body of work not in terms of an essentialisation as is generally done but rather as another approach to life and art arising from a different sensibility. The uniqueness of a woman's lived experience as a woman /artist/ actor/ director and her relation with the experiential and material world requires a language that resonates with her impulses and experiences. Such a language goes beyond the merely verbal and chooses to express itself through myriad other ways thus expanding the theatrical experience. Women directors have successfully ruptured, appropriated and subverted the existing dramatic codas to create a space of their own within this field.

Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker in her book *Theatres of Independence* (2005) remarks,

The success of female directors in creating new modes of performance and appealing to new communities spectators has diversified a hitherto male-dominated field, and the resulting focus on female experience by women practitioners modifies the almost monopolistic control that male playwrights and directors have exercised over the representation of women on the Indian stage (119). Breaking this 'control' is highly significant in the Indian context as it allows formuch needed and reasonably independent spaces where women can express and emote their experiences in comparison to the cinema which still suffers from a certain objectification of women.

Anita Singh in her book *'Gender, Space and Resistance: Women and Theatre in India'* (2013) remarks,

Women practitioners who stage their own realities are engaged in the material process of innovatively producing both theatre and female subjectivity which makes a female identity or self the pivotal presence within the text. At the

same time, unorthodox performances in public spaces challenge the gendered control of spatial relationships in society and geographical spaces (10).

By challenging this 'gendered control' women directors have been able to express themes and issues in ways that are much closer to the symbolic experiential world of women. However it may not necessarily be 'feminist' in every instance. Lieder in her essay 'Not-Feminism: A discourse on the Politics in Modern Indian theatre' sees women directors in India as adopting the "decolonial notion of not-feminism, rejecting Western feminism", by situating them in a position of authorial/ directorial agency wherein they can create "a discourse of women and women's rights" (601) which is unique to their own spatio-temporal and cultural world. This distinction is relevant because there are diverse viewpoints and expressions present amongst women directors, who seek to challenge, disrupt or rupture the 'gendered space' of theatre in their own ways.

Lakshmi Subramanyam observes that a "variety of approaches mark the work of women in Indian theatre. Many of them write within the paradigm of a dramatic text" and many "evolve their own texts which do not necessarily subscribe to the conventional play text" (24). This desire to 'evolve' their own texts on stage through a language that relies more on material, body or collaborative processes points to a plurality of expression and a resistance against following a hegemonic traditional mode for enunciating the myriad experiences of women. Elaine Aston in her study of feminism and theatre sees "Modern woman's theatre"... characterised by a resistance to being pushed 'offstage and is replete with explosions, *'demolishings'* of discourse" (47). However these 'explosions' may not all necessarily be at a larger political or social scale, but often more importantly are those that shatter the comfortable hegemonies and oppressive structures that exist within the confines of domestic spaces also.

It is in this larger context of women directors that Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry's theatre can be situated as one that posits female subjectivity within familiar 'gendered spaces,' amidst everyday objects and familiar spaces. Her productions feature strong female protagonists who raise important questions such as those of love and relations in *Fida*, motherhood in *Yerma* or desire in *Nagamandala* to name a few. These questions are important as they are raised by ordinary women in the comfortable confines of their homes where everyday objects become extensions or expressions of the self. Commenting on her plays, Kirti Jain observes,

Yerma and *Fida* explore the concept of womanhood, motherhood and female sexuality with a kind of passion and uninhibitedness that one rarely sees in theatre. That the statement is being made by a woman is underlined by her imagery which she draws from the immediate world of the woman, and includes water, sand, grains, ritual related to daily worship etc (156).

This carries with it an intensity of experience that the audience is also able to relate with *vis a vis* the familiar while at the same time making this very familiarity a contested site in which the female protagonist tries to negotiate her identity. These materials help in creating a space and language for aiding the expression of a feminine sensibility beyond languages and spaces which are already codified by a male order.

The various collaborative processes that directors engage with also have an important bearing on the manner in which the performance text develops on stage. Commenting on the collaborative processes practiced by women practitioners of theatre, Lakshmi Subramanyam says, "most of them have reconstructed and adapted available or given texts, or worked in close collaboration with writers to create texts which articulate their ideology or prioritize their concerns. The scene is varied and rich in its originality and

innovative methods” (22). In the case of Mansingh Chowdhry, these collaborative processes work at several levels: with the acclaimed writer and translator Surjit Pattar for the translation of the text, the folk performers, *naqqals*, and of course the actors on stage. The creative process of translating the text also consists of several stages: the classics, which are mostly English translations, the subsequent translation in Punjabi and finally the translation of an already layered and ‘unstable’ text into a performance text on the stage. In discussing translations through the metaphor of a Trojan horse, she says “What translation brings to us is the narrative of an alien culture, but delivered, like a Trojan horse, into our minds through a familiar language...this familiarity ... carries within it unfamiliar emotional sensations that are both familiar and disorienting” (213). This instability comprising multiple authorial voices exists alongside the language that is created on stage with the coming together of the actor/body, material, music leading to the combined emotive impact of all the elements. Commenting on the visual language of her plays she says, “it is essential to translate the text into visual images...the actors and I collaborate in creating a visual language that will become a metaphor of the text. But these images are within the text... these images become raw material for the performance” (214). While this holds true for a lot of theatrical practices depending on the source text, Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry’s theatre while displaying all these stages and processes, is unique in terms of its charged sensibility and the emotive power of the sensory that she accords it, making it important both in the context of the regional Punjabi theatre and the larger body of Indian theatre.

Mansingh’s collaborative process of using *naqqals*, the traditional female impersonators in Punjab, ruptures the perception of gender in performance by juxtaposing the female lead with the female impersonators, thereby problematising the ideas of masculine and feminine sensibility as accepted in social discourse. Neelam

Mansingh Chowdhry sees her work with the *naqqals* as “an attempt to reach a space where the distinction between conflicting histories did not matter. By putting such a company together, I have tried to produce a somewhat precarious, somewhat unstable meeting of folk, tradition, and the modern, as between setting up an equation between the female impersonators and actresses” (Chowdhry 213). Other than depicting the complex binaries of male and female body onstage, the presence of the *naqqals* creates an androgynous body which resists codification and therefore exists in a fluid space. Kirti Jain sees it as representing a “contradiction in the idea of the feminine” which is “underlined by the traditional performers doing female impersonation” (156). This is one of the most striking aspects of her works as it not only problematises the ‘feminine’ but also ruptures the whole idea of gender as being only a normative biological binary construct.

This brings us to the other important aspect of this theatrical process, the actor/body as an important signifier on stage. According to theatre director and critic Anuradha Kapur, “the body of the actor is a primary sign in the theatre. More than speech, the body of the actor is an instrument of the actor and the director” (Subramanyam 245). The body carries the weight of the play and in Neelam Mansingh’s plays it is primarily the female body that is encoded by a strongly marked sensibility which enunciates all the myriad experiences and feelings that women feel: whether it is love, desire, sexuality, conflict, violence or helplessness. For instance Fida’s open hair in the performance becomes at once a symbol of her sexuality, her desire, as also her tangled and conflicted state of being. Anuradha Kapur states, “Neelam Mansingh is very much concerned with presenting a woman who is not just sexually passive but an active person who knows or seeks to know her desires, her rejections, her fears.” There is a subliminal text implicit in her plays, enunciated by the body and aided by the material world that the woman steepes herself in, in order to express her inner being. Her

adaptation of Lorca's *Yerma* depicts the various emotional states, turbulences and self-realisation that the protagonist Yerma undergoes through everyday activities such as looking in the mirror, and finding herself incomplete without a child, the rambunctious sights and sounds of the laundresses complete with the visual of two people drying clothes by periodically lifting them against the wind or the almost savage energy with which she grinds the *chakki* (mill) to depict her frustration and all the emotions running through her. *Fida*, based on Racine's *Phaedra* shows her expressing the conflicting passions within, through the material and elemental world around her, by writhing in the wheat grains or juxtaposing the fiery passion for Harman burning within her against water, thereby depicting a woman expressing herself in *her* world. This is not to say that the domestic space is the only space of or for a woman but the real world does reveal most women as still tied up within these spaces. The importance of the actor is highlighted by Mansingh's own observation that, "An actor makes the invisible, visible; makes the forgotten perceptible, makes things tangible through the intangible. By this I mean that theatre makes love visible, makes fear visible, and makes power, hate, anger...visible" (212). Another important aspect is that of time which according to most women theatre critics is cyclical in women's theatre. To quote Elaine Aston, "Feminist theatre criticism links the concept of 'linear time' to those dramatic forms such as realism which are alienating to the female subject...The linearity of speaking time, ordered by units of dramatic time and action, therefore represses the 'speaking' of women's experiences" (54). This is also observed by Kirti Jain who states that in women's theatre the "linear narrative (is) replaced with a more disjointed and diffused narrative to allow for several viewpoints to be incorporated" (Jain). This is seen as something intrinsically tied to the woman's experience, which defies linearity. Josette Feral's application of Irigaray's 'feminine discourse' describes the "feminine voice" as one characterised by 'simultaneity', which 'would transform meaning into a continuous flow within the text.'

(Aston 51) This simultaneity and continuous flow therefore necessitates that the text moves at various levels, wherein the verbal or linear alone are not adequate for representing this 'feminine voice'. Aston further goes on to say that "Explorations into finding a form to represent the 'broken backed' experience of women which has been repressed, necessitated the explosion of the linear, the masculine" (55). While these binaries might not be drawn up consciously by Neelam Mansingh, these do surface in the strong visual, tactile and physical language that emerges in her theatre. For instance, *Fida* depicts a woman's world where there are no male protagonists on the stage, except by their absence as either the desired yet forbidden beloved or the authority wielding figure of the king/husband. Yet the actions of both, as reported to us, cause a disruption in Fida's world, an invasion of social authority which leads to devastating consequences in the climax as Fida ends her life.

The disruption of the linear narrative and the cyclical persistence of violence can be seen in the play *Bitter Fruit* directed by Dr. Mansingh with the students of National School of Drama. The play based on Manto's stories shows not just the violence of partition, but the intrinsic violence of man which surfaces when caught in such moments in time and history. The stories in *Bitter Fruit* have strongly etched women characters with the scars and violence of the Partition all over them. They are not all just victims who cry out in the pain, but some are also women who exert their sexuality, bruised or otherwise; avenge themselves or refuse to compromise upon their individuality. The disruption of a linear narrative is clearly visible here. The play starts with multiple voices overlapping each other, voicing concerns, fears, confusion that were part and parcel of everyone's consciousness during partition regardless of religion.

To take up one story from the production, Manto's 'A Believer's Version', is a psychological story of sex, violence and desire set during the Partition. The main characters: the narrator, Rukma and Girdhari are involved in a torrid triangle of sex and violence wherein

the illicit affair between Rukma and the narrator leads to the death of Girdhari, Rukma's husband. Mansingh's play uses a symbolic visual language to explore these raw passions depicted in the story through a few changes of her own. The play shows Rukma and Girdhari engaged in kneading clay for making toys, while in Manto's story Girdhari makes wooden toys. This small detail gathers enormous significance on stage as this mud also stands for the raw physical desire between the narrator and Rukma presenting it in a very earthy, elemental and sensuous manner thereby adding many more layers of meaning to a story depicting the turbulence of sex, desire, violence and of course the complex and tumultuous inner world of humans. In Manto's story the narrator says "I was like Putty in her hands" (Manto) which at once makes us realise the fragile and ephemeral nature of relations. In the production this is brought out more powerfully when we see these primordial drives expressed through mud. She uses mud again in the story '*Thanda Gosht*' which ends with a man being wrapped, mummy like, in swathes of toilet paper. Violence does not just affect the victim but the perpetrator also and this is brought out by the frenzied movements and later the stillness of the protagonist of the story who confesses to having raped a dead girl.

The production showcases important collaborations with the scenographer Deepan Sivaraman and the students of NSD. The sets evoke a highly symbolic language and aid the narrative. The presence of a burnt car instead of the train as a signifier of violent times is important as it shows the pervasiveness of violence across the history of the nation. The Partition is the immediate context of the play, however the presence of the iconic Maruti 800, the car of the masses, shows the manner in which violence affects the common man the most across time and space. The production is marked by popular Bollywood songs which help in giving this event and its violence an immediate cultural reference rather than simply seeing these as stories of a distant time, removed from our frame of

reference. All these elements and objects: such as the Maruti car, the innocuous bottles of popular soft drinks that the players are sipping, Bollywood songs, have a cultural and temporal immediacy. The violence generated by communalism goes much deeper and can be found at different times and different parts in no less an intensity than the Partition, though not as massive in its scale. The violence is localised and therefore we are more anaesthetised to it now. While the verbal text of the play is definitively Manto and the context that of the partition yet Neelam Mansingh is able to take the violence beyond a specific time frame and connect it with the present as well. The theme of pervasive violence, pain, trauma present even today in the social and cultural body is communicated through the female body scarred by a violence and violation. This theme operates at a symbolic level that is foregrounded by the non-verbal signifiers which help it transcend the barriers of time.

The theatre of Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry is not consciously 'feminist' or political. It deals more with a feminine sensibility which transcends specificities in its enunciation of the experiences of love, desire, joy, sexuality, repression, violence and pain. She states, "Theatre is an adventure, because one never knows where it's going to take one. One never knows what will be the shape and form of the production until it bursts forth onto the stage, and is received by an audience" (Chowdhry211). The layering of the performance text through the verbal, visual and material makes it a more accessible and, at the same time, a much more semiotically charged text which helps the audience connect with it at an emotional and experiential plane. Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry's theatre presents an important body of contemporary theatre practice both within the domain of regional Punjabi theatre and the larger body of Indian theatre. Her exploration of the feminine world through a language that is inclusive, elemental, lyrical and at the same time disruptive of our senses of the familiar, has helped in providing a voice for the feminine experience to reach across the audiences, thereby broadening the

scope of Indian theatre.

Works Cited

- Aston, Elaine. *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre*. Routledge, 1995.
- Aurora, Gunjeet. "Punjabi Theatre: Spaces, Icons and Culture." *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory*. 10:2, 2014, pp. 271-283. doi: 10.1080/17448727.2014.941202. Accessed 02 Nov. 2015.
- Chowdhry, Neelam Mansingh. "The Quotidian Philosophy of Creation: An Account of "The Company" *Indian Literature*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (264) (July/August 2011), pp. 211-215. www.jstor.org/stable/23348593. Accessed 6 Feb. 2017.
- Dharwadker, Aparna Bhargava. *Theatres of Independence: Drama, Theory and Urban Performance in India since 1947*. University of Iowa Press, 2005.
- Hasan, Khalid. Ed and Trans. *Bitter Fruit: The Very Best of Saadat Hasan Manto*. Penguin Books, 2008.
- Jain, Kirti. "In Search of a Narrative: Women Theatre Directors of the Northern Belt." *Muffled Voices: Women in Modern Indian Theatre*, edited by Lakshmi Subramanyam, Shakti Books, 2002, pp. 151-164.
- Lieder, K. Frances. "Not- Feminism: A Discourse on the Politics of a Term in Modern Indian Theatre" *Asian Theatre Journal*, Vol 32, Number 2, Fall 2015, pp. 598-618. doi: doi.org/10.1353/atj.2015.0053. Accessed 6 Feb. 2017.
- Singh, Anita and Tarun Tapas Mukherjee, editors. *Gender, Space and Resistance: Women and Theatre in India*. D K Printworld, 2013.
- Singh, Nonika. 23 Jan 2012. "In Need of a Push." *The Tribune*, August 28, 2012. <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2010/>

20100123/saturday/main1.htm.

Subramanyam, Lakshmi, editor. *Muffled Voices: Women in Modern Indian Theatre*. Shakti Books, 2002.

INSTA-FOOD: PROSUMPTION OF IMAGES OF FOOD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Eaten cakes are sweet, but those uneaten are sweeter

Over the past half century there has been a gradual, and in recent years, an accelerated rise in prominence of food in the media. This is partly because of the steady growth in media industries themselves and partly because of the simultaneous expansion of food industry and dominance of its advertising. From utilitarian mentions in newspaper columns and magazines to daytime television cooking shows to reality and lifestyle food television to its infinite presence on social media feeds, food discourses have escalated and in the contemporary society, people are continually bombarded with food related information and images. The researcher's YouTube feed, during the six-month time period (June 2018 to November 2018) of the case study of this paper, was preceded by a short un-skippable advertisement of either one of the two major Indian food delivery and restaurant search services. Being forced to look at mouth-watering dishes along with a cheerful voice urging to get it delivered at one's doorstep every time one visits a website is just one example of the pervasive presence of food and its discussions in everyday life. The societal phenomenon of obsession with food and food-

induced lifestyle, typically found in some sections of the Western world, is what Guido Nicolosi has characterized as the 'orthorexic society'. He extended its use from an individual disorder (orthorexia nervosa) to a "psycho-cultural syndrome" of late modernity (39). Italian semiologist Gianfranco Marrone has used the term 'gastromania' and French sociologist Jean-Pierre Poulain's term 'social alimentary space' too describe the same phenomenon as Nicolosi's orthorexic society, albeit from the frameworks of their different academic disciplines.

The role played by media and social media apparatus in representation and meaning making of food and also its impact on the practices surrounding food cannot be underestimated. Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst, in *Audiences towards a Theory of Performance and Imagination* argue that meanings which people make when consuming any kind of media contributes to their social life and processes. The significance of media in present times is due to their ability of providing a subject and a framework for social interaction. According to such a model of media consumption, audience-hood is characterized as performative and the resources for performance of daily life are provided by media, which are used by people to make decisions and integrate patterns related and routines into the styles and strategies of their daily life. It becomes necessary to understand the embeddedness of media in everyday life. Therefore, the production and consumption of food visuals via various digital interfaces necessitates an analysis to try and disentangle interrelationships between media representations of food, social structures surrounding it and personal experiences of those involved.

This paper is an attempt to trace the history of the image of food briefly, its present avatar as 'foodporn' and its present ubiquity across social media. Using Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulacra as a framework, the paper also looks at their location in a post-modern consumerist world. Using a case study of selected Instagram

accounts of Indian food bloggers, the paper uses discourse analysis to understand the different ways in which food visuals are consumed and engagement of prosumers of these visuals in the online spaces.

The Image and the Photograph of Food

Image has always been an essential part of human communication and has been used in varying capacities- from purely aesthetic to communicative to performative. Almost all societies have the image serve as an important component, albeit with different meanings and significances. Visual communication has taken different forms and formats over time but the close connection of the image with the human psyche has retained its centrality. Thomas Mitchell states that “to live in any culture is to live in a visual culture” and that the turn towards the visual is not something distinctive to the contemporary time (173-174). When Roland Barthes stated that “polysemia” of food characterises modernity in his 1961 essay ‘Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption’, he had no idea how every passing decade would be adding more truth to his words. Once the basic needs regarding food, that is nutrition, are fulfilled, its value as protocol becomes more important and food therefore gains a ‘tendency to transform itself into situation’ (29). The ubiquitous food images in contemporary times are polysemic too and have the potentiality of multiple meanings and interpretations. Since the whole process of image creating, curating and meaning-making is intricately bound up with our social structures and communication patterns, it becomes utmost important to try and understand our voracious appetite for food and its image.

While explaining the movement from the plastic arts to painting to photography, Andre Bazin emphasized on the purely mental, even if non-aesthetic, need of the human brain for illusion (7). To satisfy the need that humans have to substitute the object with something more than just mere approximation, the photographic image “is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space

that govern it" (8). A photograph of food, therefore, is not just not fulfilling any biological requirement but its consumption is also spatially and temporally far removed, most of the times happening after the food ceases to exist as food, after its ingestion. This can also be described by bringing in another interpretative category, the myth, as described by Barthes. The myth as a system of communication has a socio-historic origin. The phenomenon of orthorexy then can be defined as a type of mythization of food, which is a result of history and the social, cultural and economic factors which influence the consumption of the society manifested in various forms.

In the case of all the visual representations of food, the understanding is that the appreciation would come for the images of food, which obviously side-line other attributes and meanings such as smell, taste, flavours etc. But food imagery is not a new phenomenon. Historically, food images have been found in art, advertising, magazines, cookbooks and even personal photography. Unlike food, which is perishable and ceases to exist as food, once ingested, its image has certain permanence. It can have multiple consumptions and each time can be rendered with new meanings and diverse significances. With proliferation of advertising and branding, food images have become ubiquitous in the world of consumer capitalism. Packaging of food, advertising it through television and its incorporation in lifestyle; especially through women's magazines, naturalises stylisation of food and its imaging, as a part of the emerging consumer culture. The realm of broadcasting witnessed movement of food from pedagogic cooking shows to food and lifestyle channels and emergence of celebrity chefs. All of these constructed desire and food imagery entered the era of 'the spectacle' (Debord). Therefore, the eminence of highly stylized food images on digital platforms can be traced back to the wider capitalist, consumerist societal frameworks which took advantage of undeniable human connection with food, not only as

means of sustenance but also as a symbol of culture and solidarity.

Food Turns Pornographic

The very idea of food porn and the term itself is debateable. The idea can be traced back to Roland Barthes when he discussed ornamental cooking as featured in *Elle* magazine and stated that “cooking according to Elle is meant for the eye alone, as sight is a genteel sense” (78). The term was first used by Michael Jacobson describe food in contrast to healthy foods. According to him, he “coined the term to connote a food that was so sensationally out of bounds of what a food should be that it deserved to be considered pornographic” (qtd. in McBride 38). The term has been used differently—Sharon Zukin and Jennifer Maguire discuss the ways of showing food on TV and cookbooks using the visual effects and techniques of pornography; Richard Magee while pointing to the performative function of food uses the term to mean acutely indulgent and sinfully rich foods which are meant solely for vicarious consumption; Signe Rousseau contends that food porn is that contested space that lies between the ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ desires about eating.

Apart from the academia, the term is also prevalent amongst the general public. The most pervasive understanding of food porn today is the stylisation and capturing of food, more often than not on smartphone-cameras and its tagging and dissemination via digital platforms. As opposed to the food porn which was professionally produced by skilled stylists and photographers for a specific targeted audience, the former is produced by an amateur on her smartphone, using her sense of aesthetics and put up for view to a potential worldwide audience. Although this is not to claim that the distance between the professional and the amateur has been decimated, but smartphone-food porn “democratises imaging practices around food as a cultural artefact, while domesticating food imagery...(and) enables a mainstreaming of food photography in our cultural

practices” (Ibrahim 3). In the digital economy, the unachievable quality of food porn is interceded- instead more attention is paid to the individual aesthetics and the idea of ownership of the image. Although this kind of food porn does not eliminate ‘desire’ or the notion of unattainability through its vicarious consumption, but the sense of ownership does bring a certain kind of familiarity, which does not usually follow from viewing lush food images on TV or glossy magazines. Therefore, food porn today keeps intact all the components of desire, vicarious consumption and the distance from the real, just that it has now come to occupy a more personalised space on the web. This space is easily created and accessed through the use of smartphones. The constant upgradation of cameras in phones, the improved interactivity due to the availability of better broadband and bandwidth, the possibility of uploading content at zero processing costs- all of these allow the creation of this personalised-space to be an easy, affordable and even obligatory feature in contemporary times. It is the use of this space to publish, curate and circulate, among other content, the hashtag foodporn, which necessitates looking into the plethora of social and symbolic meanings associated with the omnipresence of food images.

Pleasure and Fantasy: Food Images in a Consumerist Society

Colin Campbell argues that while traditional consumerism emphasized on satisfaction, which is based on need, modern consumerism emphasizes on pleasure, which is based on desire. Modern consumerism is also characterized by the precedence of anticipation, imagination, fantasy in consumption and primacy of imagined experience over physical consumption. Media scholarship has studied the ways pleasure is derived from media use and Ian Ang argues that fantasy is fundamental in attaining pleasure in media consumption. The modern consumer consumes a commodity with an intent to come closer to the fantasy but there is always an inevitable gap, which leaves her with unrealized desires. Scholars like SutJhally, Allen Kanner and Mary Gomes, amongst others, have

contended that this longing is essential to the tenets of modern consumerism and keeps us in the search for what would come closest to our imaginations. Campbell asserts that anticipation is important in understanding pleasure and the “imaginative pleasure-seeking” of the modern consumer is the outcome of “mentalistic hedonism” (89). This can be expanded to understand the consumption of physical food and its image. Suffering from a kind of disenchantment, the disillusioned modern consumer tests the imperfect delights of ‘reality’ (physical food- either cooked by her or available to her) against the perfected pleasures of ‘dream’/or advertisement (the absolutely flawless and spectacular food photograph).

In his theory of the psychological motivation for consumption, Grant McCracken postulates that the pursuit of desirable objects in a consumer society is a way of bridging the gap between the real and the ideal in everyday lives of the people. Dreams and fantasies- given to us by the advertising discourses, the real/imagined lives of others, the details of which are available to all of us owing to new media- help people define their idea of an ideal and also find and make meanings. Aesthetically pleasing food images fabricate a ‘lack’ and act as windows to an ideal albeit unattainable state. The audience of these images not only consumes, but also tries to replicate those images.

Today’s ‘society of the spectacle’ is characterised by “the decline of *being* into *having*, and *having* into merely *appearing*” (Debord thesis 17). In the absence of any grand meta-narratives, people look for other things like imagination, fantasy etc. to make sense of their everyday existence. “In the past two decades, as the deterritorialization of persons, images, and ideas has taken on new force . . . more persons throughout the world see their lives through the prisms of the possible lives offered by mass media in all their forms” (Appadurai 53-4). In the contemporary times, new media has become the realm where new narratives, practices and identities

play out. It is accompanied by fast, immediate consumption and instantaneous gratification, as exemplified by social media.

Consumption has been defined by Jean Baudrillard as a process of communication which transforms objects into symbols. Therefore, objects in the consumer society become signs of social code, which help in forming new social hierarchies and identities. Baudrillard also takes up the case of food in his explanation of consumer goods in modern industrialised society, whose connotative value becomes more important than its use value, and once shown and shared prolifically (on new media), the connotative value becomes much more significant. Food pictures on the internet, for example on Instagram, create meanings through added specifics like hashtags, location markers (geotags), other tagged users and consequently end up creating signs. Consuming these pictures online is to participate in that system of signs- to be in the know-how, to belong, to curate and reinforce the digital self-identity. Since the innate purpose of food is to be literally consumed, images of food are a departure from its fundamental use and consumption of these digital representations of food is a replacement from actual consumption, in service of commodification. The image then represents only its presence, which indicates an absence for the people viewing that photograph. In some cases, these food photographs function as 'lesser emblems of distinction' (Harvey et al. 253), such imitations which are readily consumed by those who lack the power to indulge in relatively more original and therefore distinctive consumption. For example, imagine coming across a close up aesthetically done shot of a burger- with some veggies showing, the cheese oozing- shared by someone on the social media. The burger in the picture could have been sourced from a high-end restaurant, with claimed organic and locally sourced vegetables and fair trade cheese, its only consumers belonging to the affluent and foodie-elite or the burger could have been very well sourced from a hole in the wall café or maybe even from a roadside stall (the likes of which can be

found easily in small Indian towns), which could have been bought for anything from fifty to a hundred rupees. Therefore, the lack is attempted to be fulfilled by projecting certain qualities which would help people to align to the specific groups which they want to emulate.

Salad or Simulacra?

Food photographs in the realm of then can be understood through the lens of Baudrillard's simulation and the hyper-real. In "The System of Objects", Baudrillard explains simulation as a process by which something goes through the process of commodification and in the end by bearing no relation to reality, threatens the difference between true and false. As discussed earlier, pictures typically referred to as food porn undergo photographic processes of careful framing, zooming, editing etc. and typically reach the hyper-real, so ideal that perhaps it can only be accomplished digitally. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard states, "to simulate is to feign to have what one hasn't" (170), and that material objects are an attempt to make up for the void that results from 'a dissatisfied demand for totality' (125). The feeling of lacking totality perhaps springs from having to witness the innumerable representations of "having" which make up the photo feed of any social media.

According to Baudrillard's hypothesis, reality can be reproduced for an infinite number of times, to a point where the real and the imaginary are blurred to form a new dimension, the hyperreal, which bears no relation to reality whatever. "The age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials... It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself." (Baudrillard4). The four stages of Baudrillard's process of simulation can be applied to understand the evolution of the image of food (in the age of mass media, although it can also be used to understand its evolution right from the time of still life paintings of fruits etc.).

The earlier food photographs which were used more or less for pedagogical purposes were very utilitarian and tended to represent food as it was in the various stages of cooking it- the first stage of reflection of a basic reality. Later with the advent of newer technologies, magazines and cookbooks started to gloss up the food images into more idealized versions- the second stage of distorting and perverting reality. The food images which are shared on social media sites like Instagram attempt to create a hyper-reality: a meal laid out in idyllic settings, a food item against a very vivid city scene in the background, the exact moment when molten chocolate rushes out of a cake- all of these are appropriate enough to be fashioned visually and then reproduced digitally- the fourth stage of masking of a basic reality. These images of food are meant to be desired, consumed, enjoyed and perhaps imitated only visually- they do not intend and claim to go back to real material objects or situations, i.e. they are 'free floating signifiers' which are no longer associated with real referents.

Click/Make, See/Eat: Prosumption of Food Images on Instagram

As a socio-economic concept and phenomenon, prosumption refers to production and consumption of goods by the same set of people. In the present digital age, Web 2.0 applications like YouTube, Facebook and Instagram render easy the prosumption of user-generated content. Rather than a limited number of professional institutions producing content, social media sites like these rely on mass users to produce the content. Users can thereby choose to assume the role of a both producer and consumer. The creation and consumption of food images on the internet happens simultaneously and are performed by the same group of people.

Instagram is a popular photo and video capturing and sharing mobile application which was launched in October 2010 and has more than 800 million registered users (Instagram statistics, accessed

June, 2018). The platform lets the users to shoot and upload pictures and videos using their smartphones, tamper with the images using 'filters', add captions, use the symbol # to describe the images and the symbol @ to tag or refer to other users, which creates a link from the user's account to the mentioned user's account. Like other social media platforms, Instagram provides social connectivity where a user can 'follow' the accounts of other users. Unlike 'friends' on Facebook, this social network is asymmetric— one can follow someone and not be followed back. To become someone's follower, an approval is required from the concerned user. By default, the pictures uploaded are visible to anyone using the Instagram app or the website unless one changes the privacy settings, which then allows only the followers to access the uploaded content. The content on Instagram is available for a user as an infinite 'stream' of photos on its core page, shown in a reverse chronological order. The users can 'heart' i.e. like a photo and comment on it as well.

The omnipresence of 'food porn' on this visual platform cannot be understated. In a study conducted on the use of the hashtag foodporn (#foodporn), spanning two hundred and twenty-two countries, it was found to be used by 1.7 million individual users within a time frame of hundred and fifty days (November 6, 2014 to April 6, 2015), which roughly means an average of sixty-two thousand posts every day (Mejova et al.). This enormous visual content is created professional food bloggers/photographers, amateurs and common people who not only consume the professional styles but also imitate them. Unlike how physical food is perceived by one's vision, the ways of consumption of food photographs is structured by the mediating camera and the person handling it. The tantalising images of food are a result of photography techniques like framing, focus, zoom etc. and the gaze of the photographer/producer. Walter Benjamin has also asserted that since the process of creation of the image is obscured from the audience, they are left with a somewhat false sense of reality. Things which

are left out of the frame- equipment like lighting units etc, which help in producing hyper-real food images— are not seen by the audience and they consume the pictures oblivious of the technological artifice. They simply consume the near-perfect images of food without comprehending that these can never be replicated by them in their own kitchens.

For this study, pictures posted on concerned Instagram accounts and the accompanying text, including recipes, and the comments on posts serve as the primary texts. As active digital spaces like Instagram give an opportunity to the consumer audience to engage with the producer/chef/photographer and others by writing back by ways of commenting, they act as 'both-and', spaces for primary food texts and community reception and engagement. For an easy assessment of the ways people interact and engage, the comments on the posts have been thematically segregated into various categories.

A thing of beauty!

The reason that food has become an object so worthwhile of gaze is both because of the possibilities of voyeurism that are provided by the Internet and the social intimacy that has always been linked with food. These images of food that flood the internet are consumed by people who desire to visually consume exotic and wonderful food that they otherwise might never get a chance to eat. The practice of photographing and sharing of food has been magnified by the desirability of unknown and the ever-increasing unachievable standards of food. Therefore, the food that has been decidedly anesthetized becomes the unattainable object of desire, whose consumption can only be done through the eyes and the mind.

Some of the food photographs, which were 'loved' and commented on, were admired for the beautiful pictures that they were, that is aesthetically pleasing and using the techniques of

photography. The following comments stand in for many of such similar comments on photographs posted by the different bloggers and provide the gist of all those comments:

"I can't stop adoring this picture"

"Looks like a painting"

"My favourite (heart emoji) and that beautiful light"

"It looks like you dished up some sunshine on a plate"

"Oh looks like an artist's palate"

"Absolutely stunning shot"

These comments indicate that sometimes the appreciation of the audience is perhaps more for the way a particular photograph has been produced and its overall affect, than the object in the photograph. That is an acknowledgement and appreciation of the conscious 'plating' or presentation of the food in question and the various elements of photographic production- all of which come together to shape whole of the experience of the person who views, gazes at and therefore consumes the photograph. These comments (and some others which directly pose a question to the producer/ photographer about the kind of camera or lens used for the photograph in question) in a way also indicate that the viewers do realize that to a certain degree it is the conscious utilization of visual aesthetics which endears the object of the photograph to them. Most of the photographs which were commented on the same lines as above conspicuously used those fundamentals of photographic production which are also the apparent hallmarks of pornographic aesthetic. An extreme close-up shot, which conveys intimacy through proximity, can invite the viewer to watch with a certain kind of longing. Used with food, zoom not only draws attention but can also impose emotional intimacy and sometimes sensationalize a familiar food. @iamdatingfood frequently uses this trope and many of her posts are close-up shots of familiar street food. Most of the times the zoom is used at the exact moments when glistening syrup is

being poured on a dessert or cheese is oozing out of a pizza. These cases, where the thrust is more on the aesthetic qualities of the image rather than the subject, are a quintessential example of commodification of food.

Bonding over food, virtually

Over the centuries, food has been used as a means of communication and eating together is recognition of companionship and mutual social responsibilities. Etymologically, the word ‘companion’ means ‘bread sharer’. Family meals and inviting over friends and visitors to dine together are more or less common to most cultures. Even in these times when fast and convenience foods have started to become common features of everyday life of many cultures, eating together with family and friends is still seen as significant and desirable. An interesting aspect of consumption of food images online is the simulation of social bonding that comes with it. The online spaces of Instagram accounts become grounds where people, like in real life, invite others for sharing meals, involve others in the food they are having and make plans for communal cooking, fasting etc.

As Instagram allows for a user to ‘tag’ (which results in the tagged user being notified of the mention of one’s account handle and providing a direct link to the specified post) another user in the comments section of a particular post, many users tag their online friends, effectively sending them specific weblinks, in particular food posts. Some Instagram accounts cater specifically to certain metropolitan cities (for example- @mumbaifoodie, @foodelhi) and most of the times they share posts regarding particular eating joints in the city. Posts on such accounts have recurrent comments where one user/commentator tags another with an intent of sharing the information and invites/plans to go out together to the specific eatery.

“@mukta131 bas iss weekend ye (wide smile smiley)”

- (trans. *This! This weekend!*)

“@subham.skd.14 wanna have some?”

“@jyoti.puniaakhilladoo”

(trans. *Treat me to this*)

“@vrinda.bhargava abbe yaaaaaaarrrr. Zamana ho gayaacchemomoskhaye hue. Aja nayaar.”

(trans. *Hey friend. Its been ages since I have had tasty momos. Come soon pal!*)

These comments are by people wanting to try out the specific eateries (featured in the posts) with their friends. Some posts featuring cooked food and their recipes are commented on by people who either want to share those recipes with a friend or are requesting them to cook and share that particular dish or sometimes want to cook it together (@dhavalsopariwala *let's make this*). Sometimes the comments consist solely of the tag, meaning that the user simply wants to draw the attention of the friend to that particular post for whatsoever reason. All such comments help in forging a certain kind of bonding. There is of course no way of knowing how many of the plans made in the virtual world are actually translated into reality, but irrespective of that, the food images do become a reason for forging a connection based on food, albeit for a fleeting moment. Even if some fraction of the plans, emerging from the group communications happening in the online space, are actually realised in real life- where comradeship around food materialised in real time- yet, all of these comments do create a simulation of social bonding.

Fantasy Imagery

Elizabeth Hirschman and Morris Holbrook have described that internal, multisensory images can be classified into two distinct types- historic imagery, which are concerned with an actual happening, for example a blogger's visit to dine in a particular restaurant, and fantasy imagery, which does not deal directly with a previous experience but is constructed in the mind. Sharing a picture of one's

meal is historic imagery for the blogger, as the person relives the experience. For the audience who haven't had that experience, the same picture becomes fantasy imagery. The visual representation, which sometimes is accompanied by some textual representation as well, of the actual physical experience lets the viewer feel that they have experienced it themselves as well. In some cases, even those physiological reactions are recorded which usually accompany undergoing the actual experience, as can be seen in the comments below:

"the description and pic definitely makes tickle the tongue"

"Mouth is watering"

"That looks so damn delicious, I'm already salivating and that description tho! Loved it"

This phenomenon, which is a common feature of food blogs, is referred to as "expressive embodiment" (Pile and Keith). Such consumption can also be linked with constructing reality in imaginative ways- not what the consumer realises is true, but how she would desire the reality to be (Hirschman and Holbrook). They might even imagine themselves to be a part of what they never thought possible, as in consuming exotic, rare and/or expensive dishes. According to the concept of hedonistic consumption, as postulated by Hirschman and Holbrook, instead of making rational and logical decisions, consumers are affective, experimental and subjective. It is concerned with the affective dimensions of the consumption experience. In case of the consumption of food, this applies perfectly well as the process is itself multisensory and has obvious physiological and emotional consequences. We can extend this understanding of consumption to virtual consumption of food images as well. The reasons of immediate pleasure and fulfilment arising from a collection of emotions like fun, fantasy, enjoyment and a simulation of the senses, which drive a food blogger to indulge in a particular dining experience are perhaps the same which drive a visitor to

those accounts to be a part and therefore vicariously consume some of the same experience.

Pictorial pie as pedagogy?

While some Instagram accounts feature particular restaurants or eateries, some others focus on processes, intricacies of home cooking (for example- @thegutlessfoodie, @shwetainthekitchen, @saffrontrail). These can be considered equivalent to cookbooks, with scribbled personal instructions, transmitted from one generation to the next or recipe books containing recipes clipped from newspapers or magazines. Followers and visitors to these accounts are generally people who are genuinely interested in cooking and cook in their daily lives. For them these accounts become pedagogical texts, which can impart information regarding ingredients, different styles, new dishes etc. Such accounts usually feature pictures for utilitarian purposes- an assembly of ingredients, the required exact texture of dough or colour or consistency of some curry or sauce midway in the preparation. Such visual (and written) representations of food may or may not be aesthetically pleasing but are nevertheless enthusiastically consumed by a certain group of audience. The following are some of the comments on such posts:

"I had a lone cucumber in the fridge and as soon as I saw this post in the morning, I knew I would make it for lunch. Though we often make kosambri in almost similar way, never thought about addition of peanuts. It turned out to be Yummm. Thanks for the recipe!!!"

"@saffrontrail I prepared this dish just now for lunch as I have cucumber lying around from quite sometime...My husband, I and my son who is 2 polished the whole cucumber in a jiffy. It was so refreshing and yummy (heart emoji). Now I cant eat cucumber in any other way. Keep such beautiful and simple recipes coming please."

These visitors to the @saffrontrail account were perhaps seduced by the beautiful picture of the salad dish and together with the fact that they happened to have the essential basic ingredient present at hand, decided to go for the recommended dish. They are pleased with themselves for having learnt and successfully tried out something new and different and give the credits to @saffrontrail.

“Pico’s bhoothjolokia (mentioned in the recipe)..where is it available”

“@ishdesai16 it’s a sauce. Even Amazon will have it. Local hypercity has it here.”(a reply to the above comment by @saffrontrail)

“Can you please state quantities for that peppercorns, coriander seeds, fennel seeds and all that.....?”

In these comments, the visitors are asking direct questions regarding the ingredients, their availability, their quantity used in a particular dish etc. For them, these online spaces function as a potential source of culinary education. These spaces might be visited for entertainment and as a leisure activity, but they end up being informational. These forums then can be said to be providing ‘culinary edutainment’ (de Solier 467).

“Classic shot...traditional idli chutney in gourmet form (heart emoji) increase the urad dal and u need only rice and dal. It comes out super fluffy.”

“That’s brilliantly done...I am just curious to know about why taking only the fermented fluffy part, what about the remaining batter.”

Such comments are an evidence of online communities of interest. A virtual community has been defined as a group which is geographically widespread but remains connected through the internet (Su et al.), which offers convenient and permanent spaces for asynchronous get-togethers. Therefore, like-minded people who

can bond over their shared interest in food and cooking use the social media for communication- sharing and learning culinary skills and knowledge.

Apart from culinary knowledge, these online spaces also become involved in transmission of other types of encoded social and cultural knowledge. @shwetainthekitchen, who describes herself first as a 'mom' and second as a food blogger on her account, shares posts about her daughter's school lunchboxes (which are tagged with the hashtag #inherlunchbox) frequently. The photographs of the well styled and ample variety lunchboxes are accompanied by a description and sometimes a summarized recipe.

*"Wow Shweta!!! Cant believe you make such awesome dishes!
Loved this lunchbox ideas.. so healthy and so good!!!!!!
Going to try it out with Prithvi from tomorrow :)))))) thanks
Sweta!"*

"Love the muffins. Will try them soon!! :)"

*"That's a yummy lunchbox! She (the blogger's daughter) must
be so happy (heart emoji)"*

In this case, the blogger-mother, through the display of the prepared lunchbox for her daughter, displays a certain way of caring for her, all the while holding the interest of the child. She comes across as a 'good' mother who provides meals, which are healthy and fun at the same time. Her Instagram account can be understood to be performing a sort of ideological task as well, by inculcating certain discursive views on gender and motherhood in the audience, which is in line with Anne Allison's research on the tradition of obentos, lunchboxes for Japanese nursery school children. She argues that the obentos are invested with a gendered state ideology and how both mother and child are judged and constructed in the process (154). Therefore, apart from the entertainment and pleasure provided by the food photographs, they also inform their consumers- from straightforward practical knowledge to implicit socio-cultural

forms of knowledge. These can be extrapolated to understand that they also inform the consumers regarding matters of 'taste'.

Amassing Culinary Cultural Capital

"@thegutlessfoodie Can you tell me what foofoo is? If you don't mind me asking?"

"Thank you for intro a new taste (Korean veggie pancakes-Yachaejeon) I looked up recipe online thanks to you! Great way to use veggies!"

While analysing class distinctions in France, Pierre Bourdieu had stated:

Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed. (6)

Bourdieu contends that an individual's disposition towards certain goods and practices become reflective of the social class they belong to. This 'taste' is used as a distinguishing mechanism, to distance one class from another and to gain distinction by creating hierarchies in the aesthetic choices. Food has always been an area where these distinctions of taste have been applied. According to Bourdieu, the social class of an individual is dictated not only by the economic capital i.e. financial resources, but two other types of capital as well: social capital, the networks of relationships that people form and cultural capital, which is the acquisition of 'what is called culture, cultivation, Bildung' (244). Such an understanding of cultural capital can be used as a framework to understand the kind of culinary knowledge that is exchanged online. Apart from being sources of pragmatic cooking knowledge, these Instagram accounts also promote and justify certain regimes of valid culinary taste. Accounts like @mumbaifoodie chronicle the 'must visit' places in the city—everything from expensive restaurants serving exotic cuisines to

hole in the wall cafes—and post delectable food pictures from these places. Not only are these pictures devoured up by the followers, but they give them ideas and goals about the most ‘happening’ places in the city to eat at. They not only visit/dine at these places but then, in turn, also share photographs from the same on their own social media accounts. At other times, they are introduced to a ‘new taste (Korean veggie pancakes- Yachaejeon)’ (comment by teslagirl007); by learning the new recipes and cooking the same for either dinner at home with friends or a family member’s lunchbox, they can showcase their know-how about different cuisines and skills to prepare those dishes.

Unlike earlier culinary television, where the shows were broadcast to a mass target audience, the web is not bound up by any such problem of a fixed visitor stream and therefore has a wide variety of things to offer, suitable for different audience groups. The multitude of virtual food-communities, online, are targeted at small niche audience sections, classified on such demographic factors as gender, age, class, lifestyle etc. The contemporary digital foodscapes are therefore servicing a broad variety of social distinctions and taste cultures. Being a follower, visitor and consumer on these foodscapes and trying to immerse oneself in the exchange of information happening there is in itself the work of acquisition of cultural capital and is ‘work on oneself, an effort that presupposes a personal cost, an investment, above all of time’ (Bourdieu 244). The acquired cultural capital proves useful in projects of social distinction and even mobility perhaps.

Conclusion

In her work on virtual spaces, Elizabeth Grosz has critiqued ‘the idea that one could take on a second-order or virtual body and somehow leave one’s real body behind with no trace or residue, with no effects or repercussions’ (42). That is, we cannot understand online and offline spaces as completely different realms without any intersection, where bodies and subjectivities can exist independently in each realm. Using the Derridean concept of ‘trace’.

Anan Lavis states that the images of food on the internet can be looked at as an index or trace of food and they act “as a precursor - a ‘trigger’ perhaps – to an alternative eating that will take place *later* offline” (3). Being regularly exposed to images of food on digital interfaces is linked to various neural, physiological and behavioural responses. The omnipresence of food visuals in contemporary times and the easy access to them leads to adverse effects on the ‘doers’—in a survey conducted on young women, it was found that those who sourced new information about recipes and cooking in general, from cooking shows on television and social media had a positive correlation with Body Mass Index (BMI) whereas those who procured information from either print or in-person sources didn’t show any significant relation with BMI (Pope et al. 135)—and on ‘viewers’— exposure to desirable but high-calorie food cues to overweight and restrained eaters has been shown to increase wanting in them, whereas in normal-weight restrained eaters, it lead to decreased wanting (Ouweland and Papies 59). Such exposure and voluntary or involuntary consumption of food images is especially problematic and nuanced for people with eating disorders. Therefore, it needs to be taken into account that consumption of food images is rarely a neutral harmless activity—it can exacerbate physiological hunger and can problematise the eating patterns of people, especially those who are already struggling with some sort of eating disorders. The impact of continual bombardment of appealing food images on humans living in rapidly changing foodscapes, both real and virtual, needs to be given more consideration and is a topic for further research.

Works Cited

- Abercrombie, Nicholas and Brian Longhurst. *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*. Sage, 1998.
- Allison, Anne. “Japanese Mothers and Obentos: The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus.” *Food and Culture: A*

- Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, Routledge, 2013, pp. 154-172.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large*. U of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Translated by Annette Lavers, The Noonday Press, 1991.
- . "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption." *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, Routledge, 2013, pp. 23-30.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Glaser, U of Michigan Press, 1994.
- . *The System of Objects*. Translated by James Benedict, Verso, 2005.
- Bazin, Andre and Hugh Gray. "The Ontology of the Photographic Image." *Film Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1960, pp. 4-9.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. "Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste." *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, Routledge, 2013, pp. 31-39.
- . "The Forms of Capital." *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John Richardson, Greenwood, 1986, pp. 241-258.
- Campbell, Colin. *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
- Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. Zone, 1994.
- de Solier, Isabelle. "TV Dinners: Culinary Television, Education and Distinction." *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2005, pp. 465-481.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*. MIT Press, 2001.

- Harvey, Charles et al. "William Morris, Cultural Leadership, and the Dynamics of Taste." *Business History Review*, vol. 85, 2011, pp. 245-271.
- Hirschmann, Elizabeth and Morris Holbrook. "Hedonic Consumption: Emerging Concepts, Methods and Propositions." *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 46, no. 3, 1982, pp. 92-101.
- Ibrahim, Yasmin. "Food Porn and the Invitation to Gaze: Ephemeral consumption and the Digital Spectacle." *International Journal of E-Politics*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2015, pp. 1-12.
- Jhally, Sut. *The Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in Consumer Society*. St. Martin's, 1987.
- Kanner, Allen and Mary E. Gomes. "The All-Consuming Self." *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*, edited by Allen D. Kanner et al., Sierra Club, 1995.
- Lavis, Anna. "Food, Bodies, and the "Stuff" of (Not) Eating in Anorexia." *Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2016, pp. 56-65.
- McCracken, Grant. *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*. Indiana University Press, 1988.
- Mejova, Yelena et al. "Fetishizing Food in Digital Age: #foodporn Around the World." International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media, North America, Mar. 2016. <<https://www.aaai.org/ocs/index.php/ICWSM/ICWSM16/paper/view/12998/12745>>.
- Magee, Richard. "Food Puritanism and Food Pornography: The Gourmet Semiotics of Martha and Nigella." *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture*. vol. 6, no. 2, 2007, www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/fall_2007/magee.htm

- McBride, Anne E. "Food Porn." *Gastronomica*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2010, pp. 38-46.
- Mitchell, Thomas. "Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture." *Journal of Visual Culture*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2002, pp. 165-181.
- Nicolosi, Guido. "Biotechnologies, alimentary fears and the Orthorexic Society." *Tailoring Biotechnologies*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2006, pp. 37-56.
- Ouwehand, Carolijn and Esther K. Papies. "Eat it or Beat it. The Differential Effects of Food Temptations on Overweight and Normal-Weight Restrained Eaters." *Appetite*, vol. 55, 2010, pp. 56-60.
- Pile, Steve and Michael Keith. *Geographies of Resistance*. Routledge, 1997.
- Pope, Lizzy et al. "Viewers vs. Doers. The Relationship Between Watching Food Television and BMI." *Appetite*, vol. 90, 2015, pp. 131-135.
- Poulain, Jean Pierre. *The Sociology of Food: Eating and Place of Food in Society*. Bloomsbury, 2017.
- Rousseau, Signe. "Food "porn" in Media." *Encyclopaedia of Food and Agricultural Ethics*, edited by Paul B. Thompson and David Kaplan, Springer, 2014, pp. 1-8.
- Su, Norman Makoto et al. "A Bosom Buddy Afar Brings A Distant Land Near: Are Bloggers a Global Community?" *Communities and Technologies*, edited by Van Den Besselaar et al., Springer, 2005, pp. 171-190.
- Zukin, Sharon and Jennifer Maguire. "Consumers and Consumption." *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2004, pp. 173-197.

READING J. H. PRYNNE'S POETRY IN THE CONTEXT OF FREDRIC JAMESON'S *THE POLITICAL UNCONSCIOUS*

The present paper attempts to read J. H. Prynne's *The Kitchen Poems* (1968) in the context of Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* (1981). The latter text is to be scrutinized to unravel its theoretical insights, sine Jameson discusses a triad of concepts, or vidlicet narrative, mediation and history. Application of these insights will help us comprehend Prynne's *The Kitchen Poems* in a better way, also illustrating the efficacy and comprehensiveness of Jamesonian writing and Prynne's poetic composition.

Prynne, through his poetry reveals his keen interest in present day culture and in the mode of production today and his poetry comes around as nuanced and polysemous. It also goes on to discuss Saussrean binaries, namely the language sign and the referent. Prynne in his initial years was influenced by Donald Davie's *Purity of Diction in English Verse* (1952) and went on to write experimental poetry as mentored by Davie. Prynne was influenced by Davie's concept of "Fleeting Assertion" that underlines the fact of focusing upon the margins for better understanding of phenomena. He was influenced by the writings of Charles Olson and American postmodernist poets Like John Ashberry and W. S. Merwin. He

was an avant-garde poet¹, writing against the grain and experimenting with innovative poetic techniques.

Jameson is a prominent contemporary Marxist theorist and demonstrates the efficacy of Marxian thinking in the interpretation of art and literature. Marxist thinking underlines the idea that art instead of being independent is a part of culture where society is the subject matter. Clement Greenberg in "Avant Garde Art and Kitsch" explains the concept of avant-garde that has been practised more frequently to comprehend capitalism vis-à-vis societal needs. Marxism underlines the idea that what is taken as a norm is actually ideology is being propagated by the ruling class, where a work of art is seen as a product of historical and the cultural forces.

Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* explains that literary criticism does not occur in isolation, rather political interpretation is the constant concomitant leading to various readings of a text. Jameson goes on to focus intently on the seminal idea that individual comprehension is shaped by concepts and categories implicit in cultural tradition. He presents the question of reading past literature which is a product of a culture different from our own. This is resolved thorough Jameson's insight that Marxism is helpful in the solution of the problem because it enumerates history as a single collective narrative to buttress the continuity of the present with the past.

Jameson discusses various theoretical models like psychoanalysis, structuralism and sundry domains of allegory. Here, he heralds the fact of literature as a *Socially Symbolic Act* as also the idea that text is an individual utterance. It emblemizes only when we go beyond this, to realize that the text is social product

¹ Avante Garde are people or works that are experimental, radical, or unorthodox with respect to art, culture and society. This term is loosely used to describes the work of any artist who markedly departs from tradition. It may offer a critique of relationship between producer and consumer. The avante garde pushes the boundaries of what is accepted as the norm or the status quo.

rather than an individual advancement is to be viewed as a collective or class discourse. This social perspective becomes the horizon of human history to take its place in the sequence of modes of production within a coexistence of sundry systems to anticipate specific mode of production.

Jameson goes on to lament the inefficacy of present literary theory, sine it fails to comprehend and address the present scenario. He presents instances of Freudianism and Structuralism as devoid of history and praxis. He alludes to deconstruction as an anti-totalizing process, which he explains as a "less disinterested aesthetics" (53). Literature is seen here as a therapeutic device and the critic as a therapist diagnosing the ills of literary theory. Of course here the political critic/literary therapist attempts to both to cognitively map manifest and latent narrative. Traces of interrupted narrative are deduced and the repressed and buried reality is brought to the surface. Herein, Jameson's doctrine of *The Political Unconscious* finds its function and relevance (p.20). Thus the theorist restores fullness to the text of history.

The conscious mind is mapped to unravel coded manifestations of the unconscious which is shaped by the ego to be brought to the surface to be rationally dealt with. Jameson is more concerned with the aspect of superstructure sine he occupies with himself scrutinizing cultural texts instanced through books and films and revisits to reread the submerged and coded manifestations of the political and the economic base that shaped them in the first place. He also points to the fact that such political and economic features are not visible on the surface in literature. Nevertheless they are present and can be recovered through the perusing of the literary and the cultural, analogous of concepts like Freudian psychoanalysis and or the irrationality of dream.

Jameson revalidates Freud's division of mind into conscious and unconscious as leading to latent and manifest meaning. Manifest is

limited to surface and it is the latent that the dream unravels concerning its presence in the unconscious. This division is more marked in the case of the cultural critic. It is on many occasions that Jameson reveals the fact of the relation between latent and manifest content as inverted.

Jameson argues for the further texts to be read against the grain, which is to say that they be visited in counter intuitive ways to bring out the significant lurking in the margins or the unconscious. A person is controlled by an awareness of such forces that fashion the path from the unconscious to the conscious, from latent to manifest since there are forms of history to be reckoned with. He asserts that subject, is written by history and society, as subject is a for different and varied meanings that allows for more trenchant and fertile analyses of exactly those forces that orient people into being family, society and culture. He firmly believes that the sense of history cannot be directly apprehended, but can only be known through symbolic manifestations. Images employed in literary works are materials to underscore the symbolic but for Jameson history is the benchmark. Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* (1902) for instance tends to be oriented towards history, from the ancient Roman times to the 20th century Britain since it is not only the history of the Congo but also the history of the novelist own life accompanied by historical records and brute facts. It is not merely the factual history of the time; rather it is in the sense of a story as also storytelling. Jameson asserts that version(s) of history are embedded in every text. This leads Jameson to focus on the narrative because narrative usefully mediates the unconscious reality of the text's relationship with history.

Jameson's perception of history does not involve monumental history concerned with kings and queens rather it is the history of struggle and economic evolution of society leading to the emergence of bourgeoisie with appropriate forms of literature, since the theorist follows the Socialist Economist Ernst Mandel's study *Late*

Capitalism (1978), who attributes changing phases of history to the development of capitalism, beginning with early capitalism going through industrial capitalism and then Imperial capitalism to the late capitalism of the present. Jameson reiterates that it is in this sense that history is always present in art and in culture and the reader/critic needs to be aware of this fact.

Jameson then focuses on mediation and regards it as the most crucial form in literature. Mediation is one of the tenets in Marxism wherein human existence is not apprehended directly, but is mediated or accessed via some middle mechanism or concept. Marxist criticism considers the systems like the village, or the religious institution that mediate between an individual and his experience of the world, providing coherence and valuable meaning to existence. In a sense, it could be argued that the supreme mediator is money. Marx himself talks about the way money tends to mediate between subject and object. Jameson considers art and literature as such mediators. He argues that it is narrative, story form and plot that play a dominant role in mediating individual experience and social totality², according to the process of what he calls transcoding – the translation into an accepted code (which consists of certain narrative patterns and expectations) of social and historical reality to make it accessibly mediated for the individual. Jameson says:

The concept of mediation has traditionally been in the way in which dialectical philosophy and Marxism itself have formulated their vocation to break out of the specialized compartments of the (bourgeoisie) disciplines and to make connections among the seemingly as disparate phenomena of social life generally. (*The Political Unconscious* 40)

² *Totality* is a unique way of thinking of Hegel. For Hegel, only the whole is true. Every stage or phase or moment is partially untrue. Hegel's grand idea is "totality" which preserves within it each of the ideas or stages that it has overcome or subsumed. Overcoming and subsuming is a developmental process which preserves all of its "moments" as elements in a structure, rather than as stages or phases.

Satya P. Mohanty observes that one of the main contributions of *The Political Unconscious* to Marxist literary and cultural studies is its substantive theory of narrative as a mediational category. For him, mediation is the classical dialectical for the establishment of relationship, the formal analysis of a work of art and its social ground, or between the internal dynamics of the political state and its economic base. Mediation is dialectical because it has to go back and forth between two rather very different objects. Marxist literature is for him the proper mediation between our individual perception of society as fractured and fragmented on the one hand and the real state of affairs of social totality on the other. As a Marxist he explains that what are “seemingly disparate phenomena” of life are only seemingly disparate and in fact they are all expressions of an underlying totality. It is the fragmentation that is illusory.

Such momentary unification would remain purely symbolic and were it not understood that social life in its fundamental reality one is and indivisible, a seamless web, a single inconceivable and trans-individual process, in which there is no need to invert ways of linking language events and social upheavals or economic contradictions because on that level they were never separated from each other (*The Political Unconscious* 41).

There is another level of mediation in Jameson's work and that is the mediation between Hegelian and Althusserian perceptions. As Hegelian philosophy advocates on the other hand that everything is a totality and on the other hand, Althusser disagrees, since for him the superstructure (for instance art) and base (economics) are semi- autonomous,³ and so separate from each other, but Jameson is able to mediate between the two dialectically to synthesise these

³ *Semi-autonomous* is Althusserian thinking of base and superstructure. Althusser argued that the relationship between base and superstructure is not simply one of cause and effect. In some ways base determines the superstructure, but in other ways the superstructure determines the base and in still another way the two are really relatively free of one another.

apparently differing traditions. He goes with the Althusserian idea that totality is not available for representation any more. It is accessible in the form of some ultimate truth, but it is available, nonetheless, at second hand through various mediating forms, such as narrative.

Narrative, then, is for Jameson a key mode of mediating between the individual and society, as well as between the apparent fragmentation of society and the real totality underlying it. Narrative might be the story line of any form of a work of art, which tells the sort of story about the development of a literary form over time. The advantage in particularly focussing on narrative is that it provides comprehensiveness without reducing the elements of the text to static and idealised elements. A story will link together all the elements: protagonists, events, descriptions, and other textual elements, and, as such, narrative is the place in fiction most directly to express the 'unconscious' totality of real life. This is the meaning of the book's subtitle: *Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*; the narrative that mediates our existences (from the stories we tell ourselves) to symbolically embody our social reality.

Jamesonian theory has its roots in Sartrean philosophy. Jameson refers to Marxism as "Grand Narrative" to interpret art and culture in the postmodern world. His preference of Marxism is noteworthy, but his outlook is neo-Marxist⁴. He extends Marxism by adding the concept of culture to it. Jameson exemplifies in *The Political Unconscious* that "literature and culture only made sense if they are placed in the context of grand narrative-Marxism." (18) He

⁴ Neo-Marxism is a loose term for various twentieth century approaches that amend or extend Marxism and Marxist theory. Neo Marxists tried to develop a critical perspective in the discussion of all social practices, that is a perspective which is preoccupied by the critique of ideology – of systematically distorted accounts of reality which attempts to conceal and legitimate asymmetrical power relations. They are concerned with the way in which social interests, conflicts and contradictions are expressed in thought and how they are produced.

analyses novels by nineteenth century novelists: Honore de Balzac, George Gissing and the modernist writer Joseph Conrad in this work from the neo Marxist perspective. Jameson considers Marxism as a proper basis for interpretation and regards it as possessing primacy over other disciplines and hermeneutic device. Jameson says:

Only Marxism can give us an adequate sense of the essential mystery of the cultural past....These matters can recover their urgency for us only if they are retold within the unity of single great collective story..... [the story of] Marxism. (*The Political Unconscious* 19)

Sean Homer and Douglas Kellner in *Fredric Jameson: A Critical Reader* (2004) assess Jameson's involvement across academic disciplines, from literature to economy, film studies to cultural politics. The study "Introduction" demonstrates the richness and usefulness of Jameson's critical thinking to map the world. In the Homer alludes to Perry Anderson's *The Origins of Postmodernity* (1998) to explore the widespread expansion of Western Marxism after the World Wars which reduced orthodox political and economical form, and turned to philosophy. Then he refers to Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer and Jean Paul Sartre to present Jameson's developing interest in philosophy and his new vision of orthodox Marxism. Anderson says:

Constructed a remarkable field of critical theory, not in isolation from the surrounding currents of non- Marxist thought, but typically in creative tension with them. This was a tradition concerned with question of method – the epistemology of a critical understanding of society-on which classical Marxism had left few pointers. But its philosophical was not merely procedural: it has one central focus: Western Marxism was above all a set of theoretical investigations of the culture of the developed capitalism. (1998, p.69)

Jameson in his early years was greatly influenced by the ideas of Jean Paul Sartre. He owes his interest in Marxism to him as also his dealings with the New Left. This is evidenced from Jameson's *Sartre: The Origin of Style* (1971) which reveals his keen interest in individualism and Marxian philosophy. Kellner also opines that Sartre was Jameson's earliest choice for comprehension of Marxism. Jameson may be lauded for the fact that it was he who related Sartrean philosophy with Marxism's all pervasive meta-language facilitating us to situate and co relate all other partial dialogues. It strengthens the idea that class struggle is the inevitable form of social reality and it is this which determines social event.

Jameson enumerates various forms of textual interpretation and goes on to rework on these sundry models. He explains dialectic methods for the explanation of the text. Jameson also discusses psychoanalysis and its importance for the comprehension of unconscious which he feels there is a need to historicize Freudian method which renders psychic fragmentation visible, where capitalism has acted as the catalytic agent. He points out three concentric frameworks, namely specific understanding of the text and its political history, moving on to comprehend a text as an element existing in for particular social formation and imminent class contradiction. He also envisages the framework wherein a text is viewed in relation to the historical perspective vis-a-vis mode of production. Then the text is critiqued in the mode of dialectical analysis, it is history as well as the mode of production that lead to the final horizon of semantic interpretation to discover that social formations are historically existing social structures consisting in the overlay and coexistence of various modes of production. Jameson is of the view that apart from the relevance of diachronic, it is the synchronic which provides clarity regarding a particular mode of production

It was conventionally believed that poetry elaborates happy times, but it should also include dejection and despondency. Bob Lerner in

The Hatred of Poetry (2001) says a poet's task is fulfilled only when he gauges limitations and failures of the historical. He says that poetry may be a song of an individual, but it must lead to revolution in society to annihilate social inequality. This is akin to Prynne's poetry that repudiates inequity and cohesion to focus on the humanitarian. Prynne's poems offer no easy connect, rather they unravel problematics of an individual's relation with the world. It goes to Prynne's credit that he juxtaposes the poetic and the political, revealing complexities for comprehension of the contemporary times. Prynne elucidates the complexities of power and its edifices.

Prynne's poetry is not an easy read, since it brings together disjunctive phrases and often inter-disciplinary in content. The poet expects greater critical dexterity from the reader. Jameson's theoretical corpus and critical insights help in the comprehension of Prynne's poems. For instance Prynne's "Die A Millionaire" and "Sketch for a Financial Theory of the Self" may be read along with insights from Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*, where the former poem describes the sway of capitalism and its impact upon the people. It also draws attention to the tension between materiality, value and essence on the one hand, and various relations on the other hand. The expansion of the capitalist world is stressed through the construction of the good and the building of various dams and Suez Canal. Prynne's says in the opening lines:

The first essential thing is to take knowledge

Back to springs, because despite

Everything and especially the recent

Events carried under the flag, there is

Specific power in the *idea* of it. (Prynne, 13)

Jameson explains that a work of art a (poem) substantiates a peculiar form of engagement with the language, so the focus has to be on the narrative as also on various textual forms employed

therein. Freudian concept of surface and depth is considered as pertinent to view literary text as emblemizing psychic depths. Surface meanings are at the most unreliable indicators and the relevant and the viable have to be excavated. Surface reality merely mediates the reality of the unconscious in the text. Prynne, for instance reiterates the word *idea* implying wide ramifications and a plethora of connotations. This is true of most of the stanzas of a poem, since the poem engages: both with, materiality and value. There is greater need to decode the poem with allusions to monks from the medieval times with their passion to spread Christianity with crusading zeal. Hence the employed phrases 'Drang nach Osten' and 'Western Frontier'. This is reminiscent of Jameson's 'Always Totalise' and 'Always Historicise' since 'seventh century monks' movement' significantly relates with history of religion during the pre capitalist feudal times. Also 'Drang nach Osten' had been associated with Germany's eastward expansion the coercive Nazi rule. Here Jameson is pertinent since he explains that narration needs to be deciphered because it is mediation between the social totality and individual experience. Here Prynne points out that it was imperialism of the worst kind. Jameson states that narrative should be deciphered because it is replete with meanings, hence polysemous. He says:

Imperialism was just
 An old, very old name for that
Idea, that what you want, you by
 Historic process and just readiness
 To travel, also "need" – and
 Need is of course the sacred daughter
 Through which you improve, by
 Becoming more extensive. (Prynne 13)

It is language as Jameson says that orients the world, to act doubly, both as restricting and liberating individuals, more so in the

case of poetic composition to be aware of the linguistic materialism and its ramification. Prynne strives to juxtapose the duality of language with the flouting of rules of grammar where the underlined tendency is imperialistic i.e., to acquire and to make people acquiesce. Even otherwise the poem develops with the twin themes of the textual and the materialistic, emphasising materialization of ideologies and as Jameson would say the complication of the world.. The semantic field stands considerably widened along with the dense fabric of the text alluding to hoarding and exploitative suppression of people and elements of nature. Lucre seems to be the sole mediator as in capitalism in the present times. Prynne says:

Otherwise it's a
Purchase, of natural course, the alteration
Or storage of current like dams in the
River: what starts up as irrigation ends up
Selling the mega wattage across the grid. (Prynne 14)

The I/We duality is comprehended vis-a-vis this grid and an ordering system including the linguistic and the materialistic. The poet seems to be deconstructing the idea of capitalism as also providing a catalogue of its concomitants. The poet goes on to say that it is right "from the *springs*" that water is soiled, the water of life. The ideas are further extended in "Sketch for a Financial Theory of the Self" which is an extended contemplation on the concept of self and its desires. Other concepts like individuality and totality are also alluded to along with avarice, self love and the imperialistic. Prynne says:

We give the name of
Ourselves to our needs
We want what we are. (Prynne 19)

Prynne focuses on the gap between language and the real and it

is this gap which opens between the name and what is named, between sign and referent. Linguistic and portrayal of materialistic systems overlap to penetrate deception and trickery of the present times. In Jameson's term the poem reveals the relationship between the name and object within the economic field to suggest the manner in which it impacts on the self. Thus Jameson's insights help in unravelling the extended meanings of Prynne's poems where we seem to be in the third phase of capitalism, with total commodification and in need of cognitive mapping. Prynne says:

The name is of course is that money
The absurd trust in value is the pattern of
Bond and contract and interest- just
Where the names exactly equivalent to the trust
Given to them. (Prynne 19)

This income passes though both individual and society, hinted through I/We duality where even the unconscious is impacted by the economic domain. Choices imply independence, but in reality these are conditioned by the bonds and contracts of the economical. The narrative shows the mediated reality where name and numbers are merely the surface of the depth that hides the capitalist conditioning of individual in the modern world, seeping into language and impinging upon the psychical. Since the economic dominates, hence it has come to exert its authority over the poetical, where language is conditioned by the economic mode of production. The textual forms present the truth that the trust reposed in value equals the trust reposed in words, as a result the deceptive nature of names and numbers is forgotten. Jamesonian thinking deciphers that it is only money that runs all types of relations. Then it is felt that language is capable of conveying the message intended.

Prynne articulates the fact that "our necks are in our polluted history" and where materiality has become the identity. The truth

and the self are reified⁵. He states:

Which is grossly untrue, because we
Pay for it well, I have squandered
So much life and good nature I could hardly
Guess the account. (Prynne, 19)

Here "I" may be the persona, entrapped in economic domination, where *silk* and *stars* buttress the *idea*. Further on the expression concerning the broken tools underlines the idea of the fragmented consciousness.

Thus Prynne aptly describes subservience to money in the many spheres of life. Language tends to lose its thought provoking characteristics in favour of staleness. This in Jameson's terms, can be seen as commodification of language and the human being is turned into an economic resource

Jameson and Prynne both comprehend history and its significance. The poet situates things and development in historical form to examine their truth and critiqued the notion of advancement. Marianne Morris has studied Prynne's poetry to explain that poet's use of disjunctive phrases and disorganization of grammar are apt devices to portray the contemporary scene. He has all along articulated the themes of subjectivity and modernity in addition to the problematic of language and capitalism.

Works Cited

- Anderson, P. *The Origins of Postmodernity*. London: Verso, 1998.
Donald, Davie. *Purity of Diction in English Verse*. Chatoo & Windus, 1952.

⁵ *Reification*. In Marxism, reification (German: Verdinglichung, literally: "making into a thing") is the process by which social relations are perceived as inherent attributes of the people involved in them, or attributes of some product of the relation, such as a traded commodity.

Greenberg, Clement. "Avant Garde and Kitsch." *Partisan Review* 6, Fall 1939.

Homer, S & D. Kellner. *Fredric Jameson: A Critical Reader*. Hampshire:

Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Jameson, Fredric *Sartre: The Origin of a Style*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1961.

—. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*.

N.Y.: Cornell University Press. 1981.

Lerner, Ben. *The Hatred of Poetry*. Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2001.

Olson, Charles. "Projective Verse." *Poetry New York*. 1950.

Prynne, J. H. *Kitchen Poems*. London: Cape Goliard Press, 1968.

KUNTAKA'S THEORY OF *VAKROKTI*: THE LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE

Literature is the most conscious use of language. It is a language within language and an art of language. It is a special kind of human discourse in which writer tries to communicate his/her vision or ideas in a highly individualized medium by resorting to a particular, and in part, unique use of language. This unique use of language is a process in which the basic concept is transformed into an effective and meaningful message. It is the most delightful and perfect form of utterance that human word can reach. Indian thinkers have their own distinctive concept of the language of literature in which they fully appreciate the oblique elements which they call *vakrokti*. In this paper an attempt has been made to unfold how Kuntaka treats the language of literature as *vakrokti*, delineating its nature and different levels.

Vakrokti, etymologically has two components—*vakra* and *ukti* (literally, a crooked or indirect speech), thus impregnated with obliqueness of expression. Raghavan defines it as a striking, oblique expression. According to Kuppuswami Shastri, *vakrokti* can be understood as obliquity of expression from the commonplace. The earliest use of *vakrokti* is discernible in the *Atharvaveda*, Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā*, Amrû's *Amrûâtakam* and BâGa's

Kâdambarî. In the *Atharvaveda*, it is used in the sense of crookedness. Subhandu used the word *vaidagdhya* in the sense of *vakrokti*. Amarû and BâGa used *vakrokti* in the sense of humorous remark—the former in the description of the condition of his heroine who had become angry with her husband for the first time and the latter in a bantering humorous speech made by *Candrapî a* about the quarrel of the parrot and jealous *mainâ*. The parrot, addressing *Candrapî a*, said that she also understood all oblique statements and could make use of witty remarks. This shows that there were poets before Kuntaka who were already aware of *vakrokti* in one way or the other.

Kuntaka considers *vakrokti* as the language of literature in an exhaustive way, delineating its nature, types and significance in his treatise *Vakroktijîvitam*. In it he attempts the task of literary analysis, critical appreciation and appraisal from a total perspective of a text as a practical critic. He defines *vakrokti* as an utterance, characterised by wit or ingenuity. To him, the language of literature, born of writer's compositional skill, adorning both word and meaning, is *vakrokti*. According to him, it is a striking mode of speech differing from and transcending the established or current mode of speech. Ordinary language gratifies a rational or practical impulse and exhibits the minimum of perception. The language of literature gratifies a perceptual impulse and exhibits the minimum of reason.

Kuntaka's *vakrokti* is an inevitable and deliberate departure from the empirical linguistic mode to achieve aesthetic effect. It is a deviation from the common parlance, which means "diction is different...striking combinations or relations of things which are beyond the reach of ordinary matter-of-fact men" (Kane 385) and it is dictated by the very necessities of poetic facts and it is not an intellectual but imaginative activity. Krishnamoorthy writes, "*Vakrokti* is not just an out-of-the way expression or poetic turn; it is the masterly art underlying every element of poetry and involving effortless and spontaneous transformation of the prosaic raw-

materials into things of consummate beauty" (59).

In fact, in Kuntaka's view there is no line of demarcation between *vakrokti* and the language of literature; they have invariably the same character assimilated with each other. R. S. Pathak summarizes the salient features of Kuntaka's theory of *vakrokti* as follows: (i) Obliquity is an essential factor in [a literary composition]; (ii) It is a striking mode of speech and depends upon the individual power of the poet; (iii) It helps [a literary composition] to impart an unspeakable delight to the connoisseur; (iv) It distinguishes [a literary composition] from matter-of-fact speech; (v) [A literary composition] becomes lively in association with *vakrokti*; (vi) *Vakrokti* is called obliquity arising out of [literary] function (*kavi-vyâpâra-vakratva*). It is also recognized as the embellishment (*alaAk[ti]*) of the word and its meaning, the physical constituents of [a literary composition]; (vii) *Vakrokti* and [a literary composition] are invariably associated with each other; an unembellished [a literary composition] can hardly be conceived; (viii) [Literary] delectableness causes an elevation or consummation; (ix) Whatever renders [a literary composition] charming must be recognized as *vakrokti* (109-110).

To conclude, every charming feature of literature, according to him, must be recognized as *vakrokti*. Referring to the conventional definition that a word and sense in their alliance constitute literature, Kuntaka lays down the qualification that this alliance must have the speciality of being characterised by what he calls *vakratva* or *vaicitrya*. A literary composition is strange, and therefore beautiful. It is strange because there is an obliquity from what is commonplace, or in other words, a slight exaggeration. As the title of his *Vakroktijñvitam* unfolds, *vakrokti* is the life of literature as it has the delightful union of word and meaning and is capable of affording pleasure to the *sah[daya]*. Krishna Chaitanya rightly opines:

Literature is distinguished by the supremacy of utterance (*uktipradhâna*). Utterance, here, does not refer to the verbal

tissue alone. It emphasises both-the content, image, episode and thought coloured by emotion, and the form, the special, poetic verbalisation. Kuntaka explains the special oblique quality (*vakratâ*) of poetic expression as the peculiar charm (*vicchitti*) or strikingness (*vaicitrya*) which can be clearly donated to ordinary expression by the imagination of the poet (*kavipratibhâ*). It is the mode of expression in which this imagination incarnates itself that makes literature stand apart from the matter-of-fact speech or scientific discourse (Chaitanya 58).

Kuntaka himself says that his purpose in writing a fresh treatise on poetics is to establish the idea of "*lokottaracam akârakârivaicitryasiddhye*" (VJ, I.2) (*strikingness* which causes extraordinary charms in literature). He affirms that it is a charming deviation from the ordinary mode of expression of ideas that constitute the soul of literature. He himself defines it in the text, saying:

ûabdârthausahitau vakrakavivyâpârauâlîni,

bandhe vyavasthitau kâvyam tadvidâlhâdakârîGi. (VJ, I.7)

(i.e. a literary composition is that word and sense together enshrined in a style revealing the artistic creativity of the writer on the one hand and giving aesthetic delight to the man of taste on the other.)

In order to understand Kuntaka's concept, it would be proper to know how a *kavi* (writer) and *kâvyâ* (a literary composition) have been defined. The word, "*kavi*" literally means 'one that shows' and he/she who shows must necessarily have himself seen. One may in this sense understand the word "*kavi*" as the equivalent of seer. He/she portrays the language not as it is commonly known, but as it ought to be; and it is the vision of the true word one gets through his works that, according to this view, is the source of

satisfaction in reading literature (Hiriyanna 21). Like the Greek word “*poiema*”, the Sanskrit word “*kāvya*” literally means ‘something made or created by a poet’ (*kave% karma kāvya*m). Hence, if anything is the soul of a literary composition, it should be *kavi vyâpâra* (the writer’s creative art). This is the initial incontrovertible stand of Kuntaka and on this foundation is built the superstructure of his theory of *vakrokti*.

Kuntaka makes no distinction between writer and the creative activity and holds that differentiations of *rñtis* and *mârgas* should be based on poetic function. The writer’s temperament alone, says he, can furnish a reliable criterion for their differences:

santi tatra trao mârgâ% kaviprasthanahetava%

sukumâro vicitraûca madhyamaûcobhayâtmaka% (VI, I.24)

(A classification of styles can be justifiable only when it is based on the temperamental differences amongst poets themselves. For example, a writer gentle by temperament is gifted with an innate literary power of the same order, since the literary creativity and the creator are inseparable from each other).

It is this fusion of the literary creativity with the writer which makes a language the language of literature. The mediate word which literature cannot miss without ceasing to be literature is the word used, not in the denotational function, but with the power of expression which only the reality of the genuinely *kavi vyâpâra* can endow. Such expression does not convey thoughts directly in the manner of prosaic discourse. It does things to readers, stirs their hearts so profoundly that a new attitude takes shape in them which can lead to new thoughts about reality, the world’s and their own. Art moulds character obliquely by achieving new compositions of feeling:

The concept of *kavi vyâpâra* is similar to the *œaiva*

system. In the *œaiva* metaphysical system, as observed earlier, the highest principle is *œaiva*. There is nothing beyond this reality; all that moves in the universe is enveloped by his living presence. And, his *œakti* is described as heart-essence of *œiva* (*h(dyamparamesthina%)*). Similarly, in the world of poetry, the poet is the lord and his *œakti* which is nothing but *vakrokti* in its creative process, is regarded as the essence of poetry. This *œakti* or *pratibhâ* is not only the essence of poetry, but the essence of the poet too. (Hegde 104)

The value of *pratibhâ* has been recognised in the Indian system right from the beginning. Its role as the primary cause of poetry has been stressed variously. In India long before poetics began to take shape as a distinct discipline, in the Vedic Period itself, we see the intuitive understanding of the reality of the unconscious process. The reality is *pratibhâ*. It is from the unconscious levels of the literary creativity that the poetic idea and word emerge to light. The roots of this view may be traced back to the *Zgveda*. If *prajñâ* is *buddhistrakâliki* (timeless knowledge), *pratibhâ* is responsible for flashes of insight in the mind, transcending the limits of time. *Pratibhâ* is accepted by Indian Scholars as the most important cause of a literary composition, the other two being *abhyâsa* (practice) and *vyutpatti* (scholarship). To Abhinavagupta, it is *apûrva-vastu-nirmâGa- kcamaprajñâ* (the capacity of creating something unique). Anandavardhana opines that it is the gift that makes a writer great. A writer, endowed with his power, is able to transform trite ideas into a real literary composition. According to Mahimabhattacha, it is the writer's imagination when the mind is concentrated on the choice of proper words and ideas suited for proper evocation of *rasa*. He calls it the third eye of Lord Siva, for it reveals to the poet the very life of things. Bhamma louta maintains in his *Kâvyakautuka* that the poet must have two-fold endowment of vision and expression. It has been said that no non-seer can be deservingly called a writer, and one is a seer only by virtue of his

vision. Vision is the power of disclosing intuitively the reality underlying the manifold materials in the world and their aspects. To be termed 'writer' it is not enough to be possessed of the vision of reality. But in everyday speech the world accords that title to him alone who possesses vision as well as expression. Thus, though the first poet i.e. Valmiki was highly gifted with a clear vision, he was not hailed as a poet by people until he embodied it in a poetical work.

Kuntaka holds that this *pratibhā* (poetic genius) i.e. *vakra kavi vyâpâra*, also known as *vyâpâra-prâdhânyavâda* is responsible for the whole literary activity. His conception of literature is well matched form and content—where sounds beautifully vie with sounds and ideas with ideas—set in the composition of the writer. According to him, such composition as impregnated with matched form and content, gives aesthetic pleasure to those who know its true nature. "This deviation of language used by the writer is, as given in his *Srikanthacharita*, like the beautiful curve of the crescent moon and quite unlike that of the dog's tail. Significant words and their senses form the body of [a literary composition] and *vakrokti* consisting in the clever and dexterous choice of words and ideas forms its embellishment" (Sankaran 121).

Kuntaka is always concerned with two concepts 'what' (i.e. what the writer endeavours to express) and 'how' (i.e. how the writer expresses it). He establishes the importance of *kavi svabhâva* (writer's temperament), the difference of which makes differences in *kavi karma* (literary function), the product of *kavi svabhâva*. He is one of the few Sanskrit theorists who puts a clear emphasis on the imaginative power of the poet and considers it to be the source of the characteristic charm of poetic expression. He regards embellished speech as poetry, but holds that the source of this embellishment, even if it consists of figures of speech, is the poetic imagination. He, therefore, draws a distinction between what may be called speech figure, on the one hand, and poetic figure on

the other. In a formal scheme of poetics, speech figure and poetic figure may correspond but in a poetic figure Kuntaka discovers *vakratva*, a kind of differentia which consists of a peculiar turn of expression resulting in *vicchitti* or *vaicitrya* (a characteristic strikingness) and depends on *kavi pratibhâ nirvartti tatva* (the imaginative activity of the writer). The so called figures of orthodox poetics are admissible only when they possess these characteristics of peculiar charm imparted by the imagination of the poet. Kuntaka maintains, therefore, that embellishments do not 'belong' to poetry; that is to say, they are not added externally, but poetry embellished speech itself, the particular embellishment depending on the poetic imagination.

It is important to note that Kuntaka does not define *kavi vyâpâra* because he is conscious of the fact that it is in its nature undefinable. However, he analyzes it elaborately and classifies its functions, as *vakratâs*. He says that

*kavivvyâpâravakratvaprakâra% sambhavanti cama,
pratyekam bahavo bhedâstecâm vicchittiæobhina%.*

(VJ. I.18)

(Art in the poetic process is divisible into six categories. Each one of them may have numerous subdivisions, every subdivision striking one by a new shade of beauty).

Obliquity is of six types, each with a number of sub-divisions striking the reader by a subtle nuance of literature. The six types are: obliquity in the arrangement of syllables, obliquity in the base forms of substantives, obliquity in the inflectional forms of substantives, obliquity in a whole sentence admitting of thousand varieties, including a whole lot of figures, obliquity in parts or incidents, obliquity in the entire composition, which may be spontaneous or studied, both transmitting beauty and delight. These six functions or *vakratâs* of *kavi vyâpâra* are at six levels: *varGa-*

vinyâsa (phonetic), *pada-pûrvârdha* (lexical), *pada-parârdha* (grammatical), *vâkya* (sentential), *prakaraGa* (episodic) and *prabandha* (compositional). He gives a detailed exposition to these six functions by classifying them further.

The first function is at the level of *varna-vinyâsa* (phonetic arrangement) which is the 'art in the arrangement of syllables'. The first kind of arrangement is:

*eko dvau bahavo varGâ vadhyamâna puna% puna%,
svalpântarastridhâ soktâ varnavinnyâsa vakratâ.*

(VJ. II.1)

This arrangement gives texture and beauty to the language and makes it oblique. Here, syllable stands for consonantal sound and it is three fold:

1. Only one consonant closely repeated – repetition of one sound
2. Two consonants closely repeated – repetition of two sounds
3. Many consonants closely repeated – repetition of more than two sounds

The other level is when consonants are combined with their nasals in alliteration; when consonants are doubled and reiterated; or when the rest becomes conjunct with 'ra' etc. in alliteration. Sometimes alliteration is employed without any interval too, to contribute to high poetic charm. The last one is the use of rhyme (*yamaka*) which consists in the words of similar sound with different meaning, perspicuous and pleasing to the ear, and endowed with decorum. These varieties are considered as *vṛttivaicitrya* (beauty of literary mode) by Kuntaka. He also includes the arrangement of *varGas* without any interval employed artistically by the writer for a high poetic charm. He calls it the third sub-level of *varGa-vinyâsa*. The fourth sub-level, according to Kuntaka, is the repetition of new

varGa. He holds that a discontinuance of earlier repetition of *varGas* and choice of new ones also impart beauty to the expression. Mentioning the sub-levels of *varGa-vinyâsa*, he remarks that chime also falls under it, and adds that chime should be affected without extra effort; it should be adorned with syllables which are not harsh; it should be in consonance with feelings conveyed; and lastly, it should be with propriety. All these sub-levels of *varGa-vinyâsa* have innumerable charming effects in determining precise nature of attributes and style based on them. But they need a careful attention as they have their own limitations. Keeping the limitations in his mind, Kuntaka holds that the arrangement of *varGas* should not violate propriety and should be in consonance with the feelings conveyed. It should be without extra effort, adorned with syllables which are not harsh. It should be very carefully chosen and should not be tarnished by unattractive *varGas*. And, finally, lucidity should be maintained at any cost. Kuntaka says that writers use these sub-levels of *varGa-vinyâsa* in order to impart beauty to the poetic expression. They are, in fact, used for various kinds of effects in various ways.

The second level is *pada-pûrvârdha* (lexical) which is found in the basal forms of the words: *rû hi-vaicitrya* (usage), *paryâya* (synonym), *upacâra* (metaphorical expression), *vicecaGa* (epithet), *saAv{ti* (concealment), *v{tti* (indeclinable), *liEga* (gender), *kriyâ* (verb).

In *kâvya*, Âcârya Kuntaka holds, the writer is also guided by the consideration of special tense, case, number, person, voice, prefix, suffix and particle. Strikingness may appear in the terminal part of the word. He discusses these various sources in his treatment of *vakratâ* in the inflectional forms of substantives. At this level, all possibilities of varying the grammatical construction of an expression are included. Defining it, Kuntaka says that:

parasaparsya úobhâyai bahava% kvacita,
prakârâ janayantyetâm citracchâyâmanoharâm.

(VJ, II.34)

(When several forms of such literary turns occur together in such a way as to enhance the beauty of one another, they go to produce artistic charm, reminiscent of myriad-faced beauty).

According to Kuntaka, this charm is produced at the level of *pada-parârdha*- which bears many sub-levels like *kâla* (tense), *kâraka* (case) *sâAkhyâ* (number) *puruca* (person), *upagraha* (affix), *upasarga* (prefix) and *nipâta* (particle).

The fourth function of the writer works at the level of *vâkya* (sentence) to deal with *vastu* (contents or subject-matter). Defining it, Kuntaka writes:

*udârasvaparaspandasundaratvena varGanam,
vasuno vakrasabdaikagocaratvena vakratâ.*

(VJ, III.1)

(When the subject matter is described in a way conducive to beauty by virtue of its own infinite natural charm and by means of exclusively artistic expression, we may take it as an instance of creative beauty relating to content).

Kuntaka holds that *vastu*, replete with beauty, serves an integral purpose in a poetic composition. The *vastu* of the composition may be *sahajâ* (natural), *âhârya* (imposed). On the basis of this division of *vastu*, Kuntaka has divided *vâkya* into two sub-levels: *sahajâ* and *âhârya*. When the *vastu*, replete with innate beauty, is described without heavy embellishment in a simple style, it has *sahajâ* and when the expression attains a heightened beauty due to the use of skill, we have *âhârya*. Here the skill means technical art acquired by the poet. This excels the beauty of individual elements such as words, meaning, attributes and embellishment. The subject-matter is not entirely an imaginative matter. Rather it has its own power in it but with no attraction. The writer, by his art, imagines a divine beauty in it and its character becomes potent and prominent, manifesting a new form of beauty. Thus the subject-matter and the

writer's art are complementary to each other to arrive at the same end.

PrakaraGa vakratâ (episodic obliquity)-the fifth kind of function deals with the oblique use of *prakaraGa* (episode). The art of devising episodes or incidents in such a way that they give maximum consistency to the total effect of the poetry is at the level of *prakaraGa*. Kuntaka says:

*apyâmulâdanâûaEkyasamutthâne manorathe
kâpyunmîlati ni%ûîmâ sâ prabândhânûa vakratâ.*

(VJ, IV.2)

(When the intended object at the end will remain inscrutable from the beginning (i.e. suspense remains constant till the denouement), the unique and boundless poetic skill underlying it all should be regarded as the poetic beauty of an episode).

Here he means to say that the writer, overwhelmed with the zest of creation, creates an alluring charm in the subject – matter by laying down the suspense unabated from the beginning up to the very end of the story. According to him, this very charm is nothing but *prakaraGa*. He describes it at the following eight levels: *utapâdyaalâvaGya* (modified source story), *upakârya-upakâarakabhâva* (episodic relationship), *vicæicmhaprakarGa* (particular event and episode), *aEgirasanicycandanikasa* (dominant *rasa*), *apradhânaprasaEga* (secondary episodes), *prakaraGântara* (play within play), *sandhiviniveæa* (juncture).

Prabandha (composition) is the last function of *kavi vyâpâra*. This is said to bear the beauty of the combined complex of the five functions at the levels of *varGa* (phoneme), *pada pûrvârdhha* (lexis), *pada parârdhha* (grammar), *vâkya* (sentence), *prakaraGa* (episode). The last function of *kavivyâpâra* works at the following sub-levels: *rasântara* (changing the *rasa*), *samâpana* (winding up the story), *kathâ-viccheda* (intending end), *anucâEgika-phal*

(contingent objective), *nāmakaraGa* (title), and *tulya-kathā* (identical subject).

Thus, Kuntaka's theory of *vakrokti* is a viable theory of the language of literature. It is based on an aesthetic concept which is never lured away by what is ordinary and ornate since its whole concern is to distil the aesthetic essence in the ordinary as well as extraordinary ingredients of the subject. It is so comprehensive that it includes text, context, writer and reader in the act of literary interpretation at its six levels i.e. arrangement of syllables, the base forms of substantives, the inflectional forms of substantives, a whole sentence admitting of thousand varieties, including a whole lot of figures, episodes or incidents and the entire composition, each with a number of sub-divisions infused with the capacity of making the language striking. The exposition of the theory of *vakrokti* makes it clear that a language is transformed into the language of literature by the writer. He, by introducing an element of strangeness into what one hears and experiences everyday, satisfies a basic demand of human nature — that for a pleasant surprise. This language of literature, according to Kuntaka is *vicitrabhidhā*, because the *vakratva* or *vakra-bhāva* underlying it becomes synonymous with *vaicitrya* or *vicitra bhāva*, which transcends *abhidhā* (the ordinary connotation). It is the language of literature that heightens the beauty, qualities, nature, feelings, action or activities, circumstances, internal state, character, physical beauty, objective, scene and thought in tune with feelings. It also heightens the integral part of the literal meaning, gives a different meaning to achieve excellence by its own splendour and expresses some impossible meaning. This is effective only when it appears in disguise, that is to say, when it is shaded by the brilliance of style of the writer. In a plain style, it makes all the show, throwing the rest of the utterance into shade. Though a writer, for special reasons, may now and then renounce the use of figurative language, it remains true that this is the characteristic and habitual mode of utterance, not only of a literary composition, but of all emotional prose. To conclude, it is an

indispensable character in the texture of literature; it is a striking mode of speech; it is the result of a talented writer or, in other words, it depends upon *kavi-vyâpâra*; it is a literary expression of speech as distinguished from expression or speech, either of the ordinary work-a-day life or of the scientific laboratory, the scholastic class-room and the philosophical text-book; it is also recognised as the embellishment of the word and its meaning, the physical constituent of literature; it facilitates the expression to give a kind of unique pleasure to the *sah{daya*.

WORKS CITED

- Arnold, Matthew. "The French Play in London". *English Literature and Irish Politics*. ed. R.H. Super. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973. Print.
- Chaitanya, Krishna. *Sanskrit Poetics: A Critical and Comparative Study*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965. Print.
- Hegde, Suryakant. *The Concept of Vakrokti in Sanskrit Poetics: A Reappraisal*. New Delhi: Readworthy Publications Ltd., 2009. Print.
- Hiriyanna, M. *Art Experience*. Mysore: Kavyalaya Publishers, 2000. Print
- Kane, P. V. *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsi Das, 1961. Print.
- Krishnamoorthy, K. *New Bearings of Indian Literary Theory and Criticism*. Ahmedabad, 1982. Print.
- . *Indian Literary Theories: A Reappraisal*. Meharchand Lachhmandas, 1985. Print.
- . *Studies in Indian Aesthetics and Criticism*. Mysore: N.p., 1979. Print.
- . Kuntaka. *Vakroktijivitam, Critically Edited with Variants, Introduction and English Translation*. Dharwar: N.p., 1977. Print.

- Pathak, R. S. *Oblique Poetry in Indian and Western Poetics*.
New Delhi: Bahri Pub. Pvt. Ltd., 1988. Print.
- Sankaran, A. *Some Aspects of Literary Criticism in Sanskrit*.
Delhi: Oriental Books, 1978. Print.

POTENTIALITY OF HUMAN LANGUAGE – A READING OF GIORGIO AGAMBEN’S *LANGUAGE AND DEATH: THE PLACE OF NEGATIVITY*

The present paper is an attempt at re-reading Giorgio Agamben’s most significant study about the potentiality of human language entitled *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity* (1982) which has received substantial critical appraisal and intellectual discussion since its publication. Agamben’s ardour for the issue of human language dominates his thematic concern in this influential text. He argues that the metaphysical tradition is based on negative presuppositions. Due to this reason, contemporary ontological condition has been occupied with nihilism and the potentiality of human language has found itself grounded in negativity. Agamben thinks that contemporary thought should aim to redefine the concept of the transcendental in terms of its relation to language. The aim of the present paper is to study Agamben’s theoretical concerns concerning the effects of nihilistic tendency on the potentiality of human language. This paper also seeks to explore the critical relevance of the philosophy of Agamben in literature and especially in the works of Herman Melville and Franz Kafka.

Agamben’s central concern, in *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity* (1991) is the “study of the Western philosophical

tradition's linking of language with negativity" (Durantaye 2009: 412). Jacques Derrida, in *Of Grammatology*, reproaches traditional philosophy for privileging speech over writing, but Agamben's critique of metaphysical philosophy traces the pervasiveness of space of negativity in the thought of G.W.F. Hegel and Martin Heidegger. Agamben finds the ground for his argument in Heidegger's idea of the relationship between language and death:

Mortals are they who can experience death as death. Animals cannot do so. But animals cannot speak either. The essential relation between death and language flashes up before us, but remains still unthought... (Heidegger 1971:107, qtd in Agamben 1991: xi)

Agamben interrogates the nature of this essential relation between language and the death as it surfaces 'unthought' at certain decisive moments in Western philosophy. He identifies 'Voice' (1991: xii) as the negative foundation for language. Agamben aims to explore the place and structure of this negativity by reexamining the problem of "Voice and its 'grammar'" as a fundamental metaphysical problem, and, at the same time, as an originary structure of negativity" (1991: xii).

Agamben's *Language and Death* marks out a close relation between the functioning of language and contemporary philosophy. According to him, logic and ethics rest on a single ground and they are inseparable on the horizon of metaphysics. Literary writers, like, Melville and Kafka depict this horizon as the dissolute code of the social order. Delano's racist attitude in Melville's *Benito Cereno* embodies the depraved vision of mankind. His thinking, in *Benito Cereno*, is diminished by his immoral discrimination when he says:

Could then Don Benito be any way in complicity with the blacks? But they were too stupid. Besides, who ever heard of a white so far a renegade as to apostatize from his very species almost, leaguin in against it with negroes? (1990: 63)

Kafka presents an illuminating picture of absurd bureaucratic

and judicial hierarchy which not only comprises corrupt guards, stupid inspectors and examining magistrates but also “sustains an entire magistracy of high rank with its indispensable retinue of valets, clerks, gendarmes, and other auxiliaries, perhaps even executioners” (2011: 45-46). Agamben perceives the disintegration of metaphysics into ethics reaching its final nihilistic stance at the very heart of ethos which is also the humanity’s proper dwelling place. Melville’s literary preoccupation with self-annihilation is personified in *Mardi* by Taji’s decision to sail in search of Yillah his lost love. Taji’s resolution is self destructive since all his companions finally desert him. Ahab’s fatal fight against the white whale in *Moby Dick* is the extreme depiction of this self- annihilation. Agamben argues that the complexity of the situation lies beyond the comprehension of contemporary thought and politics. Catherine Mills seeks optimistic disposition in Agamben’s rather disquieting claim. Mills says:

The only way beyond nihilism in this understanding is to conceive of language without Voice; that is, to open thought to a new experience of language that does not presuppose an ineffability or negativity, and instead thinks language as such. (2009: 41)

Agamben substantiates the prevalence of negative disposition in the notions of both Hegel and Heidegger. He traces the foundation of negativity in Heidegger’s conception of *Dasein*’s experience of death and its ‘own-most’ possibility. Heidegger writes:

As potentiality-for-Being, *Dasein* cannot outstrip the possibility of death. Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of *Dasein*. Thus death reveals itself as that possibility which is one’s ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped. (1962: 294)

Dasein, argues Heidegger, has already been thrown into this possibility without having any clear theoretical knowledge of the fact that “it has been delivered over to its death, and that death thus belongs to Being-in-the-world” (1962: 295). Agamben locates a

negative aspect implied in *Dasein's* experience of its ownmost authentic possibility because this incidence depends purely on negative structure of the anticipation of death. The demise of Gregor in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* emblematises *Dasein's* experience of loss of self. Due to his family apathy and abhorrence, Gregor's desire to live dies away gradually. His mind is filled with empty and peaceful reflection on his death towards the end of Kafka's story:

He [Gregor] soon made the discovery that he could no longer move at all...he felt relatively content...Then without willing it, his head sank all the way down, and his last breath flowed weakly from his nostrils. (2000: 89)

According to Agamben, *Dasein* constantly lags behind its possibilities because the existence is of one having been thrown into the world as choiceless and unwilling. He finds the source of this originary negativity in the very determination of man as *Dasein* which signifies Being-the-*Da* (there). The word *Da* introduces negation into that entity-the human-which has to be its *Da*. Agamben relates the origin of the nullifying power of *Da* to Hegel's analysis of the demonstrative pronoun *diese* (this) in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). Hegel writes:

The *This* is, therefore, established as not This, or as something superseded (*aufgehoben*); and hence not as Nothing, but as a determinate Nothing, the Nothing of a content, viz. of the This. Consequently, the sense-element is still present, but not in the way it was supposed to be in [the position of] immediate certainty: not as the singular item that is "meant," but as a universal, or as that which will be defined as a property. (1977: 68, qtd in qtd in Agamben 1991:14-15)

Agamben probes the reason of the display of this common intrinsic negativity in the two indicators; *Da* and *Diese* employed by Heidegger and Hegel in expressions such as Being-the-*Da* and taking-the-*Diese* respectively. He traces a grammatical correlation

between *Da* and *diese* in view of the fact that both philosophical terms belong to the category of demonstrative pronouns. Agamben elucidates this relationship of pronouns with reference to the work of two linguists, namely Émile Benveniste and Roman Jakobson.

Benveniste identifies pronouns as “instances of discourse” (1985: 217) which lack a class of reference due to the absence of any definable object. According to him, language has also the option of a series of distinct but associated terms that refer, not to the instance of discourse, but to real object, time and place. Hence correlations such as I: he/here: there/now: then/today: the very day, etc come into use. Benveniste elucidates that these pronominal forms are an “ensemble of ‘empty’ signs...and become ‘full’ as soon as a speaker introduces them into each instance of his discourse” (1985: 220). Their scope is to enact “the conversion of language into discourse” (Agamben 1991:24) and to permit the passage from *langue* [principles of language] to *parole* [concrete instances of the use]. Benveniste’s account of the deictic function of personal pronouns appears correlated to Jakobson’s description of pronouns or “shifters” (1981: 130) as indexical symbols. Jakobson asserts that the general meaning of shifters cannot be defined without a reference to the message. He argues that the sign *I* cannot represent its object without “being in existential relation with this object: the word *I* designating the utterer is existentially related to his utterance, and hence functions as an index” (1981: 132, qtd in Agamben 1991: 24).

Agamben draws upon the ideas of Jakobson and Benveniste to arrive at two general conclusions; first, the proper meaning of pronouns (shifters and indicators of the utterance) depends upon the instance of discourse, second, the course of articulation is from *langue* to *parole*. He derives the meaning of expressions such as Being-the-*Da* and taking-the-*Diese* through a reference to the instance of discourse. According to Agamben, the experience of *Dasein*, in his existence as ‘Being-the-there’ and ‘taking-the-this’ signifies the taking place of language. He affirms that the utterance

and the instance of discourse are recognizable through the voice that speaks them, and “the problem of *deixis* is the problem of the voice and its relation to language” (1991: 32). The literary writer unfolds the discursive edifice of human life by lending a voice to its underlying multifaceted mysteries. Pierre asks in Melville’s *Pierre*: or, *The Ambiguities*:

Is it possible, after all, that spite of bricks and shaven faces, this world we live in is brimmed with wonders, and I and all mankind, beneath our garbs of commonplaceness, conceal enigmas that the stars themselves, and perhaps the highest seraphim cannot resolve? (1996: 195)

Derrida, Hegel and Agamben relate human voice to an internal impulsive phenomenon. Derrida argues that the feelings of the mind constitute a sort of universal language and the voice, in its form of sense, thought or thing, is closest to the signified. Derrida explains:

All signifiers, and first and foremost the written signifier, are derivative with regard to what would wed the voice indissolubly to the mind or to the thought of the signified sense, indeed to the thing itself. (1998: 11)

Derrida underlies the fact that the ontology has “determined the meaning of being as presence and the meaning of language as the full continuity of speech” (1998: 70). Hegel describes human voice as the resounding of “one’s own feeling and one’s own spirit without any external impulse, just as the height of art in general consists in making the inner give shape to itself out of its own being” (1975: 358). Agamben defines the voice “as a pure intention to signify, as pure meaning, in which something is given to be understood before a determinate event of meaning is produced” (1991: 33). As a matter of fact, a literary text is the author’s voice [pure intention] because it delineates his artistic purpose and vision. Walter H. Sokel argues that Kafka used writing as a means to transform his chaotic inner world into a world that could be read, interpreted and finally understood. Sokel writes in “Beyond Self-Assertion”:

Kafka, in writing, does not seem to have a preconceived meaning, a fixed intention, in his mind. Writing is merely the means of bringing his inner world to the light of day, into readable form, which makes — perhaps — that further light that is understanding attainable. (2002: 56)

According to Agamben, the meaningful discourse occurs when the voice (animal phone) is indeed removed. He argues that 'Voice' enjoys the status of a no-longer (voice) and of a not-yet (meaning), it necessarily constitutes a negative dimension. It is ground, but in, the sense that it goes to the ground and disappears in order for being and language to take place (1991: 35). Although the shifters assume the voice as mere phonic sound, yet this course of action does not refer to the instance of discourse as such. Agamben points out that the place of language, revealed by the Voice, is beforehand captured in negativity and referred to temporality. Hence, the 'Voice' discloses both being and time during the occurrence of discourse. He refutes the Western philosophic claim that temporality and being have a common source in the incessant present of the instance of discourse. Agamben traces a secret power of negativity in this persistent presence. He calls the 'Voice' the supreme shifter that permits us to "grasp the taking place of language, appears thus as the negative ground on which all ontology rests, the originary negativity sustaining every negation" (1991: 36). He considers this negativity responsible for the split between signification and demonstration in the field of language. The expressions "Taking-the-This" and "Being-the-there," argues Agamben, are possible "only through the experience of the Voice, that is, the experience of the taking place of language in the removal of the voice" (1991: 37). He defines 'Voice' as in-between state of dialectics "which is no longer a natural sign and not yet meaningful discourse" (1991: 47). Agamben calls 'Voice' as the voice of death. Although human consciousness finds its manifestation through the originary articulation of this faculty for language, yet its emergence remains inaccessible.

Agamben feels that the problem of the voice cannot be addressed in Heidegger's thought because, in *Existence and Being* (1949), the latter confirms that language "is neither the manifestation of an organism nor the expression of a living being" (1987: 157). According to Heidegger, man is radically different from a living being because he bears *Dasein* and "takes the *Da* into his care as the light of Being" (1987: 158). This implies, for Agamben, that human language has no root in a "*Stimme* [voice]: it is neither the "manifestation of an organism nor the expression of a living being," but the "advent" of Being" (1991: 55). Agamben says:

If, already for Hegel, Language was not simply the voice of man, but the articulation of this voice in "the voice of consciousness" through a Voice of death, for Heidegger there is an abyss between the living being (with his voice) and man (with his language): language is not the voice of the living man. (1991: 55)

Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, explains that *Dasein* as being has taken the definite form of a potentiality-for-Being, but it never comes back behind its thrownness, thus, "although it has not laid that foundation itself, it reposes in the weight of it, which is made manifest to it as a burden by *Dasein*'s mood (*Stimmung*)" (1962: 329-30). Agamben adds new aspect to Heidegger's above proclamation. He argues that *Dasein* can neither grasp the taking place of language nor become its *Da* (the pure instance, the pure event of language) because *Dasein* is situated in the place of language without being brought there by its own voice. Moreover, language always anticipates *Dasein* because it stays without voice in the place of language. Agamben affirms that "*Stimmung* is the experience that language is not the *Stimme* [voice] of man, and so the disclosure of the world that it puts into effect is inseparable from negativity" (1991: 56). Here negativity is even more radical because it does not seem to rest on a removed voice; language is not the voice of *Dasein*, and *Dasein*, thrown in the *Da*, experiences

the taking place of language as a nonplace" (1991: 57). Kafka, in "In the Penal Colony," explores this state of man's drifting in the place of language without his own voice. The explorer in the story finds execution process awkward because the prisoner doesn't know the sentence that has been passed on him. He asks the officer to give the prisoner a chance to defend himself. The officer justifies his weird action in the following manner:

I have been appointed judge in this penal colony... My guiding principle is this: Guilt is never to be doubted... If I had first called the man before me and interrogated him, things would have got into a confused tangle... As it is, I've got him and I won't let him go. (1971: 98)

The prisoner does not get the opportunity to defend himself. The officer blinded by his obsession for the rule of law condemns the prisoner to death. Heidegger describes Being-towards-death as a "Being towards a possibility" (1962: 304). Being towards this "possibility discloses to *Dasein* its own most potentiality-for-Being, in which its very Being is the issue" (1962: 307). According to Heidegger, the call of conscience "discourses solely and constantly in the mode of keeping silent" (1962: 318, qtd in Agamben 1991: 58). Agamben traces a reversal of *Dasein*'s "empty silence" into a Voice of conscience. He argues that the experience of the Voice can help *Dasein* in the attainment of its own most possibility and death. This silent call of conscience reveals to *Dasein* its authentic thinking of death i.e. it can die and not simply cease. Melville's poetic voice comforts us with a better world beyond this life:

Yet Glory slants her shaft of rays

Far through the undisturbed abyss;

There must be other, nobler worlds for them

Who nobly yield their lives in this. (1966: 66)

Agamben asserts that both philosophy and poetry grasp the

performance of language in the unspeakable experience of the Voice but finally demonstrate this place as unattainable. Kafka's *The Trial* initiates a philosophic talk on man's condition in the world itself. A world of justice where entrance is forced but liberation and acquittal remain inaccessible. The painter named Titorelli explains to K. in *The Trial* how "apparent acquittal" gives the hope of freedom, but finally "it's just as likely that the defendant goes home after he's been acquitted and finds somebody there waiting to re-arrest him"(189). Thus the acquittal remains impossible experience for the defendant because "no file is ever lost, the court never forgets" (2011: 190).

Agamben argues that the true human language is one in which the pure prose of philosophy intervenes at a "certain point to break apart the verse of the poetic word, and in which the verse of poetry would intervene to bend the prose of philosophy into a ring" (1991: 59). He seems to imply that "creative criticism, combining poetic and philosophical approaches into one discourse, would be the most authentic experience of language. (Maxwell 2011: 21). If philosophy is "a mode of existing-in-the-world, which had to be practiced at each instant, and the goal of which ... [is] to transform the whole of the individual's life" (Hadot 1995: 275), the works of Kafka and Melville illustrate a striking fusion of literature and philosophy. Kafka's philosophic vision contemplates man's journey of self-discovery in the depth of gloomy and ambiguous world, while, the philosopher in Melville becomes the exponent of virtuosity and resolute spirit of every human soul. Melville writes in *Battle-Pieces*:

Nothing can lift the heart of man

Like manhood in a fellow-man...

But manly greatness men can span,

And feel the bonds that draw. (1966: 105-6)

Agamben extends his discussion of the negative foundation of

language by pointing out the scission of language into two irreducible planes; the first corresponds to the very taking place of language disclosed by the Voice; the second is, on the other hand, the plane of meaningful discourse. This division, he argues, is grounded in the very structure of transcendence and the modern linguistics. Agamben sees the paradigm of this scission in Benveniste's notion of the double significance of human language. According to him, the concept of the phoneme constitutes the negative foundation of language. Jakobson defines phonemes as the smaller units of formal minimums or ultimate grammatical units of expression. He asserts that the phoneme "participates in the signification, yet has no meaning of its own" (1971: 105). Agamben assesses affinity between Jakobson's idea of phoneme and Heideggerian idea of a 'Voice without sound.' He, finding an analogous tendency in phonology [the science of the sounds of language] and ontology, redefines phonology as the "science of the removed voice, that is, of Voice" (1991: 86).

According to Agamben, although the experience of Voice signifies capability of another death, yet this occurrence is not "simply a deceasing, but a person's ownmost and insuperable possibility, the possibility of his freedom" (1991: 86). Billy's execution in Melville's *Billy Budd* becomes a symbol of impossible possibility of man's liberty from death. Although the law of the world denies Billy the right to live in corporal existence, yet he substantiates his subsistence in an eternal form. Melville presents the scene of Billy's death in a celestial tone:

At the same moment it chanced that the vapory fleece hanging low in the East, was shot thro' with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision, and simultaneously therewith, watched by the wedged mass of upturned faces, Billy ascended; and, ascending, took the full rose of the dawn. (2008: 88)

Billy dies but he continues to live in the hearts of the fellow

sailors. A chip of the spar from which he is hanged is “a piece of the Cross” (2008: 88) for them. Agamben believes that Voice, in its essence, is will or pure meaning. It is the pure logical dimension whereby man “pronounces his ‘yes’ to language and consents that it may take place” (1991: 87). Agamben sees the whole concept within the scope of metaphysics. He affirms that a decisive connection between logic and ethics can help in transcendence of Voice and its negativity. He, realizing the fact that the common foundation of logic and ethics lies on a negative foundation for metaphysics, proposes to employ logical percepts to address an ethical problem.

Agamben refers to a segregated zone of double destiny implied in human language and knowledge. He asserts that the precinct of language exhibits conflict “between that which one can consciously know in any utterance and that which one necessarily says without knowing” (1991: 89). The zone of law in Kafka’s parable “Before the Law” in *The Trial*, becomes a precinct of double destiny for a man from the countryside. This man waits for days and years to enter the gate of law. The doorkeeper keeps on saying that he cannot permit the man in to the law. Later, when doorkeeper can see that man is near his death, he shouts to him: “Nobody else could have got in this way, as this entrance was meant only for you. Now I’ll go and close it” (2011: 254-256).

Agamben witnesses this form of scission in human experience of language in Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*. As the play opens, the citizens of Thebes plead with their king, Oedipus, to rid them of the plague that threatens to destroy the city. King Oedipus sends Creon to Apollo’s oracle to find out the reason of the plague in the city. The oracle predicts that the plague demands due punishment to King Laius’s murderer. Oedipus’s will to solve the murder affirms his self-conviction and innocence. However, his ceremonial address to the citizens of Thebes articulates his own incomprehensible condemnation:

May evil come of evil; may he [murderer] live a wretched life and meet a wretched end. And as for me, if I should knowingly admit him as a member of my household, may the same fate which I invoked for others fall upon me! (1970: 47)

According to Agamben, Oedipus believes that he has solved the enigma of language least realizing that his actual fatal battle is against the enigma of his own birth. We can discern the essence of the tragic experience of language in the concluding words spoken by the Chorus in the play:

Behold him, Thebans: Oedipus, great and wise, who solved the famous riddle... Look to the end of mortal life. In vain we say a man is happy, till he goes beyond life's final border, free from pain. (1970: 84)

The Chorus suggests the terrifying experience of human beings struggling against the mystifying precincts of language, knowledge and providence. Agamben argues that man can overcome these confines of language, his birth and nature through the silent experience of death. According to him, philosophic search for another voice and death seeks to "grant a voice to the silent experience of the tragic hero and to constitute this voice as a foundation for man's most proper dimension" (LD 90). Prometheus, in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, admits that his silence is not the indication of his pride, but it is his consciousness of Zeus's tyranny that devours him:

Have I kept silence: nay, my thoughts devour me,

To see myself thus made a mockery of these new gods !

Who was it, who but I,... (2012: 438-440)

This silent experience, argues Agamben, is the proviso of *suneidesis* [con-science, Knowing-with-oneself]. He asserts that the 'conscience' of Western philosophy rests originally on a mute foundation (a Voice) because the logic defines the limits of "which

can be known in what is said... [and ethics validate] which must necessarily remain unsaid in what is said" (1991: 90). The call of Captain Vere's conscience remains voiceless in Melville's *Billy Budd* because he knows that man-made law, ethics and logic cannot give real justice to Billy. The verdict of the court panel is based on what is said by an eye witness about Claggart's death. The jury ignores the unstated ironic set of circumstances which led to this casualty. This mute 'Voice,' in Agamben's words, has become the mystical foundation for our entire culture (logic, ethics, theology, politics and wisdom etc.). He urges to liquidate this mystical foundation by opening up the "field to a thought (or language) that thinks (speaks) beyond the Voice and its *sigetics*; that dwells, that is, not on an unspeakable foundation, but in the infancy (*in-fari*) of man" (1991: 91).

According to Agamben, the nihilistic tendency of present age has redirected all human experience of language to a negated existence. He classifies this age to be "the age of man's in-fantile dwelling (in-fantile, that is, without Voice or will, and yet ethical, habitual) in language" (1991: 92). He assigns philosophy the ultimate task to think the 'Voice' which with its marvelous muteness shows its inaccessible place:

Philosophy is this voyage, the human word's *nostos* (return) from itself to itself, which, abandoning its own habitual dwelling place in the voice, opens itself to the terror of nothingness and, at the same time, to the marvel of being; and after becoming meaningful discourse, it returns in the end, as absolute wisdom, to the Voice. (1991: 93)

Kafka's protagonists- Joseph K., K., Gregor and Karl Rossmann fight their battle against totalitarianism, capitalism, alienation and bureaucratic constructions of society. The terror of their awful condition results in their experience of a void in human consciousness and language. The redemptive hope lies in the way

these protagonists keep pushing themselves against the forces of de-humanization, since their struggles are the precondition for meaningful discourse of final deliverance. Agamben seems to suggest that human experience of language and death has no proper habitual dwelling place and it crosses the marvel of being and the terror of nothingness. Its unique foundation goes beyond the limits of the geography, politics, nativeness and time. It thinks of being and time in their co-belonging in the Voice.

According to Agamben, the man achieves his foundation in his own action of violence. This fact is the real basis of the oldest religious practice of sacrifice. According to Colby Dickinson, here, sacrifice is implicated as an essential part of the anthropological apparatus. A seminal murder or sacrifice is always lying at the origins of the violent nature of communal foundations. Agamben discerns “in this founding violence the attempts of humanity to posit itself as humanity, something inherently definitive of what we consider violence to be as it were” (Dickinson 2011: 64-65). The determinate sacred action of sacrifice is “marked by exclusion; in this way it becomes *sacer* and is invested with a series of prohibitions and ritual prescriptive” (1991: 105). The violator of the law is excluded from the community and abandoned to himself. As Melville writes: “Oh, the rare old Whale, mid storm and gale. In his ocean home will be A giant in might, where might is right, And King of the boundless sea His killing is not considered a crime” (1981: 21).

Agamben, in the very beginning of *Language and Death*, underlies the fact that experience of language has reached to its final negative ground at the very heart of ethos. He calls this arrival “nihilism, beyond which contemporary thought and praxis (or ‘politics’) have not yet ventured” (1991: xiii). His philosophic venture into the heart of this ungroundedness of all human *praxis* is the basic “platform from which humanity has sought to establish its distinction from its animality, becomes the source of an exclusive or divisive action intended to ground humanity in its representative

(and subsequently legal) forms” (Dickinson 2011: 64). According to Agamben, philosophy is an attempt to liberate humanity of the unspeakable and the transcendent through speech and reason. He discerns that philosophy does not succeed in this task because it considers the experience of language as grounded in the ineffable.

Derrida, in *Margins of Philosophy*, also detects the impact of the constraints of language on philosophical discourse. This leads Derrida to declare that “philosophy always reappropriates for itself the discourse that de-limits it” (1982: 177). Heidegger, in “Letter on Humanism,” also discusses the relation of being to language but with a little different perspective. He considers language as “the house of Being in which man *ek-sists* by dwelling, in that he belongs to the truth of Being, guarding it” (1977: 213). Heidegger asserts that language has become an instrument of domination over beings. Thus, it denies us its real essence which is the house of the truth of *Being*.

However, Agamben implies that an authentic experience of language as such encompasses the humanity’s potentiality for self-creation. He asserts that the ethos must eliminate the negative foundation of ineffability in human speech and action. This negative basis of language has consigned human nature to emptiness. Agamben calls this a stage of nihilism. According to him, a new experience in the form of ‘infancy’ can assist in going beyond the negative experience of an ineffable Voice. Catherine Mills argues that this notion of ‘infancy’ does not “simply refer here to a stage of human development, but instead indexes a mute experience of language that precedes speech, and that is also appropriated in speech” (2009: 10). Mills argues that the negative foundation of language and being that “metaphysical thought repetitively posits can be brought to light - and also overcome” eventually through Agamben’s rethinking the relation of potentiality and actuality. Antonio Negri also believes it a merit of Agamben’s book that it attacks “with great determination the problem of the foundation

itself and resolves it, not by hypostasising *Krisis*, but by rediscovering the link between being and practice” (2007: 112).

To sum up, Agamben, in *Language and Death*, probes the thematic relation between language and death in the history of western metaphysics, modern linguistics and especially in the thought of Heidegger and Hegel. Agamben’s task is to establish a connection between man’s capacity for language and death. His critique of the problem of fractured ‘Voice’ of the human leads him to the discovery of a negativity which resides at the foundation of both of these capacities. He identifies ‘voice’ as a pure intention to signify and classifies ‘Voice’ as limbo state of dialectics which is neither a natural sign, nor yet meaningful discourse. Agamben argues that Western philosophic thought marks a schism within language by making an ineffability or unspeakability as a condition of human discourse. This mute condition of language ‘Voice’ is the state of nihilism toward which we are progressing. Agamben finds the constructive resolution in the conception of language without Voice. He exhorts to open thought to a new experience of language that does not presuppose an ineffability or negativity and instead thinks language as such. Agamben thinks of a close connection between the experience of the Voice and that of death. This silent Voice of conscience reveals to man his authentic thinking of death i.e. it can die and not simply cease. According to Catherine Mills, Agamben implies that it is only by existing in “language without being called there by any Voice’ and by dying ‘without being called by death’ ...that humanity can return to its proper dwelling place or ethos” (2009: 28). Agamben’s insights help in understanding the philosophic implications of the works of Melville, Kafka, Sophocles and Aeschylus. Their works are ‘the dwelling places’ of language where man breaks the shackles of ineffability and defies his experience of death. Redburn’s proclamation in Melville’s Redburn echoes the eternal experience of every K., Joseph K, Gregor, Bartleby, Billy, Ahab, Prometheus and Oedipus: “We are blind to the real sights of

this world; deaf to its voice; and dead to its death” (2002: 379).

Works Cited

- Aeschylus (2012). *Prometheus Bound*. Trans. Edwyn Robert Bevan (London: Forgotten Books).
- Benveniste, Emile (1985) *Problems in General Linguistics*. Ed. Robert E. Innis. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).
- Dickinson, Colby (2011) *Agamben and Theology* (New York: Bloomsbury).
- Derrida, Jacques (1998.) *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press).
- . *Margins of Philosophy* (1982) Trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- Durantaye, Leland de la (2009) *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction*. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press).
- Giorgio, Agamben (1991) *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*. Trans. Karen E. Pinkus and Michael Hardt. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press)
- Hadot, Pierre (1995) *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Ed. Arnold Davidson (Melbourne: Wiley-Blackwell).
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1975) *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Vol. I. Trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- . (1977) *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* (1962). Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper).
- . (1971) *On the Way to Language*. Trans. Peter D. Hertz. (New York: Harper)

—. (1977) "Letter on Humanism." *Basic Writings*. Ed. David Farrell Krell. Trans. Frank Capuzzi (New York: Harper): 189-242.

—. (1987) *Existence and Being*. Trans. R. E C. Hull (London: Harper).

Jakobson, Roman (1971) "Phonemic and Grammatical Aspects of Language in Their Interrelations." *Selected Writings II Word and Language*. Ed. Stephen Rudy (New York: Mouton Publishers): 103-114.

—.(1981) "Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb." *Selected Writings III Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry*. Ed. Stephen Rudy (New York: Mouton Publishers): 130-147.

Kafka, Franz (2011) *The Trial* [1925](New York: Create Space).

—.(1971) *The Complete Stories* (New York: Schocken Books).

—. (2000) *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories* (New York: Dover Publications).

Maxwell, Jason (2011) "Aesthetics." *The Agamben Dictionary*. Ed. Alex Murray and Jessica Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press): 20-22.

Melville, Herman (2009) *Mardi: and a Voyage Thither* [1849](Charleston: Biblio Life).

—. (2002) *Redburn: His First Voyage* [1849] (New York: Modern Library).

—. (1981) *Moby-Dick* [1851] (New York: Bantam).

—. (1996) *Pierre: or, The Ambiguities* [1852] (New York: Penguin Classics).

—. (1990) *Benito Cereno* [1855] (New York: Dover

Publications).

—. (1966) *Battle Pieces and Aspects of War* [1866] (New York: Harper & Brothers).

—.(2008) *Billy Budd, Sailor* [1924] (New York: Penguin).

Mills, Catherine. (2009) *The Philosophy of Giorgio Agamben* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press).

Negri, Antonio(2007) "Giorgio Agamben: The Discreet Taste of the Dialectic." *Giorgio Agamben: sovereignty and life*. Ed. Matthew Calarco and Steven DeCaroli (Stanford: Stanford University Press): 109-125.

Sokel, Walter H. Beyond (2002) "Beyond Self-Assertion: A Life of Reading Kafka." *A Companion to the Works of Franz Kafka*. Ed. James Rolleston (New York: Camden House. Print): 33-60.

Sophocles (1970) *Oedipus the King. Three Theban Plays*. Trans. Theodore Howard Banks. (New York: Oxford University Press): 39-84

Book Review

NAVJOT KHOSLA

***Harry Potter and the Cursed Child: Parts One and Two* By J.K. Rowling, Jack Thorne and John Tiffany. Published by Little, Brown, London, 2016 Pages: 330; Price: 899/-**

London's Palace Theatre in West End saw the official opening of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child: Parts One and Two* on July 30, 2016. This five-hour play, in two parts, came as J.K. Rowling's latest offering, in collaboration with critically acclaimed director John Tiffany and decorated playwright, Jack Thorne. Furthermore, much to the delight of Potter fans world-wide, Rowling announced the publication of its screenplay. Thus, was born the 'Special Rehearsal Edition Script' of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child: Parts One and Two* which hit bookstores on July 31, 2016. The cover page of the book emphatically states "Based on an original new story by J.K. Rowling, John Tiffany and Jack Thorne", though the script has been written by Thorne. This review pertains largely to the book.

J.K. Rowling, the creator of the wizarding world of Harry Potter, with her series of seven books, has become an author of one of the highest selling book series in history. Apart from successfully having directed numerous plays, John Tiffany has worked as Associate Director of the National Theatre of Scotland and has also been a Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard. Jack Thorne, who writes for theatre, film, television and radio, has over the years been a winner at the BAFTA for 'Best Mini-Series', 'Best Drama Series' and 'Best Single Drama'.

The book/screenplay picks up where Rowling's last book in the series—*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*—left off. The story begins nineteen years after the second Wizarding War, at London's King's Cross where anxious parents have come to see their wards off at Platform 9¾. Harry and Ginny, along with their three children—James, Albus and Lily—have also come to drop off their sons.

'Magic' plays an essential role in the books and the subsequent films splendidly presented this 'magic' through special effects. The announcement therefore of the 'eighth story' in the form of a play understandably left many skeptical what with the limitations of the stage. But the level of 'magic' incorporated into the screenplay is at least at par, if not better, with the previous versions. At the level of stagecraft, this is indeed a novel attempt to create a story in a different format. *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* is a unique effort as it tries to showcase something that is new and original from the Harry Potter universe. For that, the writers deserve praise. In fact, they have brilliantly succeeded in setting a new benchmark for theatrical productions. Dazzling special effects on the silver screen are one thing, but performing them in front of a live audience is a whole different ballgame. And to that end, this play is exceptional. Thorne, Tiffany and Rowling have made remarkable efforts to project the performances as more real and more believable.

Over the years, much of Rowling's writing from the series has found its way in the form of inspirational quotations on love, life, friendship, darkness and light, good and evil etc. It is partly due to her ability to weave magic through words that pluck at the heartstrings. In *The Cursed Child* it seems as if Thorne is desperately trying to recreate that magic. Unfortunately, he often flounders and the dialogues just end up sounding gauche. For instance, when Professor McGonagall, Headmistress at Hogwarts, reprimands Hermione Granger, her former student and present Minister for Magic, on her laxity to safeguard the Time-Turner, she

says: "Your solidarity is admirable, but it doesn't make your negligence negligible" (265).

For Potter aficionados, the word 'prophecy' holds a wealth of meaning as all of the seven books revolve around one prophecy made by Professor Trelawney. Roughly paraphrased, the prophecy states that a boy born at the end of July, whose parents would have thrice defied Voldemort, has the power to vanquish the Dark Lord. Consequently, the mention of a new prophecy in *The Cursed Child* instinctively piques the interest of the readers. But this prophecy actually turns out sounding too long-winded, wordy and flippant: "When spares are spared, when time is turned, when unseen children murder their fathers; then will the Dark Lord return" (259).

In order to help readers better assimilate the *mise en scène*, the feel and the mood of each scene, the script/book comes with stage directions. But, regrettably, these directions fail to produce the desired effect. For instance, with a view to create an ambience of dread in the auditorium, the stage directions state:

Suddenly from around the auditorium....Some black robes arise around people. Black robes that become black shapes. That become Dementors....These black deadly shapes....They are everything to be feared. And they suck the spirit from the room... [sic] (173)

Dementors emerging from within the audience would surely add to the ominous feeling of terror in the auditorium. However, they appear a tad too contrived in the book. As a result, the spectacle fails to enthrall readers.

The writers skillfully bring to light the fact that personal insecurities can manifest into proverbial minefields if the bridges of communication in a family are missing. Though almost from the beginning, the reader can discern that all is not well in this father-son relationship—that is, between Harry and his son Albus—somehow, the torment of a 'broken' relationship never comes across

on the page. Hence, the reader is neither able to connect to, nor sympathize with, the deteriorating father-son relationship. Also, Harry's inability to be a good father to Albus seems a bit out of place as readers know that throughout the books, Harry has had many men who have been surrogate fathers to him – lovingly guiding him in all those years. So, when Harry confesses to his son, “Most people at least have a dad to base themselves on....I’ve got nothing – or very little”, it completely negates the roles of each and every one of the father figures – it be Hagrid, Sirius, Lupin, Arthur or Dumbledore (327). Potter fans simply cannot brook the idea of Harry telling Albus, “Well, there are times I wish you weren’t my son” (44).

Rowling must realize that the legacy of Harry Potter and the wizarding world will continue to endure irrespective of any marketing gimmicks. Though the series might not be masterpieces in the English canon, there is no denying that the books have earned their place in the history of children's literature. She has single-handedly brought many children back to reading again, opening up vistas of wondrous imagination for them. Besides, there would always be a new generation of children who would grow up reading about this magical world. There already are films on the books, spin-offs based on characters in these books, theme parks, a Broadway play and much more. She does not need to carry the story forward. It simply debases her body of work. She needs to put to rest the saga of the ‘Boy Who Lived’, cognizant of all her accomplishments and also of the fact that this kind of hysteria can seldom be matched. That having been said, one must add that for an ardent fan of the series, *The Cursed Child* is a delightful reminder of the reasons one was captivated by *Harry Potter* and his world in the first place.

Contributors

Prateeksha Pathak is a postgraduate research student at Cardiff University, UK. She is working on the role of tangible heritage in recording unheard stories of Kashmiri Pandit migration. Prior to joining Cardiff, she worked as an Assistant Professor at Galgotias University for a year. Her interests include Indian literature, material memory and culture studies.

Dr. Manmeet Sodhi an Assistant Professor, currently working in P.G Dept of English, Lyallpur Khalsa College, Jalandhar. She was awarded Phd in 2016 in the field of film studies. She has also pursued a Film Course from Film and Television Institute of India, Pune, to gain a wider and deeper understanding of cinema.

Gauravdeep Kaur is researching on Indian classical music with special emphasis on *Dhrupad* in the age of electronic music. Besides, she has taught as adjunct faculty in Regional Institute of English, Chandigarh.

Priyanka Bishnoi has completed Mphil from the Department of English and Cultural Studies at Panjab University where she pursued research on documentary cinema and politics of image making. Besides, she has taught as adjunct faculty in the Department of Evening Studies in Panjab University and presented papers in Social Science Congresses.

Gunjeet Aurora Mehta is Associate Professor of English in Salesian College Siliguri where she is presently on lien from the School of Letters, Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD). Her doctoral dissertation was a study of the literature based on and emerging out of the Indian Emergency of 1975-77 from the Centre for English Studies, JNU, New Delhi. Her areas of research and interest are: Resistance and Conflict literature, Postcolonial studies, Popular Culture Studies, Drama and Theatre with special reference to Punjabi Theatre and Drama.

Pavan Puneet Brar is a Senior Research Fellow in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at Panjab University. She is working towards Phd, the title of her thesis is, *Synchronic Pathways of Food Consumption: a critical study of Urban Food Culture*. She has presented papers in international conferences on Food Studies in USA and India.

Atinder Panday is pursuing PhD at Punjabi University, Patiala in the area of Cultural Studies. The topic of her thesis *The Poetics of J. H. Prynne : A Fredric Jamesonian Reading*.

Ashima Shrawan is an Assistant Professor of English at Shri Bhagwan Das Adarsh Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya, India, where she teaches English language and literature. She obtained her PhD in English from Gurukul Kangri Vishwavidyalaya, India, in 2016. Her academic focus is Indian and Western poetics and Indian classical literature in English.

Vandana Sharma is an Assistant Professor of English in the Department of Applied Science at Bhai Gurdas Institute of Engineering and Technology, Sangrur. She is also pursuing PhD at Punjabi University, Patiala under the title, *Agamben's Theorization of Literature and the select works of Herman Melville and Franz Kafka: a critical study*

Dr. Sharanpal Singh is Professor of English at Punjabi University, Patiala. He teaches Theory and Linguistics and has twenty years of experience in teaching and research, with doctorate in Anglo-American Fiction. Currently he is researching on Australian Poetry.

Navjot Khosla is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English in Punjab University, Patiala. She is currently pursuing PhD and has published a book, *A Song of Freedom: Journeying from Slavery to Love in Maya Angelou's Poetry (2015)* and specializes in Children's Literature.

Printed by : Sh. Jatinder Moudgil, Manager, Panjab University Press, Chandigarh

P.U.P. (610/2) - 100+4P/ 26-08-2019

CONTENTS

PRATEEKSHA PATHAK Memorabilia of Kashmiri Tangible Heritage: counter-narratives of Kashmiri Natives	1
MANMEET SODHI Roots and Routes: exploring relationship between mobility, place and identity in Mrinal Sen's <i>Bhuvan Shome</i>	20
GAURAVDEEP KAUR <i>Anahata Nada</i> and <i>Dhrupad</i> : communication through <i>Raga- Rasa</i>	34
PRIYANKA BISHNOI Real/Reel world "citizens": locating people and voices in Images	42
GUNJEET AURORA Devising an Elemental and Inclusive language: a study of Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry's theatre	55
PAVAN PUNEET BRAR Insta-food: prosumption of images of food on social media	70
ATINDER PANDAY Reading J. H. Prynne's Poetry in the context of Fredric Jameson's <i>The Political Unconscious</i>	95
ASHIMA SHRAWAN Kuntaka's Theory of <i>Vakrokti</i> : the Language of Literature	110
VANDANA SHARMA and DR. SHARANPAL SINGH Potentiality of Human Language – a reading of Giorgio Agamben's <i>Language And Death: The Place Of Negativity</i>	125
Book Review	
Navjot Khosla , <i>Harry Potter and the Cursed Child: Parts One and Two</i> , by J.K. Rowling, Jack Thorne and John Tiffany	145
Notes on Contributors	

ialig

A Bi - annual peer - reviewed Journal

ISSN 0975-4881

