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dialog

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EDITOR : AKSHAYA KUMAR

Dialog as Locus of Change

This is my third and last year of the editorship of *Dialog*. Without making any preposterous statement or being dismissive, I would maintain that the journal has been able to showcase the potential of the research scholars of the region. The range of areas and critical issues contributors have written about points towards a perceptible shift in the course of English studies in India in general and at the Punjab University in particular. Again, I avoid dramatizing this shift. We are of course participants in the processes of history, we are receivers as well as makers, but in no sense do we determine its course or pretend to leave our footprints on the sands of time. The shift is not tectonic or cataclysmic by any stretch of imagination, it is rather a process of making beginnings or, should I say, half-beginnings. For departments and universities which have histories and traditions of their own, making such half-beginnings is an enormous challenge and is indeed an act of creative balancing that leaves a scope for the inclusion of fresh initiatives within its fold.

Let me map these half-beginnings through a brief macro analysis of the papers that *Dialog* has published in the last three years (including the present one year). In the 2010 Spring issue of *Dialog*, we included one paper on cinema (namely "Space as Metaphor in the Third World Cinema" by Vivek Sachdeva); and out of ten papers, six papers were exclusively devoted to Indian and American writings. Brian Adler's paper "Bernard Malamud in the Indian Context" provided much-needed room for the possibilities of reading national literatures in cross-civilizational contexts. The issue included one paper on the Australian poet Fredric Manning. There was not even a single paper on British Literature. The rather checkered portfolio of papers suggests that English Studies in India is on the cusp of some fundamental change. What was once dominant, namely British literature, now struggles for its survival. More than the presence of papers on cinema, and on a spectrum of Australian, American and Indian writing, the absence of any paper on British literature is very profound. Lest we jump to any hasty conclusion, it is surmised that mere one time-absence of British literature does not rule out the possibilities of its atavistic return. But one thing is very clear, British is no longer the mainstay.

Operating within the time-tested dynamic of change and continuity, the autumn issue of *Dialog* (2010) made further strides towards a definite shift in English Studies in India. Out of eleven papers, seven

papers focused on Indian writings. The critical methodology also marked a decisive shift as issues such as representation of gender, authenticity and ownership of experience, veracity of the translated and stakes of the novel in chronicling the partitioned past received precedence. Once again, British literature remained un-represented. This erasure of the British was not an editorial conspiracy. In fact, none of the papers that we received had a British text as its focus. Very significantly, perhaps for the first time, the issue included two papers on popular culture – one paper using the Baudrillardian dystopian arguments brought forth the spectacular falsity of IPL (Indian Premier League), the other paper using the same critical apparatus made an issue of the reality of the so-called 'reality television'. The presence of papers on popular culture could be termed as another 'half-beginning' that as we progressed further blossomed into a full-fledged academic interest.

The spring issue of *Dialog* (2011) published papers that belonged more to the emerging domain of Cultural Studies than to the conventional pathways of literary analysis. The issue contained papers on activist writings – autobiographies, testimonies, biopics etc. – that foregrounded the stakes of literature in social transformation. Again for the first time perhaps, the research scholars evinced an interest in subaltern writings in such a tangible manner. The papers on Mahasweta's subaltern stories, dalit food narratives and transgressive depiction of gender on screen lent a new direction to the whole enterprise of English Studies as it stepped outside the whale. The cultural critique of new spaces of culture – malls, internet and new media – found resounding presence in this issue. What was hitherto unimaginable and was the subject of deprecation, derision, neglect and even humiliation not only received intellectual attention, but was articulated with a degree of conviction. *Dialog* showed its openness to such research endeavors of young scholars.

Another issue of Dialog published in 2011(autumn) carried forward the momentum set in motion by preceding issues of the journal. This issue largely restricted itself to the analysis of literary works from the perspectives of postcolonialism, feminism, new historicism and post-Freudian psycho-analysis. The issue carried an interview with the visiting poet Sudeep Sen; this was yet another new experiment in the history of *Dialog*. There was one paper on Emily Bronte but the British writer was re-searched through the psycho-analytical framework of Julia Kristeva. Overall, the presence of British writing as subject of research remained very marginal. Indian writing continued to occupy the major attention.

The opening essay "Rabindranath Tagore as the Intimate Other" written by poet-scholar Sudeep Sen, showed that the field of Indian writing was undergoing self-reflexivity and cultural contestation from within; the poet as a representative of the young generation did not respond to his poet-predecessors with unqualified adoration. The tilt towards Indian writing proved the fact that the character and content of English studies at Panjab University had taken a fundamental turn towards what may be termed as the 'decolonization of English in India'.

In the year 2011, the Department formally underwent a change as it rechristened itself as the Department of English and Cultural Studies. Without any risk of exaggeration, I must say that the preceding issues of *Dialog* paved a befitting intellectual climate for such a change. The spring issue of *Dialog* (2012) declared itself to be the inaugural issue of Cultural Studies. In this issue Rana Nayar's opening essay "Popular Culture and Literary Studies" reflected on the challenges and excitements that the project of Cultural Studies possibly entails. The issue published papers on cultural economy of leisure, portrayal of gendered subalterns, conceptual divergences within nativism, novelization of honour killings and politics of literary awards. As a matter of principle, though not formalized as yet, the autumn issue would deal primarily with the analysis of literary texts, and the spring issue would concentrate on the analysis of other forms of cultural texts. This kind of demarcation is extremely tenuous because the boundaries between literary analysis and cultural analysis today have blurred.

The present two issues of autumn (2012) and spring (2013), put together, consist of 24 papers. Both the issues cover papers pertaining to the analysis of literary and non-literary texts through an array of critical approaches that fall within the broad rubric of Cultural Studies. As we hold seminars and workshops under the UGC (SAP) programme on various aspects of Cultural Studies, our researchers are gradually learning the skills of critiquing the verbal and non-verbal texts from multiple theoretical horizons of culture. The autumn issue includes three papers that deal with different configurations of religion or religious experiences in contemporary literature. One paper brings forth the subversive powers of mysticism in the poetical works of two woman medieval *bhakti* poets, another grapples with the poetical responses to communalism particularly after the demotion of Babri Masjid, yet another projects Jesus as an iconoclastic liberator through a close reading of Alice Walker's fiction. The spring issue is more radical. The opening paper problematizes the

very future of universities as institutions of higher learning in the age of neoliberal economy. Two scholars have entered into the volatile zone of Kashmir through a close textual study of woman prison narratives, memoirs and travelogues written by other activists. At least three papers deal with the contentious problems of representing the past through fallible memories and biased historical accounts. The politics of representation continues to interest young researchers. Two papers on the representation of Dalits – one dealing with the travails of a *chandala* maiden in *Kadambari*, an ancient Sanskrit text and another dealing with the marginalized subjects of early Punjabi fiction – lend a comparatist edge towards a nuanced understanding of the whole issue. On the whole, *Dialog*-papers are a measure of a robust research ethos that characterizes the region with Panjab University at its epicenter. *Dialog* thus has not just been a witness to change; it has been in small but not insignificant ways an instrument of change as well.

Akshaya Kumar

Universities, Students and the Neoliberal Economy

—Dharamjeet Singh

> The university cannot function, and we must thus prevent it from functioning so that this impossibility is made manifest. No reform of any kind can render this institution viable. We must thus combat reforms, in their effects and in their conception, not because they are dangerous, but because they are illusory. The crisis of the institution of the university goes beyond... the realm of the university and involves the social and technical division of labor as a whole. And so, this crisis must come to a head.
>
> Andre Gorz, *Destroy the University*

> The first question philosophy asks, at its origin, the initial and initiatory movement of thought and individuation, indeed of everything that is or could be asserted about rationality - this *first question,* which is perhaps not *philosophy's* "first question", is not the question of being. Nor is it that of becoming, nor technics - not even in the form of this *hypomnesic* mnemotechnique. It is not about the law or power, nor certainly about poetry. This first question that is not the first question (being generally made secondary) regards *teaching.*
>
> Bernard Steigler, *Taking Care of Youth and Younger Generations*

Introduction

In the controversial TV serial *Chanakya,* directed by Chandraprakash Dwivedi and telecast on Indian national TV channel Doordarshan in 1991, there is an incident in which the people of the ancient kingdom of *Magadha* start building a resistance movement against the repressive policies of the King. In the struggle, one of the university teachers known as Chanak decides to take a firm stand in favour of people's struggle. He independently takes the issue to the university syndicate, composed of university teachers alone, and tries to persuade his colleagues to participate actively in criticizing the King's policies. During the meeting, the central question that emerges is what should be the role of universities in social life? The majority decides to abstain from participation by arguing that *Gurukul* should not interfere in political matters. This implicitly raises two more fundamental issues: the role of

education in an individual's life and subsequently in social life, and the role of teachers as social agents.

In a recent roundtable discussion conducted by *Polygraph*, an International Journal of Culture and Politics published by Duke University, the panel raises a question that demands attention. The panel asks: What has happened to the figure of student as a political agent? This is the question which we as students and all those who are concerned with the fate of the institution of the University need to ask ourselves. The history of various social movements during the long twentieth century clearly highlights the significance and centrality of the figure of the student for radical politics. The paradigmatic moment of this figure was the student rebellion of May 1968 in France. Since then, the figure of the student has been at the center of debates, strategies and tactics concerning the possible socio-political forces of radical change. But until recently this figure has been gradually transforming into a late capitalist social category of the 'consumer' – "the student as a depoliticized consumer/product" (Arsenjuk and Koerner 2009, 4), although the figure of the student has been in the process of re-composition as mobilizations in Greece, revolts in France and protests in London on various issues highlight. The transformation in the figure of the student into consumers has been the result of a much broader transmutation of the University system under the impact of neo-liberal economic logic for the last thirty years.

These two questions, regarding the role of universities in social life and the student as a political agent, are becoming increasingly significant in the contemporary neo-liberal social order. The questions not only touch the issue of students and the universities, they actually bring to light the historical predicament of academics/teachers, and the crisis of *the practice of teaching*. The urgency of reflection on the state of students, academics, employees, universities, pedagogical practices and the implications of their interdependent matrix of relationships for the social space called 'the university' is manifested more clearly when one goes on to analyze the changes taking place in the nature and socio-political role of 'knowledge' with the coming of new forms of production, re-production and circulation of capital-labour contradiction and what in common parlance is known as the 'knowledge economy', the 'information economy' or the 'weight-less economy'. Concepts such as these seem to theorize the changes in the capitalist mode of production as fundamentally libratory, as if we had entered into a kind of post-*exploitation* era. Indeed, we have entered some kind of post-*exploitation* era in the sense that we

have stopped taking the category of 'economic exploitation' or 'exploitation' itself seriously. These conceptual categories rarely help us ascertain how the most fundamental contradiction of capitalism – *capital-labour* – is reproduced at different levels in various spheres that have hitherto been seen as immune to appropriation by capital. They fail to grasp, in the words of Christian Fuchs, "the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity of society" (Fuchs 2009, 387). These analytical categories glance over such issues like global division of labour and distribution of wealth, income inequalities within and among nations, and the problem of migrant workers, whereas the need is to "...reinsert human beings, in all their rounded, messy, vulnerable materiality – and the complexity of their antagonistic social relations – at the very center of our analysis" (Huws 2003, 151). In the case of universities, the central figure, together with the teacher and the employee, is the student. The figure becomes socio-politically significant for the project of radical social transformation when higher education no longer remains "...immune to the impact of economic globalization [and] its institutions are now on the brink of channeling some of the most dynamic and therefore destabilizing *tendencies* of neoliberal marketization" (Ross 2009, 189). Furthermore, the figure of the student is one of the central nodes in the network when it comes to dissemination, control and management of knowledge workers. It is being effectively employed as an instrument of hierarchization and segmentation.

It is a cliché to say that 'knowledge' has become one of the major forces of production in our contemporary times and, as a result, its commodity value has correspondingly increased to newer levels with the coming of third industrial (techno-scientific) revolution. It significantly contributes to the production of commodities which then keep in motion the logic of capital accumulation and circulation. These changing functions of knowledge production and circulation compel us to dig deep and witness how the relations of production are being reconfigured within the confines of the university, and how this re-configuration fuels the overall economic logic of neoliberalism. The changes in the university, and the figures that contribute to the construction and creation of this institution, can only be accounted for if we begin to see, as Sheila Slaughter and Gray Rhoades note, "the institution [of university] as marketer" of services and new-age life-styles where the students are supposed to choose the colleges or universities for their studies (2004, 1). Disciplines like business and management studies, communication studies and media

arts efficiently employ market strategies to attract the students. As a result, the need is to critically scrutinize this whole network of relationships among markets, institutions and the state to understand the ongoing transformation in the institution of the university. The figure of the student and the institution of university are situated within these changing configurations of markets, higher education and the economy. Consequently, the role and future of students and the universities will be largely determined by these very forces and their internal dynamic configurations. In the postcolonial states like India which are rapidly developing large pools of reserve labour (both mental and manual) and which are at the present moment heavily influencing the dynamics of global capitalist economy, a critical reflection on the figure of student, teachers and the institution of university becomes all the more important and urgent.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to understand the socio-historic and politico-economic reasons of the current transformations in the institution of university and what these transformations entail for the figure of the student and the teacher, and for their creative and critical roles in society. We shall start our analysis by locating the emergence of the modern university in the broader processes of modernity and see how the institution of university negotiated its relationship with the somewhat contradictory demands of the capitalist economy and the liberal state. Secondly, we shall try to understand the relationship of the institution of the university with the postcolonial state. Finally, we shall trace the changes in the institution of the university that accompany the emergence of postmodernity and the neoliberal state. In the end, we shall try to chalk out possible ways of resistance against the neoliberal onslaught in the university.

University, Modernity and the Capitalist Economy

The university historically emerged as the most significant space of secular knowledge and cultural production with the coming of modernity. It can be described as a singular outstanding achievement of what Jurgen Habermas calls the 'project of modernity': "...the professionalization of knowledge and of cultural reproduction in the autonomous spheres of science, art and morality" (Delanty 2002, 31). During the medieval period, it was *Studium Generale,* or "School of Universal Learning", which worked like the institution of university. Gradually, this institution was replaced by the modern liberal and humanist

university of the nineteenth century. It was John Henry Newman who first wrote a long essay in which he not only defined the institution of modern university, but also spelled its desired aims in society as "...the diffusion and extension of knowledge" (1999, xvii). It was a place where thinkers, scientists, writers, leaders and educationists were supposed to be groomed. It also created the possibility of the construction of a public space where the contradictions of modernity, like "...the conflicts between cosmopolitanism and national culture, universalism and particularism, secularism and religion, modernity and tradition, power and culture, intellectuals and experts [and] democracy and knowledge" were allowed to play out (Delanty 2002, 31). The university gradually bloomed as a socio-cultural space of public engagement and intervention. It came to signify a collective and institutionalized space of rational, creative and politically secular thinking. At the same time, it became a nursery for fostering and inculcating universal human values. Here people were supposed to be trained so as to be able to use reason for making better choices in their personal and political lives. One can learn and know about diverse socio-culture and political traditions and their continuous dialogue with each other, and how societies survive in times of cultural and political crises through the collective participation of individuals.

The social history of the institution of university shows that it never remained aloof from the socio-cultural and politico-economic configurations of its specific historical era. The contemporary university has gone through four stages or models of development since its constitution: "the Humboldtian University, the Civic University, the Mass University and the Virtual University" (2002, 32). The first of these models, the Humboldtian, was based on the idea of 'liberal education'. Newman in his essays *The Idea of University* distinguished between liberal and professional or commercial education. He said that 'knowledge is capable of being its own end' and criticized every understanding that upheld the utilitarian aspect of liberal knowledge or education (Newman 1999, 94). Humboldt, who reformed university education in Germany, extended the idea of the university, as propagated by Newman, by introducing research activities and pursuits as the other main aim of the university institution. As a result, the university not only became the dwelling place for research, it also acted as "the engine of modernization" (Margison 2008, 3). Finally, the teaching and research activities were brought together under the single roof of the university by Humboldt. At this point of time, the institution of university was an elite institution whose function was to educate pupils from elite background, and women were not considered fit to receive university education.

The second model, the Civic University, came to replace the Humblodtian model with the process of industrialization. It was based on ideals of objective, scientific and expert knowledge production which also encouraged social activism and civic participation. This model became the engine of development and modernization of the western education system during the first half of the twentieth century. Clyde W. Barrow, in his book *Universities and the Capitalist State,* traces how the model of civic university was deeply embedded in the very processes of industrialization and responded to its basic needs. He says:

> The modernization of American universities, as well as the emergence of the professional academic intellectual, coincided with the industrial revolution in America. The structural patterns associated with capitalist development reappear in a series of quite similar events that also revolutionized the American college and its labour process. The transformation of the traditional American college into modern university followed the same patterns of institutional change: concentration of the means of mental production, centralization and bureaucratization of administrative control, the construction of national academic markets, and the rationalization of market relations between competing institutions. (Barrow 1990, 31)

At this point of time the process of industrialization forced the widening of the university education together with the introduction of a certain level of professionalism in higher education. This was also the time when women were forced to come out of the household and contribute effectively to the production process. Consequently, women came to be accepted in the university education as eligible candidates for higher degrees. Speaking with reference to the university, Gerald Delanty says that "the American academic revolution occurred within the confines of what was still an elite institution but one that was opening its doors to the nascent middle class society" (2002, 38). In a speech delivered at Rijks Universiteit Leiden in 1970, Ernest Mandel comments:

> The function of the university...was primarily to give the brightest sons – and, to a lesser extent, also the daughters – of the ruling class the required classical education and to equip them to administer industry, the nation, the colonies, and the army efficiently.

The third level, the mass university, replaced the civic university during the post-War era of reconstitution of the western societies from the destruction unleashed by the Great Depression, the two World Wars and the Holocaust. This golden phase of welfare-state capitalism enabled the construction of the model of mass university. Jurgen Habermas, in his article "The Idea of the University", observes that "[I]n almost all Western industrial societies, the trend towards extending formal education began after World War II and continued until the end of the 1970s..." (1987, 5). This was the time when labour struggles were forcing capital to bend to its demands of higher wages and civil rights movements were claiming universal access to the ideals of social development. The coming of the welfare state during these years helped the creation of public health and public education institutions which were heavily funded by the state. Moreover, the welfare state responded to the needs of labour as labour parties were playing a formative role in the designing of policy.

We could say that the university was thoroughly implicated in the dynamics of the capitalist mode of production and the socio-cultural and political struggles of the times. The university was situated within two poles, capitalism and modern state, of a historical process shaping societies since sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The 'socio-cultural' and 'politico-economic' spheres of society motored contemporary university's complementary and contradictory relationship with state and the capitalist mode of production. Furthermore, the university education was not open to all until the late nineteenth century. It was a privilege of the elite.

In the case of post-colonial states like India the immediate aim of the leaders of independent India was a planned economy with democratic socio-political ideals. The social aspirations of nation-building and the broader aim of uplifting of their vast population from poverty and illiteracy fuelled the urge towards institution-building in India. Here we must remember that the development of modern university in India has been a corollary of British colonialism. It was the Wood's Education Dispatch that recommended the establishment of modern universities in 1854. As a result, universities were established in Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta in 1857. It was in the early decades of the twentieth century when the national movement for independence became a potent force to deal with that more universities got established. These universities were concerned with teaching also; they were not limited to the role of awarding degree as was the previous three universities. The massive expansion of the university

education took place immediately after the independence. Soon after independence, Dr. Sarvepalli *Radhakrishnan* was requested to chair the University Education Commission in 1947-48 which was constituted to recommend the possible guidelines to better the scope and range of University education in India. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, in his 1947 convocation address at Allahabad University said:

> A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search for truth. It stands for the onward march of human race towards ever higher objectives. If the universities discharge their duties adequately then it is well with the nation and people.

We can see in the above quote that the role of the institution of university in independent India was considered to be one of transmission, dissemination and exploration of the ideals of modernity. The era of 1950s and 60s was the period of successful welfare state capitalism. And this was the development model adopted by the leaders of independent India. Large-scale state funding was injected in various public sector projects. This is also true of higher education in India. It was together with the institutions of management (IIMs) and technology (IITs) that the universities were set into motion. All these were future-oriented and state-funded research institutions. In an interview given to *The Hindu* in 2006, the Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz says that "...the success of [India in] IT is largely based on heavy government investments in the past on education, the IITs, science. These are investments made over 50-100 years that have started to pay fruit" (the *Hindu*). This is true of university education, and all these institutions corresponded to the economic, political and organizational needs of a developing country. Manuel Castells argues that "[in] many of the [decolonized] countries, the universities' political function, which combined their ideological function and the formation of new social elites, has been predominant, to the detriment of the educational and economic tasks that they could have performed" (Castells *The University system*). The university in the post-colonial context has "often been an agent of 'modernization'" (2009, 35). This 'modernization' was riddled with the "...contradictions between academic freedom and political militancy and between the drive for modernization and the preservation of cultural identity" (Castells *The University System*). Consequently, the university, as Amit Basole states, acted more "...as a conservative force with a *status quo* bias, rather than as an agent of radical change" (2009, 33). However, the university until

the 1990s in modern India certainly functioned as the place where the most active, creative and progressive minds of the society came together to discuss, contest and debate social, cultural, economic, and political issues of urgent import that could significantly affect the democratic futures of postcolonial state of India.

It is noteworthy that the model of university education in post-independent India was arguably the above mentioned civic university which was predominantly an elite institution which more or less catered to the needs of industrialization taking place in India. However, the emerging middle class was gradually been able to have access to avail the fruits of university education.

University, Postmodernity and Neoliberalism

The cultural shift from modernity to late capitalist postmodernity has shaped the university system in significant ways in recent years. Whereas the coming of postmodernity was supposed to enhance the qualitative space of the university across the horizontal social plane of society, it has actually got transformed into an elite and secluded place of academic and scholastic debates. It has lost touch with actual social and political life of society and aligned itself with the establishment, losing its minimal 'relative autonomy' to resist intellectual submission and to direct critical thinking. The university has now almost stopped being the hotbed of socio-political dissent and critical/intellectual resistance where politically aware and socially enlightened subjectivities are nurtured. It is no longer the best site of intellectual and cultural production; rather it has unstoppably been deteriorating into a place of production of Marcusian one-dimensional sensibilities, or "techno-cultural subjectivities" that cater to society's hegemonic political and economic needs (Dyer-Witheford 2005, 71). The cultures of constructive dialogue, debate and nurturing of critical thinking skills are increasingly disappearing from the space of the university.

The university is one of the last public institutions which have been able to maintain it's relatively autonomy from the capitalist regime. With the onslaught of neoliberal logic of economic development since the 1970s or 80s, all kinds of public and social institutions that facilitated the establishment of social welfare, public expenditure and a collective model of socio-economic development have been undergoing fundamental *re-structuration.* The public/private binary is being redefined in all spheres: social, cultural, political and economic. "As once was the

factory, so now is the university", say the members of the Edu-factory collective who are engaged in a radical critique and interrogation of the current university system all over the globe (Introduction 2009, 4). It is certainly true that the factory has been the most important site of collective socio-political struggles for a long period in the era of Fordist or Industrial capitalism. Now as the argument goes, the capitalist system of production is itself undergoing radical transformations that have rendered the factory as *the site* of struggles obsolete. The Workerist movement in Italy had long ago argued that with the coming of post-Fordist organization of production, the factory has dispersed onto the overall social space. The 'social' itself has become like the factory. As a result, it is not only the *proletariat* who is exploited; rather there are now *precariat2* and *cognitariat3* who are actively employed in the circulation and regeneration of the profit-maximization logic of capital. Ernest Mandel's observation in the above quoted speech is worth mentioning here with reference to *cognitariat* (intellectual labour). He says:

> Proletarianization does not mean primarily (or in some circumstance at all) limited consumption or a low standard of living, but increasing alienation, increasing subordination of labour to demands that no longer have any correspondence to the special talents or fulfillment or the inner needs of men.

This situation makes the contemporary university one of the most significant sites for waging struggles since the university is not only being forced to submit to the imperatives of the neoliberal logic of capital, but it has become an avant-garde ideological and economic state apparatus for the 'reproduction of relations of production' that keep the neoliberal regime in motion.

Neoliberalism should be understood as an economic model that came to be accepted after the crisis of welfare state capitalism during the 1970s. In a layman's language, neoliberalism is the return of the free market economics. This return was not only facilitated by the crisis of the state-sponsored capitalism, but was heavily aided by the rise of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) which helped in the reconfiguration of structural contradictions of the capitalist system in an innovative way to initiate a new cycle of expansion, exploitation and accumulation. Amidst all these techno-cultural and political transformations, the concept of 'knowledge' has emerged at the forefront

of critical scrutiny from radical social thinkers. It was Jean François Lyotard who first referred to these transformations vis-à-vis the changes in our understanding of the concept of 'knowledge' in his small but seminal book *The Postmodern Condition.* He writes:

> The relationship of the suppliers and users of knowledge to the knowledge they supply and use is now tending... to assume the form already taken by the relationship of commodity producers and consumers to the commodities they produce and consume – that is, the form of value. Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production: in both case, the goal is exchange. Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself... It is widely accepted that knowledge has become the principle [sic] force of production over the last few decades... . (Lyotard 1984, 4-5)

We can see that, as stated in the introduction, the role and function of 'knowledge' within the over all economic logic of neoliberalism has undergone a fundamental change. Knowledge, through its association with the human beings' cognitive activity, has come to be the hegemonic 'force of production' in contemporary times. As a result, as Steigler says "We... have pure cognitive labour power utterly devoid of knowledge", which consequently leads to the reduction of 'the cognitive' to mere 'calculability', that is brains reduced to mere number-crunching algorithmic machines (2008, 46). The university could not remain immune to this shift since it is the place where required labour force is produced to work in this new communication, information and knowledge centered capitalist configuration.

The institution of University is rapidly becoming, to use Stanley Aronowitz words, "the knowledge factory". In this factory, it is your cognitive, communication, and linguistic capabilities that come to play an important role in the production process. Michael Hardt, in his introduction to Christian Marrazi's book, *Capital and Language*, writes:

> Labour in service jobs, the media, health, education, and increasingly all other sectors of the economy is characterized by the centrality of language and linguistic practices. Language and communication are crucial for the production of ideas, information, images, affects, social relationships, and the like. (2008, 9-10).

Within the post-Fordist regime of production, distribution and accumulation, it is the mental labour that takes the centre stage as against the manual labour in previous economies. In this scenario, the concepts of "immaterial labour", "general intellect" and "cognitive capitalism" (as proposed by Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt, Maurizio Lazzarato, Paul Virno and Carlo Vercellone) have become central to developing systematic understanding of the changes taking place in the capitalist mode of production and circulation, and how such changes are radically affecting the university. Maurizio Lazzarato defines the concept of immaterial labour as follows:

> The concept of immaterial labor refers to *two different aspects* of labor. On the one hand, as regards the "informational content" of the commodity, it refers directly to the changes taking place in workers' labor processes in big companies in the industrial and tertiary sectors, where the skills involved in direct labor are increasingly skills involving cybernetics and computer control (and horizontal and vertical communication). On the other hand, as regards the activity that produces the "cultural content" of the commodity, immaterial labor involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as "work"—in other words, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion. (Lazzarato 1996, 133)

This paradigmatic shift in the very nature of work and labour has enabled capital to move into hitherto unexplored domains of social life and use them for profit maximization and surplus production. Consequently, in the era of cognitive capitalism, it is '[a]bstract intelligence and immaterial signs [which] become the major productive force in the "post-Fordist economy we are living in and they are deeply affecting contemporary structures and mentalities' (Lotringer 2004, 7). The traditional distinctions between work/leisure and work/non-work have collapsed to such an extent that the issue is no longer "...the end of work. The issue is work without end" (qtd. in Marazzi 2008, 41). Karl Marx referred to this prospective development in capitalism when he said that the growth of capitalism will reach a point when the creation of wealth and surplus will depend on "the general powers of the human head", or "the general productive forces of social brain" (Marx 1993, 694; 709). In other words, it is "...the human 'know-how' - technical, cultural, linguistic, and ethical - that supports the operation of the high-tech economy" (Dyer-Witheford 2005, 73).

These changes in the broader social space within which the university exists as an institution can be traced at many levels in the university. These changes in the university, David Harvie argues should be understood at three levels: "'the state and universities', 'the economy and universities' and 'university management and academics'" (Harvie 105). The dynamic of all these contending forces is greatly pressurizing the university system. At all levels the university and the spaces within the university are getting manipulated as per the global capitalist class's interests. Firstly, it is at the level of the nature of work in the academia. Massimo De Angelis and David Harvie write:

> Work in academia seems to capture the basic features of immaterial labour: a form of directly social work, in which the form of social cooperation is crucial in defining the "output," a form of doing that is necessarily grounded on relational awareness, and that produces affects (our students are, after all, our "customers" and they will be compiling a "customer satisfaction" questionnaire at the end of their courses with us). It goes without saying that academic work is also a context for the production of ideas, research papers and books; moreover that this production is "biopolitical" and can occur at any moment of the 24/7 span: we both have experienced waking up in the middle of the night with the solution to a problem insoluble during 9 to 5, or have reached an insight that will find its way into a paper while playing with a child. (2009)

Here the reference to "customer satisfaction" alludes to another aspect of the university regime. It is at the level of the introduction of new standards and measures to judge the performance of academics. This is because, as Lazzarato writes, "[t]he profound changes in these strategic sectors have radically modified not only the composition, management, and regulation of the workforce—the organization of production—but also, and more deeply, the role and function of intellectuals and their activities within society" (134). Now, since the role and function of the intellectuals are undergoing a fundamental change, the system also needs new methods to measure their performance vis-à-vis the demands of the 'regime of knowledge industries'. De Angelis and Harvie further argue that this has been achieved by the imposition of 'law of value' "through its measuring of immaterial labour" (2009, 3). This 'law of value' has been concretely implemented in the form of assessments, accountability,

"performance reviews, mandatory grant getting, more required publishing, and a quiet, invisible perishing by stress" (Dyer-Witheford 2005, 77). Lyotard was right when he said that the main aim of post-Fordist economy is to "optimiz[e] the system's performance-efficiency" (1984, xxiv). And this is what has been happening with the university system; it is increasingly being forced to optimize its performance.

Secondly, it is at the level of the relationship between the students and the academics. The relationship is becoming commercialized day by day. One clearly visible reason is the opening up of the university spaces for corporate functions, exhibitions and festivals, other popular media centered activities which literally set the general contours of university ambience in modern times. The university has been "...transformed from a 'closed environment' to an eminently porous one, with spaces of further and higher education doubling up as conference centers, spaces for credit card companies [mobile, automobile and clothing companies] to hawk their wares, where books are replaced by corporate-sponsored computers and lab equipment" (Power 2010, 3). The other consequence of this has been the change in the very status of 'degree' for students. The university degree is "...increasingly understood as a product purchased for a certain amount of money and a certain quantity of time served" (2010, 2). This has led to a significant shift in the very aim of higher education. Higher education is conceived as one's passport to wealth and consumption, the aim being "to get a better job and higher lifetime earnings" (Williams 2009, 92). Consequently, the space of the university is "construed as [coming together] of atomized individuals making a personal choice in the market place of education to maximize their economic potential" (2009, 92).

Thirdly, it is at the level of student debt. The practice of studying, by availing loans, has been on the increase in recent years. Jeffrey Williams observes that "[d]ebt is not just a mode of financing but a mode of pedagogy. We tend to think of it as necessary evil attached to higher education but extraneous to the aims of higher education. What if we were to see it as central to people's actual experience of college" (Williams 2009, 93). The question which is raised by Williams is of crucial importance when one sees how the whole experience of college life is transforming into an independent 'work'. Gone are the days of student radicalism, creative clubs and late night discussions, or "...student as rebel ...the student [as] synonymous with social rebellion, [and] with the ruthless criticism of everything existing" (Read 2009, 151). The logic of student

debt not only kills the creativity of the students both individually and socially, but it also weakens the social bond among the students since everybody is concerned about the increasing debts on their shoulders which they are supposed to start repaying once they get jobs. They inevitably spend more time looking for and doing part-time jobs on and off the campus. It is the very liminal experience of the university life and higher education that has been damaged to the very core of the idea of student life. And this has "...less to do with theories taught at the university, than with a particular practice, a particular experience of living" (2009, 151).

Commenting upon the relationship between late capitalism and the universities, Alex Callinicos remarks that "neo-liberalism in higher education means that th[e] logic of competition is internalized deep into how universities work" (2006, 11). The component that plays a dominant role in these relationships is the economy, in particular the neo-liberal paradigm of cost-cutting on public institutions of all kinds. It can be said that the field of education has remained relatively insulated from the logic of the capitalist mode of production. But recently it has gradually been forcefully pulled into the nefarious logic of the capitalist economy. Blackmore succinctly puts this transformation in the following words:

> Education has, in most instances, been reshaped to become the arm of national economic policy, defined both as the problem (in providing the multi-skill flexible work force) and the solution by upgrading skills and creating a source of national export earnings. (2000, 134)

The universities are certainly mutating into becoming the most crucial site for the efficient working of the late capitalist logic of production and consumption. Marc Bousquet's observation is apt: "Late capitalism doesn't just happen to the university; the university makes late capitalism happen" (Bousquet 2008, 44).

It should be kept in mind that the changes taking place in the nature of work and labour should not be understood in absolutist terms; rather, these shifts should be understood in relative terms and with reference to global divisions of labour. Slivia Federici and George Caffentzis proposes that "...work can be organized for capitalist accumulation and along capitalist lines without the labourer working at the average level of technological/scientific knowledge applied in highest points of capitalist production" (2009, 127). Concepts like "cognitive

capitalism", "immaterial labour", "academic capitalism" and "cognitive labour", they further argue, should "...be used with the understanding that they represent a part, though a leading one, of capitalist development and that different forms of knowledge and cognitive work exist that cannot be flattened under one label" (2009, 131). This is particularly significant in third world countries like India where varied and myriad forms of labour and work are submitted cumulatively to the imperatives of capitalist logic.

All these phenomena are aided by a process of continuous ideological de-politicization of the figure of the student and the academic. The administration of universities continuously tells the students in seminars or conferences that they should stay away from politics because politics is a *dirty game.* The coming of political maturity is seen as the loss of some strange kind of pure *ontological innocence.* Consequently, students should concentrate on their studies and get good marks in the examination so that finally they could end up with a good salary packet. It is like creating politically impotent 'social individuals' who are restrained from actively engaging in public sphere. From politics, we understand rational and reasoned collective participation in the public sphere. De-politicization means barring students from public and civic engagement. This has been achieved successfully by the shutting down of the 'commons' through the production of 'enclosures' within the university. It is in the spaces of the 'commons' that the classroom hierarchy between students and teachers is broken and they collectively participate in, creatively engage and construct a process of shared learning. The production of the 'commons', as Hardt and Negri explicate in their book *Commonwealth,* is premised on 'social interaction'. The 'commons' includes those aspects of life whose basis is shared and participatory like "knowledge, languages, codes, information, affects, and so forth" (2009, viii). It further involves construction of social spaces that enhance humanity's social production of life in a more qualitative and fruitful manner. The commons are "held collectively and used according to non-capitalist value practices of a given group" (2009, 6). Tracing the history of the changes in the university administration's structure, Kamola and Meyerhoff argue that "the enclosure of the university through the creation of divided governance [got fresh impetus] when leftist professors were forced to compromise with the university administration" (2009, 13). The changes in the university administration have been the result of an earnest need and desire to control living labour. The logic of 'divided governance' is basically the adoption of managerial ethics and practices to create a

new managerial class to better control and direct the output of knowledge workers in the university. The aim of knowledge managers is to "...nurture and cultivate the skills that directly contribute to the firm's [here, the firm is the university] propriety knowledge" (Newfield 2010, 13). Consequently, the kind of culture that is encouraged at the university level is the one which "...makes balance sheets sound like Homer and Homer sound like balance-sheets" (qtd. in Mary Evans 2004, 97). The university is increasingly becoming a corporation which needs to be managed in such way that its performance can live up to the demands of the market. And this in turn not only leads to the withering away of constructive dialogue and discussion; it effectively leads to cynical disavowal of social and civic responsibilities by students and teachers.

Conclusion

In the midst of all the changes in the university system all over the globe, the university system in India has not remained untouched. The pressures of globalization have forced the Indian policy makers to 'upgrade' their higher education policies vis-à-vis the frame proposed by the national bourgeoisie in compliance with the international neoliberal economic model. In his article "Indian Higher Education: Commodification and Foreign Direct Investment", Vijender Sharma writes that "[t]he government took several measures and constituted several committees for the implementation of the National Policy on Education and for gradual withdrawal of subsidy to higher education as dictated by the World Bank" (2007, 4). During the year 2000, a report entitled "A Policy Framework for Reforms in Education" was submitted to *Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry*. The subtitle of the Council is "Special Subject Group on Policy Framework for *Private Investment* in Education, Health and Rural Development [italics mine]". In the preface to this report, Mukesh Ambani and Kumaramangalam Birla write:

> We have to fundamentally change our mindset – from seeing education as a component of social development... [and likewise should move in the direction of] a revolution in education that embraces information technology, fosters freedom and innovation and induces a *market oriented competitive environment*... vital for our future.4 [italics mine]

The emphasis laid on "fundamentally chang[ing] the mindset", with the aim of locating viable spaces of "private investment", as the subtitle of

the report indicates, to nurture "freedom and innovation" through the setting up of "market oriented competitive environment" brings to light the underlying neoliberal paradigm which is dictating the terms of the reforms in education. Prabhait Patnaik, an eminent Indian economist, commenting on the Birla-Ambani report in an interview said that "the explicit advocacy of privatizing education in the Birla-Ambani Report... [sheds light on] their conception of what the education system should be. And that conception is that education should produce obedient, disciplined servants of the order who are competent technicians". Since then, the university education has been in a process of reorganization in response to the demands of India's neoliberal-style economic growth.

The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) was constituted in 2005 with the 'objective of transforming India into a knowledge society' (http://www.knowledgecommission.gov.in/). The Commission's aim was to design policy frameworks and recommend reforms in education and research institutions to sharpen India's knowledge-intensive industries for competition in the world market. The commission came up with its report in 2009 entitled "Report to the Nation 2006-2009". The report was published by National Knowledge Commission, Government of India. The report says that one of the significant aspects of improving the quality standards of doctorate degrees is by facilitating "...enlightened co-operation between private industry and academia" (2009, 113). Building on the argument, the report says that the "universities should take cognizance of the changing needs of private enterprise in planning new courses" (2009, 113). And the aim of Indian knowledge hubs is to promote "...market driven research and product development" (2009, 126). The report also says that the prospective national universities of the future "...shall have the autonomy to set *student fee levels* and tap other sources for generating funds such as industry collaborations, overseas operations, as also commercial use of university facilities and alumni networks" (76). Nina Power rewrites Foucault's question "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?", when she says:

> What is astonishing about the fact that our universities resemble our businesses, our shopping malls, our corporate meeting rooms – all of which in turn resemble our new proto-privatized universities? (Power 2010, 3)

This is nothing but the commodification of the very space of the university institution. In view of the above mentioned recommendations of the NKC,

the Indian parliament has come up with new bills: Private Universities Bill 2010, Universities for Innovation Bill, 2010 and Foreign Universities Bill 2010. These bills are an attempt to make the path of private and foreign direct investment smoother through legalizing the very process of private education. This approach to hail privatization as the solution not only further "encloses" the space of public institutions; it leaves no room for critiquing public institutions' gradual decadence. The questions which need to be addressed are: What should the role of higher education and particularly the university system in the social life of human beings? Where to locate new pedagogical practices and autonomous knowledge structures that can enhance quality education across the horizontal plane of the society? What kind of strategies should be adopted by the student movements to overcome obstacles that hamper their success? What kind of flexible alliances and negotiations are possible between movements within the university and outsides the confines of the university? Experiments like *Vidya Ashram*, an autonomous collective in Varanasi, work to "prepare the knowledge base for mass politics necessary for a radical transformation of society, which realizes the ideals of equality", can be very helpful in envisioning alternative knowledge production (www.vidyaashram.org).

Under the neoliberalist drive, the university is increasingly becoming a self-regulating biopolitical machine. The question, however, is how to intervene effectively in this machine to dent this process of de-politicization. The time has come when students and teachers need to sit together to rethink the future of the university as a secular and common space of social creation and transformation. The rethinking must take into account the overall social logic on the basis of which society is being reorganized at large, and simultaneously we must be open to innovative and creative experimentation at the level of educational institutions and pedagogical practices that could nurture and carry the demands of the present into the future. Moreover, the students and the teachers should be ready to engage with the challenging questions of all kinds of social movements across the political spectrum of contemporary society which are taking on the might of the capitalist economy and the neoliberal state in order to carve out new spaces and modes of learning together with chalking out, to use the title of Perry Anderson's book, uncommon "zone[s] of [political and pedagogical] engagement". The necessity of such deliberation on the social role of the university, the figure of student and the academic, and their mutual relationships has

been foregrounded by Jacques Derrida in *The University without Condition*: "[T]ake your time but be quick about it, because you do not know what awaits you" (Derrida 2002, 237).

END NOTES

1. http://www.jnu.ac.in/JNUNews/default.htm
2. The precariat is "a class-in-the-making," as Guy Standing says in his recent book. It is a historically specific product of the period of neoliberal globalization. It is characterized by "precariousness of residency, of labour and work, and of social protection" (vii; 4). The rise of precariat is a sign of contemporary socio-economic organization in a sense that there is only temporary work with no social security and public services at their disposal as was the case in welfare-state capitalist organization. Precarious existence is becoming the norm of life.
3. Franco Bifo Berardi argues in his book *The Soul at Work* that the word cognitariat is composed of two concepts: "Cognitive labour and proletariat". Cognitariat signifies "the social corporeality of cognitive labour. What is at stake within the social definition of cognitive labour is precisely the body, sexuality, mortal physicality, the unconscious" (105). In other words, we could say that the moment the fundamental intellectual and cognitive abilities (this includes emotions, affects, linguistic competence, sharing etc.) of human race are put to work under the compulsion of capital reproduction, a new kind of proletarianization takes place. Cognitariat is a kind of proletarianization when the human flesh loses its weight and is squeezed of all erotic juice, and what remains is a mere functional body, a kind of motor driven by particular momentary intensities geared to maximum efficiency.
4. http://indiaimage.nic.in/pmcouncils/reports/education/

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Discourse on Repression to Resistance in a Kashmiri Woman's Prison Narrative

—Anupama Vohra

The 1989-90 rise in women's participation in protests in the Kashmir valley was a direct result of disenchantment with the state government's policies. For many women who took to the streets for the first time protesting against the policies of the state government, it was an empowering moment. During this time Anjum Zamarud Habib started an association called Muslim Khawateen Markaz (MKM)[1]for strengthening of Kashmiri women: "Due to its growing popularity Muslim Khawateen Markaz was affiliated to the All Parties Hurriyat Conference as its social and human rights wing" (Prisoner 226), and she was the chairperson of MKM at the time of her arrest under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA)[2] in 2003.

After her release Anjum has dedicated herself to the cause of sufferers and also "formed the Association of Families of Kashmiri Prisoners (AFKP) in order to fight for the rights of the prisoners" (Sikandar 2010: September 20). She also writes a column "Khari Khari" mostly on women's issue in a local Urdu daily. Sahba Husain's encouragement to Anjum to write about the dark days of her incarceration "this experience needs to be shared ... it might provide [Anjum] her the relief..." (Prisoner xiii) took shape as Prisoner No. 100[3](2011). It is clear, then, that memories are the storehouses from which Prisoner No.100 was written or shall we say produced? Memories can be accurate or misleading, true or false, exact or approximate, literal or figurative. However, reading through the 226 pages of Prisoner No. 100, one can easily feel that Anjum is straightforward and plain in her documentation of her five years prison experience from March 3, 2003 to December 8, 2007.

In this first Kashmiri woman's prison narrative she analyzes the horrible conditions of the prison system where the unequal relations of power and oppression are maximized. Her reconstruction of that space as an active entity of repression and her appropriation and subversion of it in her writing are the focus of this paper. She transcribes the dismal life which prisoners are forced to live in prisons, opening a textual window and giving voice to those who are condemned to silence in prison. Accordingly Prisoner No. 100 is a text both personal and collective, for it bears witness to the suffering of a collectivity of women prisoners through

the mediation of Anjum as participant and witness. The text speaks not only of her horrendous experiences in prison but also presents the experiences of her fellow prisoners.

In Prisoner No. 100 Anjum's textual strategies for representing the conditions of the imprisoned women are inextricably linked to the representation of carceral space as a repressive and active force. As Perez and Perez have pointed out, "literary prisons may be metaphorical, philosophical or very real"(12). Even though Anjum's text deals with the very real experiences of women in Tihar jail, the author appeals to a literary and popular tradition that presents carceral spaces as metaphors, that is prison as hell. From Plato's "Myth of the Cave" to Foucault's "carceral city," prison has been established in the collective human imagination as a space of suffering, deprivation of freedom, darkness, and melancholy. Real and metaphorical prison spaces have nurtured the histories of repression and literary imagination; present in our societies and literary traditions, carceral representations are part of our collective memory. Prison space is then full of significations, a palimpsest upon which the pain of the confined person has been inscribed. At the same time, carceral space not only refers to the bars, the stone walls, the iron gates, or the armed guards, but also to the ideological and discursive structures that are vital to any space. In this sense, the conceptualization of space as an active entity, as constant performance, as a mechanism of repression, control and discipline, as well as a practice of resistance, is integral to the interpretation of prison writing.[4] In this way, space, then, is no longer conceived of as a fixed, immobile entity, as a receptacle where objects and/or beings exist or are inserted, but as a strategy within the discourses of power and knowledge.

In this paper I explore how Anjum construes the carceral space in Prisoner No. 100 as a representational space of repression towards women and then move on to examine how Anjum converts the space of repression into a space of resistance, first through raising her voice at the death of Zohra, and, then writing her days of incarceration. The title of Anjum's Prisoner No. 100 sets up the metaphorical mapping of the space of prison for literary discourse to disclose the space of captivity and make intelligible its horrors. Anjum's account of the carceral system situates the prisoner and the reader at the threshold of this metaphorical hell: "The police then asked the judge for a ten-day remand for me and he readily agreed" (Prisoner 5). The "present hell" is constituted by the

spaces Anjum portrays in the narrative, that is Interrogation Centre Special Cell, Tihar jail, the wards, the barracks, her cell, the Medical Investigative Room (MIR) room, court room, Patiala House lock up, langar, chakkar, prison van, reserved room in hospital, "the mulaheza (where new prisoners/ convicts are first brought) ward... the toilets were worse than the sarkari ones found at bus stops or railway stations"(146). Anjum makes all these different locations of confinement converge into one metaphorical yet horribly real space of hell.

This constructed space of hell is indelibly marked by gender in Anjum's narrative, as the subtitle of her book *An Account of My Nights and Days in An Indian Prison* indicates:

> I was the only Kashmiri woman in jail 6, in fact in the entire jail. I was in an alien city, amongst alien people, in a large and terrifying space. I was the only woman in all of Hindustan, a Kashmiri woman, arrested under POTA....Women in the jail were not only against me and hostile to me but also maintained a tight vigil over me, always looking for an excuse to harass me (*Prisoner* 14).

The relationship between carceral space and women's confined bodies is crucial in Prisoner No. 100. In order to understand this relationship, I turn to Henri Lefebvre who emphasizes the relationship between space and the body in *The Production of Space*:

> When 'Ego' arrives in an unknown country or city, he first experiences it through every part of his body-through his senses of smell and taste, as [...] through his legs and feet. His hearing picks up the noises and the quality of the voices; his eyes are assailed by new impressions. For it is by means of the body that space is perceived, lived-and produced (162).

When Anjum first arrived at Tihar jail, she narrates: "The barrack was full of women whose clothes had turned filthy and tattered.... There were two girls from Rajasthan next to [me] us who were picking lice from each other's hair and flicking the creatures around, Rani pulled out a packet of roti and dal from a bag and began to eat; I watched everything in a daze, overcome with feelings of helplessness and despair... the roti and rice were half cooked and the dal, watery....The barrack was so noisy, women fighting amongst themselves and each one pushing to use the toilet"

(Prisoner 9-11). Anjum through her body perceived the space of prison, lived that space, and wrote her experiences in order to survive the negative experience.

Anjum attempts to interpret and communicate her perception of this space through her writing. Her text is beset by spatial tropes that emphasize the feeling of confinement and oppression, giving shape to "anti-topophilia." For Bachelard "topophilia" "seek[s] to determine the human value of the sorts of space that may be grasped, that may be defended against adverse forces, the space we love, [the] eulogized space." In Anjum's, narrative, however, the carceral system is presented as what Bachelard envisions as the opposite, "the space of hatred and combat," a space that "can only be studied in the context of impassioned subject matter and apocalyptic images" (xxxi-ii). In this sense, this text may be read as an anti-topophilia that apprehends, through the reproduction of hellish and apocalyptic images, the magnitude of the horrors of everyday life in a women's prison.

The reader crosses the entrance into Anjum's hell through the doors to the rooms of the Interrogation Centre. Anjum describes the tortuous grilling prior to being taken to court. Here, it is not only a feared actual physical space, but also a space for repression where the discourses of violence, and total domination are enacted: "...grabbed me by my neck and struck me hard across my face. She shook me hard by my shoulders, again and again, saying 'You are a terrorist and all you Kashmiris are traitors.' This brutal and humiliating treatment continued for many days and my body was now erupting in pain...a stack of blank sheets of paper were brought to the table and I was forced to put my signature on them. I knew then that my fate was sealed" (Prisoner 4-8). According to Scarry, the torturer, through physical pain (which reduces the prisoner's voice to pre-linguistic utterances) and interrogation (which causes the prisoner's voice to be usurped by the torturer because the prisoner is made to "confess" details that are required by the torturer), strips the captive of her voice. Silence is imposed upon Anjum, and the officials' gain power through robbing the victim of her voice.

Scarry, then, sees claiming one's voice as essential to overcoming pain, of which silence is a crucial element: "As torture consists of acts that magnify the way in which pain destroys a person's world, self, and voice, so these other acts that restore the voice become not only a denunciation of the pain but almost a diminution of the pain, a partial

reversal of the process of torture itself" (50). Anjum undergoes inhuman, unfathomable torment in this dark and dirty space:

> Therefore, for Anjum the choice to speak out against the oppression, to exercise her voice, is an attempt to react against the pain of living with such stifling memories. Speaking out, for Anjum, consists of articulating traumatic experiences through writing.

Inside Tihar jail the depiction of the space stresses a sense of enclosure and abandonment: "I felt that the high brown walls and iron doors were about to devour me and trap me in their maze –like interior..."(8). Not only is Anjum confined in an over crowded barrack which: "had far more prisoners than could be accommodated because of which there were frequent quarrels and fights among them and chances of theft and pilferage were high; it was quite natural for prisoners to lose their mental balance in this dark, intimidating and suffocating atmosphere" (51), but also everything that surrounds her highlights the idea of imprisonment:

> The fans being old and rickety also did not function properly...an abundance of mosquitoes in summer and all kinds of insects could be seen in the cell, particularly in the earthen pots and the food.... When prisoners raised such things with the staff...we were told 'this is after all a jail, this happens in summer elsewhere too' (135).

Even the architecture-the high walls of the jail, narrow corridors, iron doors and bars gave rise to terror and pain in Anjum. She felt encaged in hell with no way to escape. The prison administration creates fear psychosis in the prisoners by penalizing prisoners' insubordination with cell confinement, extra labour and frequent beatings. Moreover, they are exploited by jail officials, pitched against colleagues and at times against other prisoners. When Alka, a convict admits before DS "that she had been instructed by the head matron not to speak with [Anjum]me ..." (33), instead of reprimanding matron DS starts shouting at them and a complaint of misbehaviour is lodged against Anjum. This shows the vulnerable situation of prisoners who are under pressure to maintain pleasant and positive relationships with prison staff. Hence defending themselves from negative self-meanings or protesting when staff appears to misuse their privileged access to private information is difficult for these women.

Anjum faces verbal violence from a coterie of vicious women: "'just as you Kashmiris are fair skinned, you are equally malicious, and you have black hearts! You people support Pakistan. If it were in our control, we would hang you to death. You are mean, wicked and anti-national'" (19). She faces threats not only from fellow convicts but also from male jail officials who indirectly try to terrify her: "There are many prisoners from J&K and Pakistan in jail 3 where we often beat them up and make them do sit-ups" (35). Jail officers have ultimate authority in prison. Power is unambiguously marshaled in the interests of control, authority, and security; as a result incarcerated women are at the mercy of a system with a monopoly on the use of force to create a methodology of fear and pain.

The moment Anjum entered Tihar jail she underwent an identity stripping. The prisoners named her "a Pakistani, a terrorist or an anti-national person" (147).The abusive nature and unabated taunts of women in Tihar made her life a virtual hell. They missed no opportunity to call her "'an enemy of the nation'" (213), while the jail staff stereotyped her as: "high risk prisoner...produced in court with my hand firmly in the grip of a woman constable" (110). After Anjum was awarded "a five year jail term," she ceased to be Anjum and was given a new name/identity "Prisoner no 100." My name was then entered into a register and I was handed a prisoner card with 100 as my prison number" (214).

During her five year term in jail Anjum endured the ordeal of fastidious search operations, especially in her cell a day before Independence day and Republic day: "On August 14, early in the morning, several policewomen suddenly raided my cell and scattered and destroyed whatever few belongings I had"(35), another time "while everything was scattered on the floor, the search party took away the nail cutter I had recently purchased from the canteen, and the sewing needles and the medicine for backache that the matron had given me. The earthen pot of water was also emptied and searched" (146).

Although Anjum's own story remains the central one, her own sufferings are interwoven with the sufferings of the other women in jail. The death of Zohra, a young woman convict due to torture and negligence of jail authorities: causes a lot of pain, grief and anger among women prisoners: "wailing...they went on a rampage, smashing and destroying whatever they could...women were also injured." Anjum and five other women recorded their statements that "Zohra had died due to the brutal beating she had received from a policewoman and then to medical

negligence" (46). Her death which led to protests entailed a deep personal involvement, a process that was tremendously painful psychologically and physically for Anjum as well as other women prisoners who recorded their statements against jail officials or participated in the hunger strike demanding justice for Zohra. The women notwithstanding "lathis raining on them" went on a hunger strike "demanding that the DG come personally to take stock of the situation"(47). In this hour of tragedy women forgot their personal differences and came together to mobilize organized resistance. When DG visited the jail on the persistent demand of women sitting on hunger strike following Zohra's death, Anjum spoke in front of all on behalf of the prisoners. Despite being behind bars on POTA charges, she momentarily forgot her personal grief to become the collective voice of the sufferers:

> We thought that DG Sir would express grief and say that Zohra was my sister and I have come to share my sorrow with you. If her death has occurred due to someone's mistake or negligence, I will enquire into it and have it thoroughly investigated. If you had then shouted at us, scolded us we would have felt ashamed but unfortunately, as soon as you arrived, you addressed us as wild beasts and hurt our feelings deeply (48). However, Anjum had to face the penalty for her resistance against injustice: "Six women, including me[Anjum], were framed in the incidents following Zohra's death...I received a copy of FIR from the Hari Nagar police station where SI Santosh had lodged the case under sections IPC34/427/149/332/186 and 353 (49).

Anjum portrays the Special Cell and prison as a representational space where she endures physical and psychological torture and alienation. However, the same space that Anjum represents as repressive is also portrayed as appropriated to counteract repression. Anjum's creation of resistance depends on the representation of "spatial practices," a concept that Lefebvre and Michel De Certeau develop in their theories of space and based on his study of these authors, Rob Shields defines spatial practices as follows:

> A range of activities from individual routines to the creation of zones and regions for specific purposes, [...] [ijndividualised performance or enactment of spatialisation by individuals in theilr daily habits and minute gestures and mannerisms (52-53).

In Anjum's narrative, spatial practices are represented as appropriations of the carceral space that allow, first, a buffer zone when she speaks before the DG: "My utterances seemed to have annoyed the jail authorities because no one amongst the prisoners had perhaps dared to speak in this manner to officers in the past"(48) , and second, when she documents her prison memories of long endless misery. Her writing process creates a space-the prison where stories of not only her personal hazard are told but also stories of women prisoners' solidarity and sharing for survival. Converting enunciation into enonce (oral testimonies, thoughts, and feelings into text) becomes a spatial practice that not only helps Anjum to recognize that writing can help her deal with her personal fears, but she also understands her narrative can be a record of the atrocities women prisoners suffered in jail. Delayed legal process, absence of a judge or witness, strikes by lawyers, summer vacations, etc., prolongs the misery and agony of Anjum in jail. Coming down heavily on the legal system, Anjum regrets that convicts become old, disheartened and dejected by the time the final verdict is announced: "A prisoner ages much before her time with the daily struggle of shuttling between the courts and coping with the dismal conditions in jail"(183). Prisoner No. 100 is not only her individual testimony of her incarceration but she also gives testament of the poor convicts who could not even pay for their bail bonds, and the illiterate convicts would always be at the wrong end because they could not follow the legal proceedings of the case.

Anjum stitches the scraps of her shattered world back together, and she does so by writing. Writing becomes a relief from the overwhelming experience of imprisonment. Anjum admits when she came out of the jail the world had totally changed for her: "The problem of not being able to connect with people affected me emotionally. Writing seemed an option to share my pain, it worked as a vent" (x). The appearance of order that she gets from writing down what happened each day combats the competing fear that she is not in control of her own life.

Prison experience is the turning point in Anjum's life. Prisoner No. 100 is a statement not only of her own struggle but also a critique of the prison system based on repressive political order. It is a saga of outspoken resistance to the injustices meted out to her. Her prison narrative is embedded in particular conditions of the social and political structures and suggests a collective history and ideological solidarity. It is a proof not only to the strength of Anjum to overcome the oppression and discrimination she faced in her daily life, but the strength to withstand

the defiling experience of prison life and use self-expression as a means of emotional escape and freedom. In an interview she says, "I am an ordinary, middle-class, educated Kashmiri woman. I am no writer and I do not know what the art of writing is. I wrote what I could, but at times I felt that my mind registered much more. It seemed like the thoughts were flowing and it was difficult to capture all of it" (Sahni 2012: March7).

In fact, Prisoner No. 100 is a representation of the transformation of space of repression through spatial tactics into a counter-space for resistance, and how the act of writing can create its own space in order to provide self- healing and to awaken public opinion towards the plight of prisoners. Thus, the formation of Anjum's discourse of resistance is twofold: on the one hand, it reproduces the violence embedded in the carceral system on the other, the text is inscribed upon that very violence, and, through its writing as a practice of resistance, represents the possibilities of challenging repression.

END NOTES

1. Anjum Zamarud Habib started Women's Welfare Association in her home town Anantnag (Islamabad) in Kashmir in the late eighties. This Association was later renamed Muslim Khawateen Markaz (MKM) (Council of Muslim Women).

2. The Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002 (POTA) was an anti-terrorism legislation enacted by the Parliament of India in 2002. The act replaced the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) of 2001 and the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) (1985–95), and this act was repealed in 2004.

3. Prisoner No. 100 was originally written and published in Urdu as Qaidi No.100 Bharati Zindan Mai Mere Shab-o-Roz Ki Rudad. *2009* Islamabad, Kashmir: Habib Publications. Sahba Husain has translated this book into English.

4. Gaston Bachelard, Michel De Certeau, Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Rob Shields, and Edward Soja among many others have deconstructed and re-written the concept of space. These writers have developed an understanding of spaces always in relation to the body-as constantly evolving

strategies, readable metaphors, palimpsests, mechanisms, productions of hegemony and power relations, and sites of social interactions. For complete details consult Edward W. Soja's Postmodern Geographies and Rob Shields's Places on the Margin.

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A Nation in the Shadow of War: Reading of Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim*

—Manisha Gangahar

First partitioned as East Bengal, then renamed as East Pakistan and, in 1971, officially declared as People's Republic of Bangladesh—a nation is born. While nationalism, in the twentieth century, was to resist and liberate from colonialism, in case of Bangladesh, it was asserting for a separate cultural identity, not religious. When Pakistan was formed as a separate nation in 1947, East Pakistan shared neither geographical nor cultural kinship with West Pakistan except that Islam was the religion of the majority population on both sides. Henceforth, the adoption of Urdu as the state language became the fulcrum of the contention between the East and the West of the nation, leading to demonstrations on the streets in East Pakistan. In a police crackdown on 21 February 1952, several civilians and students lost their lives and the day began to be revered as the Martyr's Day. But it was on 26 March 1971 that Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rehman declared East Pakistan's independence as Bangladesh following brutal suppression by the establishment. Subsequent months saw large-scale killings and atrocities till the Pakistani army surrendered on 16 December 1971 and Bangladesh won the Liberation War.

'The nation' was an end that had to be, and was, achieved through the civil war, yet what also accompanied was a set of questions: Are Bangladeshis "a people"? Or, have they stopped being one? Are they in the process of becoming one? The war ended, but can its traces be completely erased? How does the new nation change the intimate relationships among people?

> Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation—or narration—might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that a nation emerges as a powerful historical idea... (Bhabha 1)

The truth, merely an imagination or pure rhetoric, the 'nation' or 'nationalism' and served as a symbolic force to bring and keep people together. Yet, as Homi Bhabha underscores, the ambivalence punctuates

the narrative of nation. The paper, through the reading of Tahmima Anam's novel *The Good Muslim*, explores the idea of nation and traces how that idea, in case of Bangladesh, changes over the years as qualms regarding the war and the sacrifices that people made was worth being now called a 'nation'. The novel is, in fact, a narration of the Bangladesh's becoming of a nation, but the upshots of war, violence and nation itself leave individuals in altered state of consciousness. The conflict—on the ground, in the minds and within—has so intruded the lives of the characters that it follows them like a shadow.

Two patterns emerge in the novel. One is the 1970s when the people accomplish their dream of freedom, and with that a hope for equality, but that freedom is adulterated with the brutality of war. As the war invades the psyche of idealists, dreamers and revolutionaries, everything is in a flux—nationalism, religion and the sense of being. The other pattern is in the context of the 1980s. Ten years since the war and the contours of nationalism have changed. A dictator is in power; war crimes are still unaccounted for and criminals are on the loose. The stories of women raped and abused during the war for an independent Bangladesh have been erased or marginalised in the search for a clean, linear history. Nonetheless, the past and the present intersect in the minds and on the ground. *The Good Muslim* raises certain pertinent questions: what must be forgotten to allow the nation to breathe, what must be forgiven to start afresh, or is neither possible? How does one keep 'nationalism' alive, what measures, defines nationalism?

In the novel, in the aftermath of the civil war, a family struggles with the country's new identity and also their own. After almost a decade of the civil war, the widowed mother and her son Sohail and daughter Maya are physically reunited but find themselves emotionally disconnected. It is impossible for each one to escape the past, to bring about a closure: "This is how the war made its way into their house. Sohail spilling water from his glass, flicking dal over the side of his plate. A vanishing woman. A shake of the hand. A silence between the siblings" (Anam 123).

Both Sohail and Maya had participated, contributed to the war for independence in their own capacities, in their own ways. They had yearned for a national identity that would define them: "By now they could see the backs of all those men who had finally returned from war, the people who would make their victory into a country, who would write

the constitution and give them passports and anthems" (Anam 48). The people were enraged, as Maya recollects: "She remembered the sight of dead men with their hands tied behind their backs, their faces lapped with blood..." (Anam 96). Sohail, Maya, Aref, Joy and many others fought, endorsed the war, because something was needed to be done, they didn't need to define in clear terms what they were fighting for. The 'idea of nation' was enough to take the plunge: "Aref had been Sohail's best friend at university, the two inseparable once Sohail discovered that Aref's father, like Ammoo, was Urdu-speaking, that they both had relatives in Pakistan. It had set them apart from the others, having to square their politics with their family history" (Anam 46). Despite having familial ties in Pakistan, it was the sense of being a Bangladeshi more than anything else that made them join the war against the Muslim other. In finding *Bangladesh*, they would have found themselves, politically and ideologically. The idea of the "whole", of the nation-ness, seemed to have carried all of them with it. The community 'imagined' a nation, fought to make it real but the ambivalence soon overwhelmed the idea of nationalism. But, as Bangladesh emerges a new nation, with it the contradictions become apparent. In *The Good Muslim*, the author mirrors the 'state' of Bangladesh through the family crisis inside Rehana Haque's home. As individuals struggle with their own understanding and interpretation of the state of affairs, the struggle of a territory and its people in coming to terms with the new status, the nation. The prologue of Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim* opens in December 1971 with these lines:

> Eight days after the end of war... He has been walking for days following the grey ribbon of road that leads south, towards the city. In one abandoned village after another, he has eaten banana leaves and drunk from ponds, kissing their surfaces, filtering moss through his teeth. On the third day, a farmer told him the war was over... Now on his way home he turns the name of the country around on his tongue. *Bangladesh.* (Anam 3)

The war has been won and the people look forward now to being citizens of an independent state, but not without paying a price, making a sacrifice, losing their loved ones, being displaced and, for many, being unaccepted on return. Sohail Haque too had seen the killings of his own people and the enemy, the misery, and the suffering. All this took place for the establishment of *Bangladesh*. It was the revolutionary in him who,

following the idea of a nation, joined the war. But walking back home, when he comes across an abandoned building and he finds a young woman there, the idea of the nation for which he had killed people, begins to fall apart. This woman and her story with war in the background keep haunting Sohail and he transforms into a religious fundamentalist. He is no longer the same individual that he was before the war:

> Sohail's friends couldn't understand his conversion, because they hadn't really grasped what had come before. They had thought his life was full of happiness, they used words like jolly and cheerful to describe him. Happy-go-lucky...Rock and rolled. Before he found God. They remembered how good-looking he was... had they known him better, they would have seen that the teeth, the smiling, the happy and the lucky had been taken by the war. By a girl whose captors had shaved her head so that she could not hang herself. Purdah, the preaching—all of this followed naturally, filling the hole left behind by his old mutinies (Anam 91).

Sohail is ideologically driven. He has an idea of himself as a revolutionary, thus partakes in the civil war. Then he adopts the idea of himself as a charismatic religious leader in service of the people. But he is so mired in his own ideas that he can't see his own six-year-old son suffering. Perhaps it was the yearning to be a 'good' nationalist that he killed, and then again it was the unfinished business of being 'good' that he became a religious zealot and a punitive father: "He [Sohail] isn't a child any more; he's a man, a soldier back from the war. He asks himself if he can be right again, if he can be good. After Piya. After the killing" (Anam 123). As a soldier, it was his job, his duty, to kill the enemy; it wasn't a murder. But the duty, inspired by a national consciousness, fails to offer a sense of satisfaction. He thinks that Piya, who had survived but had lost her 'honour' in the fight for a nation, would redeem him. But when she leaves without notice, Sohail's sense of guilt overwhelms him. The new nation, he feels, had nothing to offer either to him or to Piya.

On the other hand, for Maya, it is hard to comprehend what has changed after the war. What Maya and Sohail had dreamed of was a reality now, she had been waiting for her brother to narrate stories of war, how he proved to be a hero and how they won but all she encounters is

a withdrawn individual:

> Once again she hoped he might unravel himself now, tell her the whole thing from start to finish, war to peace. So that, by the end of it, it would be as if she'd been there, the distance between them traversed, forgotten. It wasn't as if her own return had been uncomplicated (Anam 67).

The distance has cropped up not only between the two siblings but fissures appear in the idea of freedom that has been achieved with the end of the war. While arguing with Sohail about showing Piya the projector that their friend had picked from a cinema hall during the war, the ambiguity regarding "freedom" is underscored: "I am saying a lot of things happened during the war, but now it is not wartime anymore, and we have to behave like citizens rather than rebels," says Sohail and to which Maya replies: "I think we should let her see a film. Isn't that why we fought this war anyway, so we could be free?" (Anam 75). While liberating the people from one subjugator, Sohail is now becoming a captive of religion which, perhaps, doesn't allow the freedom of watching cinema. Maya can't find meaning in the stance that Sohail takes. What happened to the celebration of having accomplished a national identity? But the only answer she can find is the urge to leave her home: "Seven months into her exile, Maya had written to her mother. *I am not angry*, she had begun. *But I cannot come home...*" (Anam 16). But when she does return after many years, she feels it was "[a] mistake to think she could come home and everything would be as it was before" (Anam 59). Not only has the worldspace outside her house altered, but the world inside the house was not the same: "The house was changed, but it had survived" (Anam 25). Just as Maya enters the house on return, she takes a moment:

> And lodged into the bone of this house was every thought and hope and bewildered fantasy she had ever harboured about her life, about the war she had fought and won, about the woman and man she had imagined she and her brother would become; but after it was all over, the killing and the truce and the redrawing of the border, he had gone one way and she another And she had foreseen none of it (Anam 13-14).

While the siblings try to find their own meaning, for the mother it had just been the well-being of her children that is paramount. Rehana neither questions her daughter about why she left nor asks her to return; to her

son, without probing, she gives the Holy book. For Rehana, war has ended but it has left her family disoriented. The legacy of war affects people's lives and their behaviour in different and contrasting hues. The ideological difference between brother and sister creates a deep-seated schism in their minds and this difference is the central conflict in *The Good Muslim*. They have charted their own ways, opposite to each other's, of moving forward in the shadow of the tortuous history. They draw their own meanings, cross each other's paths but can no longer be together. The idea of nation that had brought the people together now seems to lose it magnetic force with people drifting in their own directions and nationalism being pushed to the back burner. When Maya, on her return from exile, visits the Shaheed Minar, she is disillusioned. The place is littered, conveying the lack of respect and callous attitude on part of the people after a decade of the Liberation struggle. It is only later, when the immediate goal is achieved, that the prism moment occurs. To commemorate the 1952 Bengali Language Movement, Shaheed Minar was established in Dhaka. It was more than just a tribute to the dead. The memorial became a symbol of resistance to West Pakistan, an inspiration to fight for liberation, a metaphor underscoring the need for a separate national identity and even defining it. Hence, not surprising, it has been a site for contestation, to be attacked and to be defended in the name of nationalism, a separate cultural identity: "Shaheed Minar was the first thing the Pakistan Army destroyed in the war. It was also the first thing to be built, taller and wider, but Maya wished they had left it broken, because now, shiny and freshly painted, it bore no signs of the struggle" (Anam 44). While the struggle for independence was based on Bengali Language Movement and Bengali nationalism, Maya finds that religion has soon began to overtake. Though the Muslim element was always present, the cultural identity was more imposing, as Anam also suggests in the novel: "All through the movement, they had walked barefoot from Elephant Road to Shaheed Minar in red-and-white saris, greeting one another with the national salutation, joy Bangla. *Victory to Bengal*" (Anam 43). But gradually, the importance of Islam began to grow as the Awami League fell out with the country's powerful military, which used religion as a counterweight to the secular and vaguely socialist ideology of the Awami League. With the assassination of the first Prime Minister, Mujibur Rehman, when Maj Gen Zia ur Rahman seized power in the mid-1970s, he 'successfully changed the image of Bangladesh from a liberal Muslim country to an Islamic country' (Kabir 201). *The Good Muslim* reflects the

transition. Not only is the new country becoming less of a nation, the whiff of religious fundamentalism is growing stronger and Maya questions the shift of national identity from cultural to religious:

> Saima's Alhamdulillah was bothering her; once upon a time they would have laughed at people referring to God between every other sentence. But now everyone had caught it; just this morning she had been to the vegetable man, and after she had paid him and taken her leave, he had said Allah Hafez. 'What's wrong with the old greeting?' she had replied sharply. 'Khoda Hafez not religious enough for you?' And the man had scraped the feeling out of his face and returned her money. 'Please buy your vegetables somewhere else,' he said quietly. (Anam 54)

Religion, as the author highlights, begins to define the lifestyle of the citizens of the new nation. For Sohail, in fact, religion is not merely an ideology or even a matter of convenience but solace. He, like all revolutionaries, had "believed that faith was beneath them, a consolation for simpler, lower minds" (Anam 93) but it is in religion that he finds refuge: "The Book spoke to his every sorrow, to every bruise of his life... it spoke to the machine-gun sound that echoes in his chest, night after night, and to the hollow where Piya had been" (Anam 166–167). He seeks redemption from the savagery he has witnessed and even perpetrated in the certitude of faith. It is the guilt that converts him. How does a sceptic manage to convert? For Sohail, the war did it. Though it drifted him away from his family, he came closer to his Islam. Retreating from the horror of war, religion seems to be the only thing he can hold on to.

Maya, however, is bewildered to find religion overwhelming the lives of the people and she even mocks his brother, calls him a *mullah* and is then rebuked by her mother, "Why? You couldn't stand for him to be different" (Anam 253). But it is only when the mother is dying that Maya climbs up the stairs of the house and ventures into Sohail's world of Islam. She doesn't believe in what religion has to offer and looking at the praying women only leaves her even more dazed. Nevertheless, she experiences relief, feels at ease, just sitting and listening to the prayers. Her idealism is tampered with things out of her control and beyond recognition. His brother, revered as Huzoor, had cured his mother of cancer but she doesn't trust him to save the life of his own son, who has been sent to a *madrassa*. She feels caught between the secular ideals and

appeal of the religion. What would be a good choice? She had been trying to be a good citizen. Has she failed? But for her being a good Muslim is certainly at odds with that of her brother: "There could be no sense between them. He would remain a hallucination to her, the ghost of a man she used to love. And she would remain a stranger to him (Anam 289). But for both Maya and Sohail, irrespective of their individual choices, the claims of memory, national history and identity had become a discourse. The freedom has lost its charm and so have the leaders:

> On Independence Day, Maya switched on the television and saw the Director laying wreaths at Shaheed Minar, the Martyr's Memorial... Last month he had tried to change the name of the country to the Islamic Republic of Bangladesh. And before that, he had bought a pair of matching Rolls Royce, one for himself, another for his mistress. Now, on the anniversary of the day the Pakistan Army ran its tanks over Dhaka, he was making a speech about the war. Eager to befriend the old enemy, he said nothing about the killings. He praised the importance of regional unity. All the Muslims are Brothers, he repeated. (Anam 42)

To keep the nation intact, it is the permutation and combination of memory, of the past. What must then be, and is, practiced is the politics of appropriation. The new nation attempts to push history into oblivion as the editor of the *Rise Bangladesh!*, in the novel, tries to explain to Maya: "Darling, it's 1985. Don't you see? We have bigger problems, Dictator isn't going to hold a fair election, we have to get him out. Then worry about other things country needs to move forward, not backward" (Anam 222). But to move on, is it essential to erase the past? Can the past be erased and would there be no traces left? Or, do you—and the nation—remain trapped in history forever?

> They changed the road numbers... No one knew whether to refer to their street by the old number or the new. Old 13, they said, new 6A. It was like a half-swallowed pill, stuck in the throat. Perhaps they were hoping the old places would not be what they had once been to people, the streets where they had marched and the streets to which they had taken to cast their votes. (Anam 51-52)

What also got erased was the narrative of 'women' in the making of a nation. Nations are not only invented, but they are also gendered. Though for Anam, women are the real "heroes" and through the novel and its

women characters, she quite overtly underscores that choices for women are not always clear-cut and that their lives are complicated by different stakes. In *The Good Muslim*, women come across as strong individuals, yet they find themselves at the crossroads.

Rehana, the widowed mother, is an unintentional hero, she has seen enough in her life yet in no circumstances does she ever give up. 'Strong as an ox,' Rehana said; 'they can't kill me' (Anam 118). She tells this to her maid Sufia when she is diagnosed with cancer but it is not, perhaps, just the health she is referring to. As she negotiates the burden of religion and the everyday life, she sees her children going in opposite directions. The new nation has nothing to offer her. While her daughter has left home, her son and his wife have moved upstairs. She must fend for herself. Even the cancer doesn't dampen her spirits: "But Ammoo remained scrupulously private, refusing to talk openly about her disease, always preferring Sufia's help to hers." (Anam 150). She seems to have passed this intensity of character to her daughter as well.

The Good Muslim turns out to be essentially Maya's story, her yearning to emotionally reunite with her brother, her ambivalence with religion and struggle with her own nationalist consciousness. At at meeting, listening to the victims, Maya finds herself saying: "I think—–I believe—that the first thing we must do is admit ur own faults, our own sins. So much happened during the war—we were not just victims" (Anam 97).But more than the physical changes that she takes note of after returning to Dhaka, it is her brother—who shifted from a committed freedom fighter to a devout Muslim—that had left her wandering and wondering. Unlike her mother, she could never come to terms with the change in Sohail. She blamed his wife Silvi, who had said there is only *One*, for bringing about the change in a man who had once loved books, had fed on Shakespeare and had a life. And then her own doings add to her own suffering. Trained in medicine, she had performed abortions on women who had been raped by the enemy. Later, the sense of guilt overwhelms her:

> She felt the urge to tell him [Sohail] more, to explain about the abortions she had done after the war, and that she hadn't realised until later, much later that she had racked up a debt she was still struggling to repay. How could he know—he was just a soldier, he had killed as a matter of principle, but the war babies, the children of rape, had been left to junior doctors, the volunteers in ragged tents on the outskirts of town. (Anam 51)

She had thought what she was performing her duty towards the new nation, service to the women victims, but then realises that she too was a perpetrator of violence. Her mother, on the other hand, had understood it better: 'Maya was worried Ammoo would say something to Bangabandhu, about the war babies... Ammoo was quiet and polite... Only she could tell that Ammoo was trying to convince herself, that the thing did not sit right with her, and that... doubted his sincerity' (Anam 142).

At the end of the 1971 civil war, Bangladesh was faced with the staggering number of 2 lakh women raped by the Razakars (local Bengali collaborators) and the Pakistani army (Mookherjee 436). The government, after the war, referred to the raped women as 'birangona', meaning 'war heroines', with an aim to prevent them from being ostracised and as an attempt to rehabilitate by marrying them off or expecting the families to accept them.

In *The Good Muslim*, Piya is a 'birangona' and has been rescued from the army camp by Sohail, who then transports her to her village but after some days, Piya comes to Sohail's house and announces: 'They threw me out...' (Anam 68). The new nation has failed her. The new state, for her, only symbolises that the state of being remains the same. Having earned a label of a 'war heroine', obviously, did not help. The society was reluctant to accept these women, let alone glorify them. In fact, the eulogisation of the raped women as heroine was a symbolic evocation of the dynamism of the new nation, but the label negated the very purpose of 'honouring' the women. It categorised the raped woman, as Kajalie Shehreen argues:

> The label carried certain qualifiers and expectation, and for women weighed down by social expectations and made docile subjects this resulted in a form of self-surveillance... In return of the honour that supposedly came with the title, the women were expected to participate unquestioningly in the various rehabilitation programmes and move on with their lives without protest. The women's reality, as is apparent in the oral histories and to some extent in the media reports, was one of dishonour and disgrace. (Islam 2138)

But Tahmima Anam, unlike the image of the 'birangona' as that of a woman victimised and ruined, pens Piya differently in the sense that for her rescue and redemption, she does not conform to male/state-imposed

mechanisms of salvaging her. When her family rejects her, she leaves but knows what direction she needs to take. At the house of her saviour, she doesn't seek pity but merely says, 'I have no place with them' (Anam 68). There isn't an expression of self-pity either. It takes a while for her to make it to the Rehabilitation Centre for an abortion. And there, Maya tries to convince her of the right action, as she repeats the words of Sheikh Mujib—the Bangladesh's government programme behind setting up abortion centres and rehabilitation centres:

> Defiled by the enemy. The child in your womb is a bastard child, a vial of poison. You must not allow it to come into this world. You must not give it the milk of your breast. What has been done can be undone. You must not live with it for the rest of your life. You must not mother this child. Do not think of it as your child, it is the seed of your enemy, I told her. Finally, she agreed' (Anam 244).

In case of Bangladesh, silence became a state policy, an instrument for the agency of the state and not the women. The subject itself was rendered "unthinkable" and "unspeakable" even among the women themselves. In the novel, Maya unconsciously endorses that silence in case of 'birangonas' though she herself questions the state of affairs otherwise. In fact, the reason for women becoming the targets in armed conflicts is that women are seen as carriers of culture and their bodies 'as both territory to be conquered and vehicles through which a nation or a group can be re-produced' (Kelly 2000). The imagery of women as mothers has, time and again, been evoked as part of nationalist consciousness. But for Bangladesh war heroines, she does feel there is a problem with this ideology, as she recollects:

> You remember what Sheikh Mujib said? That he didn't want those bastard children in our country. But some of them—it was hard, you know, I didn't think so much about it at the time—they wanted to get rid of them, but when it came time to do it they would cry. And then they would wake up and ask us to put the babies back (Anam 243).

While it shows the conflict within the raped women, it also isolates them in the society. The women were asked not to think like mothers. Piya breaks free from being a victim and becomes an active agent of her own destiny when she refuses to get the abortion, returns to the house and subsequently disappears. In the epilogue, 1992, Piya walks up the stage

and after introducing herself as 'Miss' Piya Islam, she shares her story with the people of Bangladesh:

> 'We were chained to the wall. Someone had been there before us—we saw her name scratched into the wall. She had hanged herself, so they shaved our hair and took our saris... Twenty, thirty. They took turns... Until the war ended...This is my son. His name is Sohail. I named him after the man who rescued me from the place. The man who saved my life' (Anam 292-293)

The silent voice speaks. Be it the media coverage or the official history, the 'birangona' has remained invisible. They had the statistics but not the voice of 'birangona'; what was being done for them, not what were her needs, thoughts, experiences and desires. In *The Good Muslim*, silence out of choice or compulsion is what Anam debates in a subtle manner through her character Piya. Although the narrative of Piya flits in and out of the novel, women's sexual violation during Bangladesh's War of Independence gets a platform to be debated. The silence regarding 'birangonas' continued for almost two decades till the establishment of the People's Tribunal, where the war-affected related their experiences. But this too had a negative impact as the women, especially those from villages, were openly scorned at. More than the rape, the disclosure became a crime. Anam, in the novel, makes a reference to this effort by writer Jahanara Imam where Piya stands in the witness box. She brings Maya and Piya in an embrace: "All that is good in her brother, and all that is good in her, is in this field, in this woman who has named her son after him..." (Anam 293).

As the politically confused nation progresses unevenly, the equally ambivalent people try to draw meaning from whatever they can. *The Good Muslim* bears witness to the silence around the traumatic experience of a nation's birth. The brutal war of 1971 was fought to defend what the Bengalis believed was their distinct national identity: a fusion of Bengali culture and humanist Islam (Kabeer 55) but the identity in the shadow of war remains fragmented.

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Micro-History as a Mode of Deconstructing Colonial History:
Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*

—Ashima Thakur

This paper explores how Amitav Ghosh's narrative of exploitation and dispossession *Sea of Poppies* calls into question the official narrative of history by pitting it against micro-history/fragmentary histories. The aim of the subaltern studies group was to uncover the fragments of information about the oppressed which had been effaced by mainstream history. An insight from Gyanendra Pandey's essay "In Defense of the Fragment" and Claire Chamber's paper "In an Antique Land: A Fragmentary History of the Indian Ocean" have largely shaped my understanding of Ghosh's portrayal of fragmentary histories. Gyanendra Pandey, in his essay, argues in favour of the fragment as a model for historians. According to him, the mainstream historians denied history to the 'fragments' of Indian society, that is, "the smaller religious and caste communities, tribal sections, industrial workers, activist women's groups" (Pandey 3). Pandey also insisted on paying attention to historical fragments (the kind of historical sources that are often neglected by mainstream historians) which were deemed as secondary sources by the historians. He said historians should pay greater attention to such historical fragments as:

> A weaver's diary, a collection of poems by an unknown poet [and] [...] all. Those literatures of India that Macaulay condemned, creation myths and women's songs, family genealogies and local traditions of history. (Pandey 25).

Gyanendra Pandey's essay, "The Nation and Its Pasts," delves into nationalist historiography and the manner in which it depends on the state archives and elite documents. This discussion, in some senses, extends the defense of the fragment and calls for an interrogation of "the historical construction of the totalities we work with, the contradictions that survive within [fragments], the possibilities they appear to fulfill, and the possibilities they suppress at the same time". (*Routine Violence*, Pandey 67) In his novels, Ghosh uses "fragments" as an evocative tool to narrate the stories of marginal people who have been silenced by history. Ghosh borrows Rediker's views, as elaborated in the essay "The Poetics of History from Below", and emphasises upon the urgency of

relying upon stories/verses/fragments to "bring a historical moment to life, even sear it into memory".

The master narratives of imperialism and nationalism have erased and overwritten the little stories of small places. Through his empirical research he recovers historically situated subjectivities. *Sea of Poppies* is a novel that researches into the official accounts and reports of an opium factory in Patna, looks into documents from remote archives such as British Library, The Mauritius National Archives, Canton's library et al. According to the official records, the factory was a clean place, but in the novel it is depicted as a dark dingy place. Ghosh compares it to Dante's *Inferno*. According to Alessandro Vescovi "the colonizers discourse is thus counteracted by the novelist's comprehensive research and imaginative micro-histories which expose the lies embedded in the macro-history of the imperial project" (*History and Narration*, Vescovi 6).

In the present study, history as an innocent writing of the past events has come under a sustained attack. Re-writing history has acquired urgency due to its appropriation and dubious revision by political parties and elitist groups. The West, as the apparent maker and custodian of history, has been the site of truth. It is the mission of the West, which makes history Eurocentric. As far as the academic discourse of history is concerned 'Europe' remains the sovereign, theoretical, subject of all histories. Ghosh's, novels challenge and break free from the shackles of Euro-centrism. The novel in the present study uncovers the silences and omissions of the dominant historiography. It brings to light the 'history from below'. Ghosh recuperates, recognizes, and recovers multiple stories of the ordinary people who 'vanish' into the 'anonymity of History' (qtd. in *In An Antique Land*, 353). Ghosh challenges Spivak's contention about the impossibility of representing subaltern utterance by retrieving the silenced voices of lower classes, peasants, tribals, women and other marginalized groups. Like other subaltern historians, Ghosh challenges the "elitist-bias". He recuperates the voices of the people lost in the maze of elitist history. He searches the archives for "those barely discernible traces that ordinary people leave upon the world" (17). He attempts to fill in the blank spaces left by the archives.

Through his novels, Ghosh reminds us that historiography is often limited to the history of the literate—those individuals who could write their way into posterity with journals, letters, ledgers etc. He brings

to light the voices of the nameless masses that lived and died in total obscurity. His interest is in those who constitute the footnotes of history. Figures like Deeti, merely hinted in the official records have long preoccupied Ghosh. In his prologue to *In An Antique Land* Ghosh has put it succinctly: "the only people for whom we can even begin to imagine properly human, individual existences are the literate and the consequential, the Wazirs and the Sultans, the Chroniclers, and the priests –the people who had power to inscribe themselves physically upon time" (17). Through the present study of *Sea of Poppies,* an attempt has been made to show how by historicizing the novel, Ghosh has succeeded in re-visiting and re-visioning two great economic themes of the Nineteenth Century: the forceful cultivation of opium as a cash crop in Bengal and Bihar for the Chinese market and the transportation of Indian indentured workers called 'girmitiyas' to cut sugarcanes for British on Islands like Mauritius, Fiji and Caribbean.

In the Marxist terms, his focus is on the base upon which the superstructure rests, that is, the British. The rhetoric of civilization via which the British conquered foreign lands and subjugated people has been brought to light in his novels. The initial impulse for a colonial enterprise, as is well known, is often commercial, leading to the establishment of a trading post or some such outfit. Thus, it is the Burmese teak and the Malayan rubber that spur the British colonial drive in *The Glass place* and opium in *Sea of Poppies.*

Sea of Poppies is a saga of colonialism and migration. It is a fictionalized account of the political history of the opium trade, the use and abuse of opium, of the indentured labour that was called to the Caribbean Islands. The historical project of colonialism denied history to the colonized and has hidden this denial with a mask of objectivity which it claims is transparent. The British version of history glosses over the time when this country was world's biggest drug pusher. Two centuries ago, it was British fortune seekers in India who turned the bank of Ganges into a "sea of poppies" and tried to force refined opium on the reluctant Chinese. *Sea of Poppies* paints, a poignant picture of the human devastation of this trade. Ghosh revisits in a new, detailed and compelling way some of the concerns of his earlier novels—lives of men and women with little power, whose stories, framed against the grand narratives of history invite other ways of thinking about the past culture and identity. With dexterity Ghosh assembles those who will set sail in his narrative of Ibis, an old slaving ship that is taking indentured labourers to Mauritius.

There is a rustic widow Deeti, a mullato American freedman, Zachary, a French stowaway Paulette Lambert, head of the ship's crew of lascars, Serang Ali, a bankrupt Raja Neel and convicts and coolies.

The action of the novel begins with the arrival of the Ibis at Ganga-sagar-Island, and later Calcutta. Discontinued as a 'blackbirder' with the abolition of the slave trade, the schooner is scheduled to transport "girmityas" to Mauritius. *Sea of Poppies* opens in 1838, a pivotal year in the annals of opium trade. The novel opens with "the vision of a tall-masted ship, at sail on the ocean..." (3)*. This vision came to Deeti who could not decipher anything out of it. "Her village was so far inland that the sea seemed as distant as the netherworld" (3). But, Deeti knew that this apparition was a sign of destiny because she had never seen such a vessel before. It is on the day of Deeti's vision that Zachary Reid and what is left of his motley crewmates dock a bird like schooner, the Ibis, a few hundred miles down the river from her village. Deeti lived in a village which was on the outskirts of Ghazipur, and it's through her husband that the reality of enforced cultivation of opium is exposed. Deeti's family is one of the many that supply produce to a British-run opium factory in Ghazipur in colonial India. Forced to cultivate opium as a part of Company's colonial policy, Deeti and other rural folk have abandoned centuries old agricultural tradition. The title of the novel refers to the waving fields of poppy flowers that rolled over nineteenth century India. Ghosh has depicted India as it was under the East India Company. It's once bounteous countryside is run by company edict, with the villagers ordered to grow Poppies to feed colossal opium factories.

> ...everyone's land was in hock to the agents of the opium factory: every farmer had been served with a contract, the fulfilling of which left them with no option but to strew their land with poppies. And now, with the harvest over and little grain at home, they would have to plunge still deeper into debt to feed their families... (193).

They are surviving on agricultural monoculture, because the English Sahibs allowed little else to be planted. Deeti remembers "the old days when the fields would be heavy with wheat in the winter... Poppies had been a luxury then, grown in small clusters that bore the main winter crops – wheat, masoor daal and vegetables" (29). Her hut needs a new roof, but there is no thatch to repair: the fields that once grew wheat and straw are now filled with 'plump poppy pods'.

Ghosh's interests are in unearthing stories and events that have been effaced from official history. People like Deeti, who are merely hinted at in the official record, have long preoccupied Ghosh. His primary interest is in the lives and fortunes of these people. "By dwelling on small details and bestowing on ordinary lives an attention that the historian's strict annals cannot afford, a writer creates an interior history." (Rukmini Bhaya Nair). Ordinary people like Deeti were caught up in the harsh economics of growing poppies and indentured labour. Opium has deeply infiltrated into her family life. Deeti is married to a hopeless opium addict Hukam Singh, who works in a Suddar opium factory. She was dragged and violated on her wedding night by her husband's brother Chandan Singh because her husband is incapable of performing his conjugal duties. She discovers the power of opium when she begins to use it to sedate her troublesome mother-in-law: Later, in the novel Deeti realizes that "it was not the planet above that governed her life: it was this miniscule orb—at once bountiful and all-devouring, merciful and destructive, sustaining and vengeful. This was her shani, her Saturn (452).

Amitav Ghosh brings to fore the little known fact of history of opium cultivation in Nineteenth Century India. The British version of history conceals the fact that they were the world's biggest drug pushers. This side of history is never discussed. *Sea of Poppies* is an exposé of the shrewd business acumen of the erstwhile colonial masters. Opium formed about 20% of the country's revenue till the 1920's. The East India Company, which held a monopoly of British trade in China, was unwilling to pay for its silk and tea purchases in silver. For several decades, from the closing years of the 18th Century, the East India Company sent large quantities of opium into China. "It is estimated that more than thirty thousand chests of opium, valued at about twenty million silver dollars, were annually imported into China for a number of years" (qtd. *in A Concise History of China*, 87). It scrapped India of its riches and Chinese of their discretion. . The British did all they could to increase the trade: They bribed officials, helped the Chinese work out elaborate smuggling schemes to get the opium into China's interior, and distributed free samples of the drug to innocent victims.

The cost to China was enormous. The drug weakened a large percentage of the population (some estimate that 10 percent of the population regularly used opium by the late Nineteenth Century), and silver began to flow out of the country to pay for the opium. Many of the economic problems China faced later were either directly or indirectly

traced to the opium trade Through Deeti's eyes, Ghosh gives a detailed description of the Ghazipur opium factory, based on an account by one J.W.S. Mc Arthur, a superintendent of the Ghazipur opium factory in the Nineteenth Century. Ghosh has made the most out of his book *Notes on an Opium Factory*. The narrative sees Deeti on an errand to the factory into a world of "the uniformed burkundazes" (92) at the gate and the stacks of poppy flower *rotis*. We see through her eyes "bare bodied men sunk waist deep in tanks of opium, tramping round and round to soften the sludge. Their eyes were vacant, glazed, and yet somehow they managed to keep moving, as slow as ants in honey, tramping, treading" (95). The drug seems to bring a moral numbness, not only to those who ingest it, but to those involved in its production. There was a 'miasma of lethargy" (91) everywhere. Even the monkeys were stupefied from drinking the waste water. "They never chattered or fought or stole from passers – by" (94). As, Deeti crosses into the most sacred sanctum assembly room, where her husband Hukam Singh works, and where, as per regulations laid by the East India Company, "each package of opium, was to consist of exactly one seer and seven and a half chittacks of poppy leaf rotis, half of the fine grade and half coarse, the whole being moistened with no more and no less than five chittacks of lewah" (97).

Ghosh has brought to fore the plight of poor Indian peasants and labourers who were exploited and rendered defenceless in the face of factory's growing appetite for revenue. The circumstances forced the poor people to sell themselves and their children in return for a few cowries. The muharir tells Deeti "Do what others are doing... Go to the moneylender...sell your sons. Send them off to Mareech. It's not as if you don't have any choices" (155). The people who sold themselves were called "girmitiyas" because "their names were entered on "girmits' agreements written on pieces of paper" (72).

Though Deeti is the novel's "mainsail, its guiding energy" as described by Ghosh *(Time* Oct 6, 2008), but she is not alone. Ghosh has a talent for bringing to life through his characters worlds that have been long forgotten. He tells the story through the everyday struggles and conflicted inner lives of a diverse and engrossing cast of characters who end up together aboard Ibis by chance or by magnetic pull. They belong to different strata of society ranging from Deeti, a low Caste 'giant of a man' Kalua, Raja Neel Ratan of Raskhali, a mulatto American freedman Zachary, an orphaned French girl Paulette, her playmate Jodu and a gomusta Baboo Nob Kissin. They all have stories to tell and secrets to

hide. After her husband's death, Deeti is rescued from sati-ritual of immolation on her husband's pyre by Kalua a low caste Oxen-cart driver. Together, they flee the wrath of Deeti's in-laws finding refuge as coolies in Ibis.

The Haldars of Raskhali were one of the oldest and respect worthy families of Bengal. We see Raja Neel Rattan of Raskhali from the heights of power and privilege to the depths of the schooner hold. In their heydays, the Raskhali rajas were courted by company officials to obtain finances for opium trade with China. The family fortunes of Haldar's were dependent on the firm founded by Mr. Benjamin Burnham which deals with export of opium. Due to the downturn in trade, Raja Neel Rattan was unable to pay his debts. He was accused of forging the signatures of Mr. Burnham with the intention of defrauding his friends, dependents and associates. Raja Neel Rattan was sure that he would be acquitted with some token punishment because his relations among Calcutta's gentry had told him that this was a mere show-trial to show to the public the "even-handedness of British Justice" (200). But his lawyer's terse and blunt statement that "There is not a jury on earth that would acquit you – for less one that consists mainly of English traders and colonists" (200) turned the tables on Neel's head. Later it became clear to Neel that his lawyer was right and "in this system of justice it was the English themselves – Mr. Burnham and his ilk who were exempt from the law as it applies to others: it was they who had become the world's new Brahmins" (231). Ghosh has sarcastically brought forth the inner contradiction of the Christian discourse/English law which claims that its "foundation lies in the belief that all are equal who appears before it ..." (238). Neel witnesses the façade of justness of English laws as his property is forfeited. He is sentenced to transportation to Mauritius penal settlement.

Meanwhile in Calcutta, Paulette Lambert, a daughter of an unconventional French botanist is not able to accustom herself to the constraints of 'proper' colonial life which her new guardian, the rich, powerful and fervently evangelical Burnham family leads. Paulette has been brought up unconventionally. Not only is she allowed to wear a sari and learn Bengali, she has been raised side by side with Jodu, the Indian son of her wet nurse. The first language she learnt was Bengali and the first solid food she ate was a rice and dal khichri. After her father's death, she is granted sanctuary at the Burnham's. She struggles against stuffy British Society and escapes her patron's sadomasochistic sexual advances and his peccadilloes and boards Ibis.

The second mate on the Ibis is a handsome twenty year old man with curly black hair from Maryland named, Zachary Reid. His mother was a slave; his father was a slave owner who freed her so that Zachary could be born as a free man. He boards the Ibis as a ship's carpenter, but through a series of accidents and desertions, most of the crew is lost, and by the time Ibis reaches India, Zachary has been, out of necessity promoted to second mate. Ghosh gives the lascars their due in maritime history. They are a group of sailors who come from places having nothing in common, except the Indian Ocean. He demystifies the lascars, who were a bunch of the first Asians and Africans to participate freely and in substantial numbers in a globalised workplace. It is precisely their discernible origins that Ghosh seems to celebrate.

Mr. Burnham is the new owner of Ibis, whose "eyes still had the brilliant, well focused sparkle that comes from never looking in any direction other than ahead" (73). He has no time for progressive ideas which stand in the way of his own progress. After the downturn in opium trade, he decided that Ibis would "do just the kind of work she was intended for" (78) i.e. instead of carrying slaves, it would carry indentured labourers to British plantations. He is one amongst "many who'll stop at nothing to halt the march of human freedom" and is of the view that this is "what the mastery of the white man means for the lesser races..." (79).

Sea of Poppies is a scathing critique of colonialism. Ghosh exposes the "emissary of light". The Europeans considered it their natural duty to bring the gifts of civilization to the lesser races of the world, whether this meant Christianity, free trade or the material progress. Paradoxically, the imagined process of "civilization" that the British believed they were giving to Indians led to their disintegration. The goal of colonial domination was to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness; in fact, it functioned as a means of establishing control and mastery. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin claim that: Colonial discourse tends to exclude, of course statement about the exploitation of the resources of the colonized, the political status accruing to colonizing powers, the importance to domestic politics of the development of an empire, all of which may be compelling reasons for maintaining colonial ties. Rather it conceals these benefits in statements about the inferiority of the colonized, the primitive nature of other races, the barbaric depravity of the colonized society, and therefore the duty of the imperial power to reproduce itself in the colonial society... (43).

Ghosh has laid bare the real motives and made it clear that the so called "civilizing mission" was neither a philanthropic undertaking, nor a desire to lift the veil of ignorance and uplift people or to put an end to sickness and tyranny. The civilizing mission worked on intelligent lines. The British trade, religion and government were inseparable from each other. Ghosh interrogates the dubious economic trade practices carried under the garb of civilizing mission. Several missionaries had close connections with opium traders like Mr. Burnham. Ghosh has brought forth the savage underpinnings of colonial economic engines like East India Company. They reaped significant profits both from producing and exporting the opium. "Opium came to be an essential element, indeed the cash cow, in the finances of every Asian state structure during the nineteenth century and even during the first part of the twentieth" (qtd. in *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy*, 9). Opium trade was carried under the guise of civilizing mission. In a lively discussion of free trade at Raja Neel's houseboat Mr. Burnham claims that free trade is a "right conferred on Man by God" (115). For him "Jesus Christ is Free Trade and Free Trade is Jesus Christ... If it is God's will that opium be used as an instrument to open China to his teachings, then so be it" (116). He has the audacity to call the free trade of opium holy, for it allows the natives exposure to the superiority of the British; and it is the enormous profits from opium due to which Britain were able to sustain their rule in country as poor as India. Mr. Burnham tries to convince Zachary of the legitimacy of opium trade by saying that "... if we reflect on the benefits that British rule has conferred upon India, does it not follow that opium is this land's greatest blessing? Does it not follow that it is our God-given duty to confer these benefits upon others" (115).

British waged a war against China under the rhetoric of "freedom trade and for the freedom of Chinese people" (118). They claimed that "Free Trade is a right conferred on Man by God, and its principles apply as much to opium as to any other article of trade." (188). This kernel of free trade continues to this day under the guise of globalization. Kwame Nkrumah in his book *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* posits that "new-colonialism was more insidious and more difficult to detect and resist than the older covert colonialism." (qtd in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, 163). The war against China was justified as humane. In a party at Burnham's Justice Kendalbushe proclaims "My friends in the missions are agreed that war is necessary if China is to be opened to God's word... Indeed, the humanity demands it. We need only think of the poor Indian peasant – what will become of him if his opium

can't be sold in China?" (265). The underlying irony is that, it is the British not the poor Indian peasants who will suffer because "if not for opium, the drain of silver from Britain and her colonies would be too great to sustain" (112).Through Captain Chillingworth, Ghosh unmasks the pretensions of the empire and the hypocrisy that underpinned colonialism. He puts it aptly:

> I am not sure whose good you mean, theirs or ours? ... We are no different from the pharaohs or the Mongols: the difference is only that when we kill people we feel compelled to pretend that it is for some higher cause. It is this pretence of virtue that will never be forgiven by history. (262)

Ghosh has reappraised the history of nineteenth century Indian indentured migrations by shifting the focus of historical attention from *macro* to the *micro* level, i.e., away from official records towards a closer analysis and problems of the indentured labourers. A macro-history takes a long view of history, looking at broad-ranging conclusions about the march of history. Macro-history seems to lose the individual in the drive for the greater picture. Ghosh's revisionist historiographic project retells the stories of ordinary people and minor personages through the close-up perspective of micro-history which tends to focus on the local. According to Ghosh, the challenge to history comes from the quarters of personal experiences as source of knowledge and experience by its admittance and articulation can often question the recorded histories.

Until recently, history was often regarded solely a matter of what the powerful, famous, and the wealthy thought and did, it was 'history from above'. The, experiences, hardships and aspirations of the ordinary people were regarded as insignificant. Ghosh brings to light the 'history from below'. According to Marina Carter "the Indian indentured labour migration was brought into being to offset the consequences of terminating the slave trade" *(Voices from Indenture,* 19). By the 1930's, slaves on British plantation had begun to exercise their right to freedom and Africa could no longer remain the catchment area for replacement. So, India became in nineteenth century what Africa was in the eighteenth century – a source of cheap labour. As Mr. Burnham says "when God closes one door he opens another? When the doors of freedom were closed to the African, the lord opened them to a tribe that was yet more needful of it – the Asiatick" (79). Thomas R. Metcalf in his book *Imperial Connections* mentions how the Indian ocean was relegated to the margins in colonial archives in the 19th century. He offers new perspective on how

imperialism operates and throws light on how, India itself became a nexus of imperial power that made possible British conquest, control, and governance across a wide arc of territory stretching from Africa to eastern Asia. In *Sea of Poppies* Ghosh contests the marginal place of 'girmitiyas', lascars and opium trade in the colonial archives and exposes the limits of the imperial archives which in the words of Edward Said are imbued with knowledge/power nexus. These archives hide the past as much as they reveal it.

The voice from indenture has been muffled by the colonial regime. In *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh has made an attempt to depict the indenture contract. The social and economical havoc caused by colonial policies resulted in many people accepting the indenture contract. The crushing poverty was a major factor in their decision to migrate. The "land that had once provided sustenance was now swamped by the rising tide of poppies; food was so hard to come by that people were glad to lick the leaves in which offering were made at temple or sip the starchy water from a pot in which rice had been boiled" (202).

Everyone had stories to tell and secrets to hide. The characters are stowaways who take Ibis to be a bird that will take them away from caste, colour, race, sexual humiliation, judicial jugglery and poverty and give them a new identity. Some people "brought with them stories of a land in revolt against its new rulers, of villages put to flames by the white man's troops" (246). There were others like Ratna and Champa who were married to a pair of brothers whose lands were under the opium factory "rather than starve, they had decided to indenture themselves together" (24).

Cut off from their roots, in transit, and looking ahead to a fresh start, the migrants invent new names. Kalua's new name is Maddow Colver, "While many would Choose to recast their origins, inventing grand and fanciful lineages for themselves, there would always remain a few who clung steadfastly to the truth: which was that these hallowed names were the result of the stumbling tongue of a harried gomusta , and the faulty hearing of an English pilot..." (285). For some, like Paulette disguised as an Indian Coolie Putleshwari the "layers of masking' do no more bear witness to a human being's "multiplicity of selves"(409). For others like Zachary, the truth is bleaker by far. Being a son of a slave and her white master, he will be bound to a brutal history and stigma of colour. Shirley Chew in review of *Sea of Poppies* has put it aptly "... Like the

sketches of people which Deeti – paints as keepsakes for her "shrine", their narratives tease the mind with discontinuities and suggestiveness; and, as with Ah Fatt the opium addict's descriptions of Canton, his old home, "the genius... Lay in their elisions" (*The Independent*, 16 May 2008).

The migrants forged strong bonds with each other. They left behind their strictures of caste, community and religion, renamed themselves as *jahaz-bhais* and *jahaz bahens*, and decided to confront their unknown destiny together. Unusual relationships are formed. Deeti becomes everyone's "bhauji", the deposed Raja Neel forms a friendship with a cellmate of Chinese origin Ah Fatt, the pious gomusta Baboo Nob Kissan finds his Lord Krishna in the unlikely personage of a half black America sailor Zachary Reid. They all were equal as Paulette says "*amra shob-i ek naukaye bhashchhi*?"(393). Each of the characters undergoes a series of transformations in which boundaries are collapsed. The brother and sisterhoods of the Ibis overturns the hierarchies of the land. The Indian Ocean itself becomes an archive for Ghosh, a palimpsest. He unearths stories of power, violence and survival. *Sea of Poppies* shares some commonalities with his other work *In An Antique Land*. Both texts share the same preoccupation with the ocean and the language. Apart from that, the focus of both texts is on 'history from below'. In *Sea of Poppies* it is Deeti, merely hinted at in the official record and *In An Antique Land* it was a slave, Bomma mentioned in letters between an Arab – Jewish merchant in Mangalore and associates in Cairo.

The moment of departure was a time of loss and displacement. As they bade farewell, to their land, they uttered their prayers. Ghosh has given a vivid description of indentured passengers, when Ibis anchors for one last night in Indian waters:

> ...the last place from which the migrants would be able to view their native shore: this was Saugor Roads, a much trafficked anchorage in the lee of Ganga – sagar, the Island that stands between the sea and the holy river... they very name Ganga-Sagar, joining, as it did, river and sea, clear and dark, known and hidden, served to remind the migrants of the yawning chasm ahead; it was as if they were sitting balanced on the edge of a precipice, and the island were and outstretched limb of sacred jambudvipa, their homeland, reaching out to keep them from tumbling into the void (396).

The voyage was an unpleasant and traumatic induction. Ghosh has given a vivid description of the trauma of departure, the humiliation of the cramped living quarters and unpalatable food, the rough treatment experienced and the scant regard paid to the needs of the migrants. The migrants were housed in a 'dabusa' which was grim, dark, and foul smelling enclosed floor. There was little space and no fresh air. The girmitiyas were kept under strict vigil. They were not allowed to come on the deck. They were given rice, dal and lime-pickle to eat while roasted lamb, mint sauce and other delicacies were served to the officers. The day's allowances of drinking water had dwindled to a point where men were fighting for a few sips of water. The girmityas were in a trance of fear. They felt as if they were entering a state of existence where they would be ruled by the noose, whip and the Chabuk, when the captain of the ship told them: "While you are on the Ibis and while she is at sea, I am your fate, your providence, your lawgiver. This Chabuk you see in my hands is just one of the keepers of my law... there is no better keepers of the law than submission and obedience. (404)

Many of them committed suicide, some of them died of sea sickness. They became weak and helpless. They were reduced to a 'state of infantile helplessness' (407). Ghosh has shown the barbarity of colonizers who threw the dead bodies of girmitiyas into the water like a "skin of peeled onion". It was Deeti who raised her voice against such an inhumane treatment. She asked for a little *Izzat*; some respect" (414). The British played their divide and rule policy and incorporated rather than disturb the native hierarchies, because it served their interest. The captain tells Zachary "The day the natives lose faith in us, as the guarantors of the order of castes – that will be the day, gentlemen, that will doom our rule. This is the invisible principle on which our authority is based" (482).

But despite all odds, the migrants took pleasure in little things. Singing and ritualistic performances became their sole refuge, their solace against pervasive suffering. They innovatively recreated rituals surrounding marriage, funerals and other rites of passage which could no longer be performed in their original form. The novel embodies the capacity of ordinary folk to survive and celebrate despite the oppressive incursions of power. As Deeti foresaw all along, from the Ibis an unlikely dynasty is to be born, which will span continents, races, and generations.

The Ibis is a vessel, in both senses of that word, into which the story is poured. It is the slave vessel that brings Zachary, the son of a slave, his status in a white world. It is the vessel that has come to receive

a cargo of opium. It is the jail that finally frees Neel. It is in the hold of Ibis that an oppressed Indian victim of rape is transformed into a woman of courage and leadership. On the deck of Ibis, Baboo Nob kissing feels the womanly presence of Ma Taramony in him so forcefully that "his outer body felt increasingly like the spent wrappings of a cocoon" (423). The Ibis, he realizes "was not a ship like any other; in her inward reality she was a vehicle of transformation, travelling through the mists of illusion towards the elusive, ever receding landfall that was Truth"(423). All old hierarchies are destroyed in Ibis. In the words of Paresh Chandra "...the ship becomes a site where camaraderie is created- a carnivalesque demolition of older hierarchies takes place".

The novel closes with the Ibis in mid-ocean in a storm. Serang Ali, Raja Neel Rattan, Ah Fatt and Kalua have left the ship; Of the key figures only Deeti, Paulette, Nob Kissin and Zachary are left. The second part of the trilogy *River of smoke* tells the stories of these characters, and also focuses on the lives of opium dealers in Canton. Neel finds employment as the secretary of the main character of this novel, the Parsi opium dealer.

Ghosh has presented a unique rendition of history in fiction, of how the destinies are shaped, how the questions are left in its wake. Historiography, in its obsessive search for 'facts', often ignores important stories of common people. Ghosh has picked up these strands and has weaved them in a narrative which essentially portrays the spirit of optimism as well as human failings. His novels emphasize the element of vulnerability and uncertainty experienced by the ordinary people. The act of remembering, piecing history back together from its disjointed pieces, is intended in Ghosh's work to move readers beyond "aesthetic of indifference"(As qtd in "The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi" from *The Imam and the Indian*) to the world's enduring problems.

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Skeletons in the Closet:
Historical Amnesia and Counter-Remembrance in Umberto Eco's *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana*

—Manpreet Kaur Soodan

The last three decades have witnessed, what Andreas Hyussen calls, a "boom of unprecedented proportion" (5) in the investigation of the political and ideological ramifications of memory. Many far-reaching political changes in the recent history of the world—the independence of the former colonies of European nations, the enfranchisement of ethnic and minority groups, the two World Wars and the end of Cold War—have been followed by the emergence of suppressed histories, stories and memories. At the same time, memory is now viewed as a structure or discourse of power. It is the space where the struggle for truth, representation and power is enacted. The selective nature of memory, its malleability and unreliability is insidiously utilized governing polities in the discursive formation of national identity and history. The dialectic of remembering and forgetting or amnesia and nostalgia, as advanced by state ideologies and totalitarian regimes, plays a crucial role deciding who a people are.

The present article aims to analyze the politics of remembering and forgetting in Italy as envisioned by Umberto Eco's novel *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana.* Eco's novels are considered seminal philosophical and semiotic works by the literary intelligentsia. Renowned as a literary critic and semiotician, he rose to fame as a novelist with the success of *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum.* In *MFQL*, published in 2004, Eco has written a detailed treatise meditating on the philosophical, neurological, social and cultural aspects of memory. Despite reminiscent of Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* and Jorge Luis Borges' *Funes the Memorious*, there is a discernible political dimension in the book that cannot be overlooked.

Eco's underlying concern in this novel is the retrieval and reconstruction of the forgotten past. As with all his novels, which invite multiple interpretations by the model reader, *MFQL* can be doubly decoded as a revisionist account of Italian historiography and a parable of contemporary Italian politics. The main character's amnesia is an exercise in instruction. It is symbolic of the amnesia of modern day, torpid Italy, where public memory is "built on structured forgetting" (Favero 140).

What starts as a recovery of the forgotten past metamorphoses into a revisionist reading of the past, memory and history. The protagonist's reconstruction of the World War II era is an exposition of lies and fascist propaganda, and more significantly it demystifies the monolithic, popular image of common Italians as victims during the war. Instead, the reconstructed memories deconstruct this generalizing icon of an innocent spectator and present alternate views on the involvement of the Italian populace during Mussolini's reign. Though the novel re-historicizes the past through cognitive frameworks such as flashbacks, it addresses an incumbent issue for modern day Italy—the control of truth and reality by a nexus of state-corporate machinery, the hegemonizing of national memory. Through a retrospection of their collective past in which the masses were seduced by fascist rhetoric and propaganda, Eco portends the establishment of a totalitarian system, in the guise of liberalism/right-conservative, which encapsulates the public and the private and adjudicates what counts as veritable truth and information.

Fascism and Italian Historiography

At the end of World War II and the culmination of Fascist and Nazi era, a period of rehabilitation and reinstation began, which included economic stability and massive projects in nation-building. This restitution process also included a painful yet essential confrontation with the nation's own incriminating past. However, Italy skirted the issue state-academia-media engineered deflection and forgetting. Italy's involvement in the colonial invasion of Africa and the Balkans, its alliance with Nazi Germany and its promotion of racial laws against Jews was systematically neutralized, erased or forgotten.

In 1943 when the allied forces entered Italy, an armistice was signed with the Americans. The country was divided into two regions—one occupied by the partisans and allied forces in the South and the other by Mussolini's Social Republic and German troops in the North. What followed was one of the bloodiest battles in Italian history between the Resistance movement and the Nazi-Fascist commune, with huge losses on both sides. The victory of the partisans marked the eventual demise of Fascism and is considered a turning point in Italian history. The struggle of the resistance movement against the regime towards the end of the war transformed Italy's image from the victimizer to a victim and then to the resister of Nazism. An ideological conspiracy of forgetfulness was sanctioned as the fascist reign and its atrocities were self-absolved by

placing them adjacent to the larger and more horrific dimensions of Nazi crimes. As Gianni Olivia notes:

> From June 1940 to September 1943 Italians have fought the same war of aggression as Nazi Germany but, immediately after that, wanted to forget it and have it removed from national consciousness . . . a political manoeuvre shaped by the whole antifascist class to exculpate the country from any responsibilities and to give back to the nation a soul of moral virginity. (qtd. in Favero 147)

Official historical accounts drew on the conventional image "Italiana Brava Gente" (Good Italian People), coined in the nineteenth century to justify Italy's colonial mission in Africa. This self-founding myth harpooned on the innate benevolence, innocence and jocundity of Italian people and has been over-employed by Italian historiography as an "ideological laundry for reformulating and then setting aside disquieting moments of national shame" (Favero 140). While Nazism and Fascism were unanimously condemned as an abomination, the role of the common people as supporters during the regime was suppressed or condoned.

In the 1990s another wave of revisionism of Italian history began with many academicians and historians claiming that the anti-fascist rhetoric and mythology after the Second World War was an ideological and political ploy by the communist-left. This revisionist view of Italian history was used by the Right to discredit the Left and validate their position as a legitimate partner in the new centre-Right governing coalition. While pro-Fascist sympathies at one stage were regarded as unpatriotic and the word "fascist" itself was considered pejorative, this stance has radically been reversed in recent times, contributed by Silvio Berlusconi-led government's and historian's insistence on the "progressive aspects" and "benign nature of Italian Fascism" (Fleischer 86). In this project, they have been aided and abetted by the fact that an extensive proportion of media and press falls under the domain of political parties, making the veracity of received information highly unreliable and compromised.

In all this sparring between political parties, public memory of the fascist period has constantly being written according to varying political agendas. What has emerged from the historiographical debate over the past, according to Michael Kelly is, a "series of competing political memories" (68); and consequently fascism has been relegated by historians like Benedetto Croce only to a "parenthesis in Italian history,

an anomaly . . . a movement outside the "normal," healthy historical development of the nation" (59).

Ghosts from the Past

The central character of the novel is Giambattista Bodoni, more familiarly known as Yambo, a sixty-year old bibliophile and an antiquarian book dealer. The novel begins with Yambo waking up in a hospital, after having had a major stroke, and discovering that he is suffering from "retrograde amnesia" (7), a form of amnesia in which his semantic memory and calculative faculties are in working shape but his autobiographical or episodic memory has been lost. Like Borges' Ireneo Funes, he can recite with great accuracy a stock of excerpts from art and literature, but cannot answer his name, identify his family and friends or relate who he was in the past. He loses his sense of self and finds his mind "walking through fog" (7), a central metaphor for the protagonist's amnesiatic state.

In an attempt to recover his past, he visits his ancestral home in Solara, where he spent a considerable part of his childhood during the Second World War. Left alone at the house, along with the faithful elderly servant Amalia, Yambo comes across a rich wealth of old school texts, notebooks, newspapers, magazines, posters, comics, diaries and records in the attic. Making use of his and his grandfather's memorabilia, Yambo begins to remember a partial picture of his forgotten past. Interestingly, the memories that the protagonist evokes date the fascist era only, specifically the 1936-45 period, and not the post-war era which he had equally forgotten. These memories, as the text shows, had been suppressed by Yambo even before he suffered the stroke. His wife and family claim that Yambo was very reticent about his life in Solara. From this the reader can gather that Yambo's amnesia epitomizes the structured and ideological forgetfulness of the Italian nation of its incriminating past. Concomitantly, the attic at Solara serves as a metaphor for the collective unconscious. This literal "memory palace," an allusion to ancient "theatres of memory" spoken about by St. Augustine and other medieval memory scholars, is the repository of the nation's repressed, uncomfortable past. The recovery of Yambo's personal history therefore transforms into a disinterment of the historical memory of the "schizophrenic Italy" (205), whose past has been fractured, obfuscated and forgotten by pro-Fascist agenda and post-war historiography. The protagonist realizes that he is not narrating an autobiography, but "rather the biography of a nation" (Eco, "Interview").

Yambo's remembrance of the past produces the "quintessence of a montage" (178), composed of, as Rocco Capozzi says, "elliptic, heterogeneous and fragmented" (467) memories that are highly revisionist and reconstructive. Not only does he piece together his past like a detective "intent on retracing and reconstructing remote events" (152), but also re-analyses and rewrites his personal and national past in light of the knowledge gained over the years. As he moves from one box of memorabilia to another, he selects, rejects, and revises a gamut of images, texts, notes, sounds and smells into a narrative of counter-memory. As the narrator says:

> Other days (five, seven, ten?) have blurred together in my memory . . . what that left me was . . . the quintessence of a montage. I put disparate pieces of evidence together, cutting and joining, sometimes according to a natural progression of ideas and emotions, sometimes to create contrast. What resulted was no longer what I had seen and heard in the course of those days, nor what I might have seen and heard as a child: it was a figment, a hypothesis formed at the age of sixty about what I could have thought then (178).

When he evokes his childhood memories through the memorabilia, the adult protagonist finds internal contradictions and ambiguities in the historical accounts and popular culture of the fascist and post-war era. As an adult, Yambo rereads and rewrites his own memories by realizing that his schoolbooks were based on an engineered forgetting and silence, containing no references to the Second World War. They "avoided the present" and celebrated "the glories of the past"—colonial conquest of Africa, the Spanish Civil War and World War One—with pictures that showed Italian soldiers standing like "Roman gladiators" (186). Paolo Favero notes that nationalistic and historical education has not much changed since the war eras. Recalling his own formative years in education, Favero asserts that Italians are still being instructed that they were not real colonizers, that the imperial project was not based on the use of violence and subjugation, and that the people of former colonies are thankful to them for bringing civilization to their countries. Furthermore, official history declares that Italy never believed in the racial laws and Jews were never really persecuted on its soil (140-41). This ideological nullification and forgetting of the past is debunked by Yambo's counter-memory. His memory revised by the memorabilia relates how schoolbooks, magazines, newspapers, comics and other art forms contained meditations

on racial differences, with entire sections on Jews and the "attention that should be paid to this untrustworthy breed, who 'having shrewdly infiltrated Aryan regions . . . introduced among the Nordic peoples a new spirit made up of mercantilism and profit hunger'" (187).

The flagrant errors, fabrications, omissions in historical accounts, educational texts and popular culture lead him to conclude that as a child there "must have been serious questions and official culture offered no answers" (112). All manner of information and incidents were screened and tempered by the fascist machinery and censorship prior to circulation through official and unofficial channels. The reality that was constructed for them was highly mediated and textualized. As Makel Berezin says:

> The regime that controlled the Italian state from 1922 to 1943 was a political project that aimed to recreate the Italian self or to create new identities as citizens of Fascist Italy. The "fascist project," the actions and programs that the regime undertook to accomplish its desired cultural ends, was an exercise in "hyper" nationalization and "hyper" state-building (357).

While rummaging through the memorabilia, Yambo comes across his children's library composed of books by English and foreign writers. As an adult, the narrator realizes how official censorship and nationalistic education had brought about the "Italinization" and "naturalization" of books by rewriting them as exemplum of Fascist ideals. The heroes of comics and children's books were changed to Italian nationals and the enemies were typecast as grotesque caricatures of Fascist-resisters. *Buffalo Bill, the Hero of the Plains* was changed into *Buffalo Bill, the Italian Hero of the Plains*. Mickey Mouse was changed into Topolino, and once war was declared against America, the famous mouse was killed and replaced by an Italian human imitation, Tofflino (234). Books like *Italian Boys in the World*, about a group of young boys who emigrate to Spain and save the fascist headquarters during an anti-republic rebellion, the narrator now comprehends, were paradigmatic texts of nationalistic education instructing the ideals of fascism to blossoming citizens.

This resurgence of historical artefacts impels Yambo to interrogate his past, specifically the memories he once must have had before the amnesia. The gaps and spaces in the official memory manifest themselves as questions about political-social consciousness and responsibility, truth and lies, remembering and forgetting, which the

narrator puts to himself and his fellow Italians. What was society's ideological stand during Mussolini's reign? Did the people corroborate with the regime by supporting its ideals and laws? Did he identify with the symbols of fascist pride? These questions raised by his precarious memory are answered in the affirmative as he gradually begins to reconstruct his past. The narrator now understands, as he revisits and revises his past, that he along with his family and the larger Italian society had to a great extent subscribed to the fascist ideological injunctions. While post-war official historiography has cleansed its culpable past, Yambo's counter-remembrance discredits the popular image of "Italiani Brava Gente," an innocent bystander and victim who was helpless in the face of such incomprehensible barbarity. His highly iconoclastic reconstructed memory opens up blanks and reveals indeterminacies in the official historical narratives by showing that the masses to a great extent were collaborators and instruments of pro-Fascist agenda.

The collusion of the people with Fascist ideology is exemplified in the novel by the unquestioned support and promotion of cultural ideology of the regime in the public space. Fascist songs and anthems like "Youth of Italy" and "Balilla Boys" were cultural staples at home and other communal spaces. Yambo recalls that, on the one hand, the schizophrenic nation used to listen with great enthusiasm to the radio for war time news and songs composed of "heroic phrases, incitements to attack and kill, and oaths of obedience to Il duce even to the point of ultimate sacrifice" (171); at the same time, they were bombarded with popular songs, many a times sung to foreign tunes, which were "endless lessons in optimism and gaiety" as if "life were running on two different tracks" (201).

As young students and balilla boys (future aspirants of the regime), Yambo and his classmates were motivated by their school authorities and families to inculcate fascist beliefs. In one of the key moments of the novel, Yambo finds an old school notebook containing a composition written by him on the topic "faithful and incorruptible guardians of Italy and its civilization," (205) a phrase used by Mussolini in one of his speeches. The prize-winning essay written Yambo evinces that as a young citizen he wanted to fight for "Italy's new will, die for the new, heroic, holy civilization, which will bring well-being to the world and which God desired should be built by Italy" (206). His counter-memory reconstructs the "cult of horror" (207) during the regime when noble death for the nation was the ultimate virtue and when lies were as believable as truth. He

discovers his school notebooks whose covers are pasted with fascist symbols and slogans, with "images of Il Duce on horseback, of heroic combatants in black shirts lobbing hand grenades at the enemy" (193). The narrator wonders how his elders had reacted to his pro-fascist indoctrination. He comes to the realization that they perhaps had absorbed such ideas even before the commencement of fascism since they had "been born and grown up in a nationalistic climate in which the First World War was celebrated as a purifying bath" and had been declared by the futurists as "the world's only hygiene" (206). Society had learned to conceive the love for their country as a "blood tribute, and to feel not horror but excitement when faced with a landscape flooded with blood" (207). It is not surprising then, as the narrator recollects, that the partisans had to hide not only from SS and black brigade soldiers, but also from Italian families and towns which overtly supported the regime. In a highly amusing scene, Amalia refuses to divulge a story, even after more than fifty years of the end of the war, fearing a former black brigade soldier, Pautasso, who lived nearby and flourished as the owner of a brick factory, and could "make a person talk even after . . . cut[ting] his tongue out" (219).

In the din of the war, society's political allegiance was very fluid and confusing. The elderly servant recalls that Yambo's grandfather, even though most likely ant-fascist, had provided refuge to both partisan and black brigade soldiers. The narrator recounts that those were "months when people were doing all sorts of things, like Gino, who had been in the black brigades, and one of its more fanatical members, then ran off to join the partisans" (363). Gaps and contradictions are further revealed in the official memory of fascism when Yambo recounts that criminal, horrific acts were committed not only by the fascists and Nazis, but also by partisans. The central incident of the novel involves Yambo leading a group of local townsmen, supporters of the Resistance, through a deep gorge, which only he and his schoolmates had learned to climb, to rescue a group of Cossacks, who after having seen enough Nazi-brutality had decided to change sides. Although Yambo recognizes his mentor Gragnola's heroic actions which saved the Cossacks and the entire town from the German soldiers, he emerges from the tragedy with love, fear, guilt and spite. In the rescue mission, Yambo witnesses the dirty business of war. The two captured German soldiers, who were a risk to the entire group as they were slowing them down while descending the gorge and hence increasing their chances of being caught, were killed by Gragnola.

Yambo, who was acting as their guide, is left with a troubled conscience as he realizes that nobody is innocent in the war, not the Nazis and Fascists, nor the partisans.

While Yambo's reconstructed memories reveal the hegemony of the Italian mind by Fascist propaganda and architecture, they also highlight that this hegemony was not a unilateral process. The masses too corroborated with the regime if at times not directly committing atrocious acts, but as "people who emotionally supported Mussolini and were seduced by his version of a heroic Italy that would compel lesser peoples to submission" (Danyte 39). This explains the forgetting of its fascist past by official historiography, which hides these incriminating aspects by a complete denial, vindication or by indicting a single person for being responsible for it. Yet Nazi–Fascist era was made possible not simply by the will of a single person but by an entire military, administrative, scientific and cultural machinery.

Eco's novel was written during the Berlusconi era, when media was used to camouflage or suppress an array of pressing political and issues; to further individual political agendas and shape public opinion; and to withhold, distort and regulate information, thereby controlling a nation's sense of self. The scenario has not changed even after the end of Berlusconi's term since the political stronghold on media and press is not a recent phenomenon in Italian history. The novel therefore has double implications. It not only highlights the complicity of Italians political with fascist rhetoric and the forgetting of its culpable past, but also as serves as a critique of state forces and systems in contemporary Italy which may not be fascist in the traditional sense but are equally authoritative and antidemocratic in their politicizing of truth and the past. Through the revisionist reading of the past Eco intends to galvanize his fellow countrymen into rising from a state of political and social apathy.

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Representation of Dalits in *Kadambari*: Travails of A Chandala Maiden

—Mrinalini Kashyap

The word 'Dalit' in Sanskrit means 'broken and downtrodden'. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has described them as 'broken people' who are socially weak, economically needy and politically powerless. The word 'Dalit' is a descriptive word evocative of bondage and agony, the anguish and frustrated aspirations of a vast victimised section of Indian population right down the ages. This paper tries to figure out the representation of dalits in ancient Sanskrit text *Kadambari* by Banabhatta. The story of *Kadambari* is very complex, dealing with the lives of two heroes, each of whom is reborn twice on earth. A learned parrot, named Vaishampayana was carried from its birthplace in the Vindhya forest to the hermitage of the sage Jabali. From the learned sage, it learnt the story of its former life. It was in its first life a young sage Pundarika who died out of the unconsummated love for Mahashweta, an apsara of the moon race. In the next life, he was born as Vaishampayana, the son of a minister Shuknasa in the kingdom of king Tarapida. He became the best friend of King's son Chandrapida, who falls in love with Mahashweta's friend Kadambari. In the second life too, Pundarika (turned Vaishampayana) died because of his unrequited love for Mahashweta, who in ignorance cursed him to be a parrot in next life. Chandrapida too died and reborn as king Shudraka. Thus, it is a complex but bewitching web of three consecutive births. But in this heavy text, containing the lives of persons, great in wealth or beauty or knowledge, I have tried to find out the trace of the presentation of the fourth and fifth varna, the serving class.

The story definitely bears a casteist configuration. The main character 'representing' the fifth caste is a Chandala maiden. Pundarika, born as a parrot remembered all about his previous birth and could speak in the 'language of men'. He was caught for a Chandala princess who came to know about his gifts and was amazed at his learnedness. She carried him to the king Shudraka as a gift. The gatekeeper informed the monarch about the arrival of the Chandala maiden in the following words: "Sire, there stands at the gate a chandala maiden from the south, a royal glory of the race of that Trishanku who climbed the sky, but fell from it at the murmur of wrathful Indra...."(6)

The writer tells us that the Chandala maiden belonged to the 'race' of Trishanku. This Trishanku was a low caste man, who with the power of his penance made the royal sage Vishwamitra so happy that the mighty sage sent him to heaven with his human body. But the god of heaven did not welcome him and threw him back. He then remained in between heaven and earth. It is the actual predicament of low caste people since the ancient times. They have never been given any respectable place in society. Bana says that the Chandala maiden hailed from 'south'. This is an important point and deserves attention. Manu, the writer of *Manava Dharamashastra* [1](Ketkar, 70) defines Aryavarta [2] as the land of Aryas, as the land between Himalaya and Vindhya, extending as far as the eastern and the western oceans; the significance of the name of the territory being that it is a place fit for the performance of the sacrifice, and that all the twice-born should seek to dwell there. He adds that the regions other than this are the country of Mlechchas or barbarians, where only Shudras distressed for subsistence may dwell. The regions other than this were in the 'South of Aryavarta' obviously. The Dasyus [3] or Mlechchas were evidently the Dravidian warriors, "the unsubdued foreign tribes" who did not speak Sanskrit and had not been influenced by Aryan culture. The early history of the Aryans had to be probed out by modern scholars, because the Aryans themselves left no history of their origin or dates of their migration into India. They came into India in a number of tribal waves through the passes of the Hindu Kush over a period of about 2000 BC. Aryan people despised the dark-skinned and snub-nosed earlier settlers whom they vanquished and subjugated. In the due course of time, the criteria of racial purity subsided but the attitude of disdain still persisted.

Chandala maiden, coming to Shudraka's court was indeed very beautiful. Her beauty is nonetheless described in eloquent words. Usually, the untouchable 'dalits' are presented as 'ugly' and 'devilish' in most of the ancient Sanskrit narratives. But here, Bana seems to have no qualms about the beauty of Chandala maiden. As the Brahmin writers considered themselves the 'learned patriarchs' of society, they used to excommunicate the other persons from society if they were not consulted in important matters. The people who used to steal the possessions of Brahmins were also labelled as low castes. Yavanas or the Greeks were the warrior tribes, who were given the status of Shudras as they did not consult Brahmins [4]. *Vishnu Purana* testifies the existence of Yavanas along with Shakas as a

warrior class as Ketkar says in *History of Caste in India*.(70) The untouchable 'dalits' were not 'ugly' and 'devilish' as they were presented in some of the texts. The beauty of Chandala maiden has been presented extensively but it is presented as more sensuous than piously beautiful. Almost every line of description about Chandala maiden brings in light many issues of gender, caste and race. Bana says:

> She herself seemed by the darkness of her hue to imitate Krishna when he guilefully assumed a woman's attire to take away the amrita seized by the demons. She was, as it were, a doll of sapphire walking alone and over the blue garment like evening sunshine falling on blue lotuses. The circle of her cheek was whitened by the earring that hung from one ear, like the face of night inlaid with the rays of the rising moon....(18)

Chandala maiden has been compared to Lord Sri Krishna who in the guise of 'Mohini'[5] deceived the asuras with seductive charms. The comparison here is noteworthy, as it tells more of seduction, deception and temptation that the 'body' of maiden evokes and not 'love' which is a higher notion. The images like the evening sunshine and face of night, besides telling of an amorous appeal of her body, also tells that she was dark in hue. The dark body colour has been presented as 'sensuous' [6] since those times. The castiest constructs form greatly biased cultural view-points which dominate the psyche of common people. Such description, based on body colour by one who is from within the degraded system i.e. Bana himself is likely to be coloured by conscious or unconscious biases and presumptions. But those from outside the system cannot grasp its multiple dimensions. The writers have the power of 'discourse' which creates these constructs. In India, Brahmins having Aryan origin had this power and they exploited it fully to 'misrepresent' the lowest class. Banabhatta, the Sanskrit scholar was one of them. He describes the Chandala maiden as follows:

> Shree, darkened by the sapphire glory of Narayana reflected on the robe of her breast; or like Rati, stained by smoke which rose or Madana as burnt by the fire of wrathful Shiva; or like Yamuna fleeing in the fear of being drawn along by the ploughshare of wild Balarama, or from the rich lac that turned her lotus feet into budding shoot of the Asura Mahisha she had just trampled upon. (8-9)

Chandala maiden's dark beauty is shown through metaphors like evening sunshine, face of night, darkened by sapphire, stained by smoke, burnt by fire etc. The continuous reference to Rati and Kamadeva, the goddess and god of Kama, the Eros itself tells the erotic nature of her beauty. The metaphors of the wrathful Shiva [7] and wild Balarama [8] signify the 'rashness' and 'aggressiveness' of such castes. But the determination of the perception of such caste is ambiguous.The author says, "...she dimmed by her Matanga birth, like a spirit, she not be touched, like a letter, she gladdened the eyes alone."(9) Thus he makes it clear that beauty is not the only criteria for a woman. Even a beautiful lady is dimmed by her low caste. He tells us that she was untouchable as she gladdened the eyes alone. The Hindu doctrine of creation exemplified in the *chaturvarna* [9] scheme of social stratification does not clearly account for the origin of the untouchables because all those who belong to the four varnas are above the pollution line. Those who are below the pollution line are fifth varna, hence they were called *Panchamas*. The Brahmins had legitimized the theory of karma and applied it to all the caste hierarchy. So, the panchamas 'deserved' to be the untouchables. Untouchability has many facets. It includes the notions of purity and pollution too. The *Rig Veda* showed no acquaintance with the untouchables. But when the Brahmin literature emerged in the form of Smritis, Samhitas, and the Upanishads, the powerful patriarchs turned the tables. The later Vedic period texts referred to 'Chandalas' as the objects of spite and abhorrence, but never told us that they were a source of 'pollution'.

Chandala was an offspring of a Shudra father and a Brahmin mother. He was an instrument of derivative pollution and infection. This text *Kadambari* was written in 7th century AD when the concept of pollution had come into existence. Fa Hien also confirmed that the low-castes were considered untouchables. They would strike a piece of wood on entering so that people could beware and be saved from touching them. When the Chandala maiden entered the king's court, she struck a bamboo stick on earth to tell about her arrival: "...clasping the bamboo with its end jagged, struck once on the mosaic floor to arouse the king...." (8) As Banabhatta appreciates the beauty of Chandala maiden being a Brahmin himself, we can make out that upper caste Brahmins were able to see and appreciate the beauty of low caste women. It shows that they

were thought of as objects of lust. The author of *Kadambari* says:

> Ill placed was the labour of the creator in producing this beauty. For if she has been created as though in mockery of her Chandala form, such that all the world's wealth of loveliness is laughed to scorn by her own why was she born in a race in which none can mate. (9-10)

The writer has all praise for her good looks, but he says that with her race 'none can mate'. It means that the thought of mating was the first thing that comes to the mind of the author. The woman has been bearing the burden of both caste and gender since the ancient times. To be a low caste woman was worst. They were seen as the objects of lust. A low caste woman's sexuality was never 'untouchable'. The low castes were thus so hegemonised by the upper class patriarchs that they willingly accepted the injustice done to them and considered it their due. They were never given 'social significance' and it is obvious that one should have doubts about their 'true portrayal'. Bana says that none could mate with the beautiful Chandala maiden but one of his Brahmin ancestors Prashara had made love to a fisherwoman Satyawati.[10] She was young and beautiful but she did not deny the old Brahmin as giving consent to a sage was considered something sacred. According to the sacred *Manava Dharma Shastra* of Manu, "The twice-born (dwija) in their jolly, wed wives of the low caste soon degrade their families and their children to the status of Shudra." (Ketkar, 144) So, though not married to, but succumbed to the charms of low caste Satyawati, the sage Prashara became the father of a Shudra Ved Vyasa. To top the list, that 'prodigy' enjoyed the carnal relationships with Kshatriya queens, who were wedded to his late step brother and thus became the grandfather of Pandavas and Kauravas. Lord Sri Krishna then took birth to help Pandavas establish dharma and fight against adharma and gave us our sacred *Bhagvadgeeta*. The sacred book says that if a high caste woman marries a low caste man, their children were called 'Varnasankaras' as the match was improper. But it does not say as to what would be the punishment if a high caste man used a low caste woman without marrying her.

The learned parrot brought by the Chandala maiden told Shudraka about his life. His father was killed by a Cabara[11]. The Cabaras were mountaineers, a tribal caste which was considered low by the learned men because they were less civilized. The description of the Cabara army is very crude. "...like a grove of darkness; like the followers of death

roaming; like the demon world that had burst open hell and risen up; like a crowd of evil deeds come together; like a carawan of curses"(27-28). The metaphors of darkness, evil, curses, hell and death have been used for the Cabaras to suggest their low level of cultural sophistication. By culture, we mean the way of life of a social group. People themselves create their 'culture' through material and non-material products and some definite rules which one generation follows after the other. These earlier descriptions portray 'dalits' as cultureless people possessing more negative qualities than positive like sensuousness and drunkenness etc. It was not only about the colour, but financial status and culture also. Vaishampayana, told the king about his perceptions of a Cabara clan as follows:

> ...their castra is the cry of a jackal; their teachers of good and evil are owls...their friends are dogs; their kingdom is in deserted woods; their feast is a drinking bout,....their wives are the wives of others taken captive; their dwelling is with savage tigers...their livelihood by theft; the snakes' hood is their ornament...(31)

This projection of Cabaras is mean and nasty, and speaks of the essential inhumanness of upper caste towards the members of the lower castes. They have been compared to the jackals, considered often as an unlucky species of animal, the symbol of greed, cowardice and cunningness. As quoted in *Dictionary of Symbols*, the Buddha taught that whoever lived like a dog, would become a dog when the body decayed after death (301). Cleared, dogs are considered mean creatures and their barking at night is considered inauspicious. That is why Cabaras have been referred to as friends' of dogs. The image of those tribal people who were ignorant of their 'representation' was created according to the will of the learned patriarchs of society. Vaishampayana calls them men of no character as their wives were those of other persons. They lived by hunting but the learned parrot said that they lived by theft. Snakes are symbols of passion and it is said that these people used snakes' hoods for decking them up. The above reference is an example that how literature is used to misinterpret the facts.

The parrot tells Shudraka that by the time he had lost his father and was faint due to fatigue and thirst, he was taken up by Harita. He was the ascetic son of the sage Jabali who was like the son of Brahma, had a mind purified with all knowledge and had limbs fashioned from lightening

and a shape pointed with molten gold.'(35) Clearly there is great difference between the two personalities, the two different castes. Cabara army is all dark, demoniac, evil and death-like. Brahmins, the young ascetics are associated with brightness, light, sun, molten gold, and all the beautiful considered things of the world. One thought becomes clear that not only deeds, the karmas are compared but also the form of body and colour of the skin. It is not so that the Indian literature and mythology do not pay heed to 'black'. *Mahabharata* shows that the leading lady Draupadi was dark in complexion and she was extremely beautiful. But her character was a struggling one throughout the epic. She was insulted in the *cheerharan* episode; was portrayed as a fickle minded one as she loved Arjuna more than the other four husbands; who laughed at Duryodhana unabashedly and called him a blind man's son; and lost all her children after the battle. The Indian deity Lord Sri Krishna is dark in complexion and so are Shiva and Kali. But one noteworthy point here is that our mythology gives proper reasons for their darkness as if to explain that they were originally fair in colour. Lord Krishna became dark due to the poison of the snake Kalia, whom he defeated inside the waters of Yamuna. Shiva is dark because of the poison he drank for the good of the whole world. The goddess Kali is actually Gauri, the fair-complexioned one who when angry became the destructor and turned back in anger. So, 'black' is the colour of negativity in India long before the British came here to create racial prejudice.

The parrot Vaishampayana told Shudraka that he came to know the story of his earlier birth from sage Jabali when he fell in love with the beautiful maiden Mahashveta worshipping Shiva. She descended from apsara clan of moon race. Her beauty is described by Banabhatta through the following metaphors:

> The exceeding whiteness of her form concealed her limbs as though she had entered a crystal shrine....was like sacrifice impersonate....the embodied purity of Gauri's mind...the lakshmi of the Cvetadeepa....She seemed from her whiteness to have taken a share from all the hamsas....Her head was bright with matted locks hanging on her shoulders, made, as it were, of the brightness of morning rays taken from the sun. (96-97)

While making a comparison between Mahashveta's beauty and that of the Chandala maiden, we decipher that Mahashveta is associated with

the symbols of whiteness and purity, while the low caste maiden's beauty is presented with metaphors like stains of smoke, and fear etc. The author says that Chandala maiden's feet seemed to be crimsoned by the blood of the Asura Mahisha she had trampled upon. Here the mention of Asura Mahisha is noteworthy. 'Mahisha' means the buffalo. The demon is shown as a buffalo that the Goddess kills. It is neither a bull nor a cow, but buffalo only. The black animal faces a prejudice in our ancient texts. The buffalo in *Buffalo Nationalism* by Kancha Ilaiah represents the whole Dravadian culture. The book tells us that the use of buffalo as a symbol in our ancient literature is not innocent but very much politically inspired. To consider buffalo a worthy animal would tell of the equality of colour and of the end of racism metaphorically. For the minority religions it would be extending the horizons of nationalism. Kancha Iliah tells us that the Dravadian race domesticated the black buffalo (introduction xxxvi). This black animal is a potent symbol of the spiritual fascism of Hindutva. The buffalo is everything the cow is but the difference is in the colour and its non-Aryan origin. Due to these two differences, the Hindu religion condemns it as devilish and thus allows its defeat and killing to be celebrated. In Hindu mythology, the buffalo is portrayed as the steed of Yamaraja, the god of death and as a demon killed by the goddess Durga who was known as *Mahishasurmardini* [12] afterwards. This racism and colour prejudice has entered so deep in our psyche that we have accepted every notion as a part of our "cultural heritage". If we try to decode our ancient texts, we find that long before the written tradition, we had 'oral tradition' and even then the low caste people faced sheer prejudice. In *Who needs Folklore?* A.K. Ramanujan tells us the stories about the village goddesses (544). The oral tradition tells us the stories about the ordinary women who were cheated into marrying untouchables and they turned into revenge goddesses. Tooth goddess is often a virgin and if married, she tears her villainous male consort to pieces. He is later symbolically offered as a buffalo.

Thus, these "symbols" though appear insignificantly harmless, but are actually deeply connotative and political. The fair-complexioned Mahashveta's beauty is compared to the poised and calm goddess 'Gauri' and the Chandala maiden's beauty is compared to Durga and Kali, the hot-tempered ones. The comparison is prejudiced obviously. The white is always associated with "purity and peace" and the black is always the colour of "anger and revenge". Clearly, the wrong notions about the orient were not only the contributions of the western world. We have

ourselves created the racial constructs within our own country.Those Hindus who thought them to be Aryans, wished to demark themselves sharply from those whom they thought to be Dravadians. Every caste even now thinks itself to be 'Aryan' and superior from the rest. The black women have been the victims of 'misrepresentation' in history. The myth of association of sexuality with a black woman remains powerful. They suffer 'injustice' first and 'misrepresentation' afterwards. S.M. Michael says in his *Dalits in Modern India* (52) that the Aryans or men of upper varnas could have Shudra wives. It can also be seen in the *Taittiriya Samhita* that the Aryans used to establish illicit relations with Shudra Women. In Brahminical hegemonic texts, the Shudras, women, dogs and crows are called the 'untruth' themselves. The elite of the society of those times maintained a strict distance between them and Shudras. They were included in the fourfold hierarchy only for exploitation. Though this division was made by man, it was considered directly coming from heaven. The theories of heaven and hell were continuously by Brahmin writers and the ignorance made the fourth caste serve the three upper castes.

Mahashveta tells her story to Chandrapida that how a young sage Pundarika had fallen in love with her as she too had with him. But by the time she could know his feelings, the lad had died pining for her love. Then she, blaming herself for his death decided to end her life. But a heavenly man came suddenly from nowhere and flew with the dead body of Pundarika. A heavenly voice guided her to worship Shiva and prophesized her union with her lover. After telling her story thus, Mahashveta takes her guest to her friend Kadambari. The friend of hers had taken a vow that she will not marry till Mahashveta gets her lover.

Thus the whole saga is about the love of Kshatriya men, Brahmin men and the beautiful young ladies descending from heavenly race of apsaras and gandharvas. There is almost an absence of the fourth and fifth caste and whatever little their representation is, it is highly biased. But *Kadambari* is not the only exception. Every story in the ancient times dealt with Brahmins and Kshatriyas as these two castes were in league with each other. One day Chandrapida left for his kingdom for a very important work, leaving behind the distressed Kadambari. Then his friend Vaishampayana came there looking for Chandrapida. He saw Mahashveta and went mad with passion for her. As she was doing penance for her reunion with Pundarika, she cursed him to be a parrot, not recognising him who was Pundarika himself. Thus the parrot tells his story to the king as he had heard from Jabali. He says that as soon as he

came to know about his love for Mahashveta, he flew at once to meet his beloved. On the way he was captured by a terrible Chandala who wanted him for his princess. He reflected:"with horror, I heard that I, the son of Lakshmi and of a great sage, must live with a tribe shunned even by barbarians."(204)

So, the 'dalit' Chandalas were seen more or less like demons and monsters. One possibility is that the Rakshasas could be some 'dark' race with strong and mighty bodies and had barbarian traits because of their tribal origin. The imagined scenario of a Chandala village is no less monstrous and they were said to be 'polluting' the higher castes by touching them. They faced many prejudices because of their colour. In Vedic tradition, the people having dark complexion were considered subhuman. Oliver says in his *Caste, Class and Race* (425) that a man in the caste system is known for what he is but in a race system he is known primarily by the way he looks. In the caste system the heritage which gives him distinction is cultural; hence he might be dispossessed of it. However, the individual born of a given race inherits physical marks which are not only inalienable but also beyond the discretion of the race itself. A statement of Dr. Ambedkar in *Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar and Brahmanism* says,'The Brahmin's primary concern is to protect 'his interest' against those of the non-Brahmins and the non-Brahmins' primary concern is to protect their interests against those of the Brahmins.'(qtd. From Gautama, 82) He also said that only by making the Varna hierarchy, Brahmins could save their children from being declared Shudras. To achieve this, Brahmanism proceeded in the most audacious manner one could think of. The conditions were little better during the times of Upanishads around the sixth century B.C. Many Brahmin teachers went to learn the ultimate truth from Kshatriyas. So it is obvious that a kind of mixture of race must have taken place before Upanishads. But in Smritis again, the Brahmanic colonialism showed its supremacy. In *Manusmriti*, Manu says that the Brahmans were like Gods. They would not get contaminated even when they do low occupations. It means that our social system was first divided on the basis of the labours, but later on it was moulded according to the selfish motives of the upper caste men.

A Shudra was not allowed to have wealth. Obviously, if a low caste became rich, he would serve no more. So, the existence of a wealthy Shudra was painful for Brahmins. And to prevent the upcoming many generations from helping the fourth and fifth caste, there could be no other weapon more powerful than 'language'. These people were already

ignorant of their plight. And when they were described as barbarians, horrible in their attire, their place as hell, obviously they were never approached by those who considered themselves 'civilized'. So, Brahmin leaders were ironically fulfilling their duty of preserving their 'rights' to get the services of low castes without feeling any humanitarian concern for them. We blame British for every woe of ours in post colonial India. But the British colonialism was even better, for they considered 'every' Indian as subject of their racial contempt. The British rule was not good or just to us in any way, but for the first time, we were all Indians and not the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas or Shudras.

The author tells us that the parrot did not take any food in Chandala maiden's gold cage. The maiden said:"...nor needest thou fear this food as coming from our caste, for fruit may be accepted even from us, and water, even from our vessels is pure, so men say...."(205) Chandala maiden was a princess of her tribe but she was thus insulted by a bird. The untouchables were never given a respectable treatment. There was no fellow feeling for untouchables. It was rooted in the minds of people that they were above the fourth and fifth caste. The oppressiveness of the Hindu caste is so choking even today but its claim to antiquity and to be the most dominant Indian tradition are true nonetheless. Oliver Cromwell says in his introduction to *Caste, Class and Race* that the most significant element in the stability of Hinduism is the phenomenal literary achievements of the early Brahmins, the Hindu priests. This preoccupation with literature is a cultural trait brought into India by the Aryans, the central Indian people who spoke Sanskrit and probably lived for sometime in the north-west of Hindu Kush Mountains. This rule of language was clearly seen when a bird Vaishampayana who knows the 'language' of the learned men is more respected than the human beings who were considered low.

Bana reveals in the end of the saga that the Chandala maiden, who was the only main representative of the fifth varna was not a low caste woman actually. She was goddess Lakshmi herself, the mother of the young sage Pundarika. She had kept the impatient Pundarika turned parrot from meeting Mahashveta till the time of the curse ended. When the author in the end turns the only representative of dalits, the Chandala maiden into goddess Lakshmi, the otherwise ambiguous 'representation' of a dalit is totally nullified. Thus the crux is that the Brahminical text has no representation of the lower castes. When the goddess Lakshmi says that she became a Chandala maiden to avoid contact with mankind, it tells

the woeful tale of the untouchables. They are righty called 'Dalits', the broken men. To be an untouchable in the Indian caste system means exclusion from hierarchal social order. The use of the words 'Antyaja' and 'Antyavasin' is significant. Antyaja means born at the end and Antyavasin means the one who lives in the end. It shows that they were living in separate quarters and secondly they were pushed to the corner by the victorious invaders. Thus in this ancient saga *Kadambari*, Brahmins and Kshatriyas play important roles while Dalits have been marginalized as usual.

END NOTES

1. A book written by Manu, the first giver of laws.
2. The place where Aryans lived. It is one of the synonyms of Indian sub-continent.
3. The slaves or the 'dasas' who were dark in hue.
4. In Kalidasa's *Abhijananasakuntalam* too, we find the reference to Yavani ladies in king's harem who were very beautiful. Even the story-line of the Kalidasa's text bears similarities to the Greek tale of Pelicritus who threw his ring in the water to know is fate and which came back to him.
5. According to Vishnupurana, the fourteen 'ratnas' came out of the sea. One of them was 'Amrita', the divine liquid which had the power to give immortality. The gods and demons were fighting for its acquisition. Then, Vishnu took the guise of a beautiful maiden 'Mohini' to attract the demons. He gave all the divine liquid to Gods to make them immortal and thus deceive the demons.
6. Even in the Western literature, we have Thomas Hardy's The Return of the Native. In it, the dark lady Eustacia Vye has been shown as sensuous and immoral, while the fair Thomasin Yeobright has been portrayed as caste. In Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, the female protagonist Jane is a pale-white, frail British girl while the vamp Bartha Mason is dark and sensuous.
7. The Hindu religion has three main Gods- Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the organiser, and Shiva, the destructor. Shiva has three eyes and when he opens the third eye, it foretells great destruction

8. The elder brother of Lord Sri Krishna is shown very powerful and short tempered.

9. The society divided into four castes of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra.

10. Satyawati was the daughter of a fisherman and she smelled like fish. When the old sage Prashara saw her beauty, he made love to her in a boat. Then, he gave her a blessing that her body will smell like flowers forever.

11. Mountaineers.

12. The murderer of Mahishasur, the buffalo demon.

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Politics of the Representation of Marginalised Subjects in Early Punjabi Novels: *Chitta Lahoo* (1932), *Civil Lines* (1956), and *Lahoo Di Lau* (1977)

—Narender Kumar

Chitta Lahoo (1932) can be considered as a trend setting novel in Punjabi fiction because before its publication the Punjabi novel was mainly dominated by religious propaganda; and the representation of untouchables was deliberately avoided by the mainstream novelists who mostly emerged from the middle class Hindu and Sikh communities. Nanak Singh's portrayal of untouchable characters was a new area waiting to be explored by the Punjabi novelists. Dalits representation in Punjabi literature was not all of a sudden; rather it was the result of the socio-political situation that emerged in 1920s India in general and in Punjab in particular. My concern in this paper is to investigate the politics of the representation of marginalised subjects like untouchables and women who, in Indian social order, have been exploited for centuries. I focus on caste and gender issues in the socio-political context of Punjab in 1920s when Hindus and Sikhs were trying to woo the untouchables for the political purpose since the untouchables' conversion to Christianity and Islam had terrorised them. Jaswant Singh Kanwal is another prominent Punjabi novelist and his novels are mainly located in Malwa sub-region of Punjab. In his two novels *Civil Lines* (1956) and *Lahoo Di Lau* (1977) I look at the gender politics as well as the sarcastic language used by the upper caste characters for the untouchables.

National Scenario

Many socio-political changes had taken place on the national political horizan before the publication of the novel. Under the increasing influence of Christianity Dayanand Saraswati started Arya Samaj in 1875 and opened its branch at Lahore in 1877. The Congress came into existence in 1885 and by the 1900 it had emerged as the major political party. The British government introduced the communal representation policy under which the Muslims got separate representation in 1909. The policy divided the Indian society as it encouraged the idea of communal representation. By the 1917 some Dalit organisations like All India Depressed Classes Association and All India Depressed Classes Federation had emerged on the Indian political horizon and at a meeting in 1917 in Bombay Depressed

Classes Association passed a resolution to demand separate representation like the Muslims and Sikhs in legislative body. Till 1916 the Congress denied to discuss the issues of social reform, especially the issues of untouchables, by saying that Congress is a political body and is not concerned with the social issues. But immediately after the demand of separate representation by the Depressed Classes, the Indian National Congress began to address the issues of untouchables.[1]By using the philosophy of non-violence Gandhi had also emerged as the celebrant of peace in 1920s.

As a result of his anti-caste struggle Ambedkar got popularity as a major Dalit leader in 1920s. To organise the untouchables on a common platform Ambedkar established *Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha* in 1924 in Bombay. He organised a conferece at Mahad in 1927 where with his followers he burnt *Manusamriti*. Under Ambedkar's guidance untouchables in Amraoti, Pune and Nasik made some unsuccessful efforts in 1920s for entry into the temples. 'Ambedkar who was appointed as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Bombay Province in 1927 for five years (the appointment was renewed in 1932 for further five years).'[2] By the 1930s Dalit voice had emerged especially in Maharshtra, Tamil Nadu (Self-Respect Movement 1925) and Kerala (Vaikam Satyagraha 1924-25). This was the national scenario in the 1930s when Nanak Singh published his novel- *'Chitta Lahoo'* (1932).

Socio-Political Situation in Punjab

Nanak Singh (1897-1971) published *Chitta Lahoo* in 1932, a time when there was communal conflict in Punjab and all three major communities the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims had started reform movements——Hindu's Arya Samaj, Sikhs' Akali Movement (1920-25) and Gurdwara Reform Movement and Muslims' Ahmadiya Movement. However, Christianity was gaining momentum among the lower caste people, especially untouchables, who started opting for conversion to Christianity as an escape from the caste humiliation. Both Arya Samaj and Singh Sabha came into existence in 1870s and collaborated against the challenge created by untouchbales' conversion to Christianity and Islam. But after some time Arya Samajis began to convert lower caste Sikhs to Hinduism. As a response to Arya Samaj's action, the Sikhs introduced a pork eating test to kill two birds (i.e. Hindu and Muslim) with one stone since pork eating is prohibited both in Hinduism and Islam.By the 1920s the Sikhs and Hindus became as much rivals of each other as they were to Christians and Muslims.

In 1926 a Dalit movement emerged in Punjab which is known as Ad Dharm movement. Ad Dharm was initiated by Mangu Ram in 1926,

who called an untouchable conference at his village Mugowal in Hoshiarpur in June 1926 and here Dalit leaders declared that untouchables are the aboriginies of India and their religion is Ad Daharm. Mangu Ram requested to the British government that untouchables should be recorded as Ad Dharmis in the Census report. In the census of 1931 the untouchables had been included as Ad Dharmis. This claim of Untouchables' as the separate community terrorised the Hindus and Sikhs because they knew that if the Dalits declared themselves as Ad Dharmi then the Hindus and Sikhs, who were already in minority, would loose the claim on power which they desired to be in their hands after independence. Dalits became decisive factors in Indian politics after the introduction of communal representation policy. The inclusion policy (untouchables' inclusion) which was used by the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims in the name of social reform movement was the result of political pressure made by the increasing importance of untouchables. Arya Samaj's *Shuddhi* movement, Singh Sabha's Akali Movement/Gurdwara Reform Movement and Muslims' Ahmadiyah Movement were diplomatically designed movements in the name of anti-caste and social reform movements.

Reading Caste

> "........*Likhna padna koi sada kam aa*." (Reading and writng is not our job) "*Poot !uh te hoiyan sardaran mahajna diyan kudiyan te aasi hoe garib mangte! Sanu ki lage bhale iho jihe kamaan nal.* "(My dear, they are the daughters of Saradar and Mahajan and we are beggars! We have nothing to do with education.)"......*Je kamin jataan vi pad gaiyan te inhan de kam dhande kaun kariya karu.*" (if untouchable castes start studying then who will do the menial jobs for the upper castes.)[3] (84-85).

The above mentioned statements are made by Redu who is a *Kalndar* (Bajigar) by profession. He brings up the protagonist Sundri in the novel. His statements point to the Dalit psyche which had apprehended that education is not the business of the untouchables. The idea of Dalits' exclusion from education had been promoted by the first Hindu law maker Manu in *Manusmriti* and legitimised by the Hindu religion. Such rules had been designed by the Brahmins for the political purpose and implemented in the form of religion, and Hindu religion remained uncontested till Jotiba Rao Phule, who contested Hindu philosophy in the famous book'*Gulamgiri*'(1873)[4]. The untouchables had internalised the Hindu rules and the inquiring mind, which was required for human development, had been murdered by the religious legitimation of the

Hindu ideology. The internalisation of Hindu rules had transformed the untouchables into slaves. And Redu's statement "………*Likhna padna koi sada kam aa* (reading and writing is not our job p84)" exposes the internalisation of Hindu ideology by the Dalits. Since Manu stated that untouchables are made for the service of the upper castes, they do not have any right to education but Redu's second statement-*Poot! Uh te hoiyan sardaran mahajna diyan kudiyan te aasi hoe garib mangte! Sanu ki lage bhale iho jihe kamaan nal* (Dear! they are the daughters of Sardars and Mahajans and we are beggers! We have nothing to do with education. 85) points to the idea that education is only the privilege of the upper castes. His last statement '.... *je kamin jataan pad gaiyan te inha de kam-dhande kaun kruga*?' (If untouchable castes start studying then who will do the menial jobs for the upper castes. 85) is cynical about the religious legitimation of education as the previlige of the upper castes. This statement hints that he has understood the politics of Hindu religion behind the exclusion of untouchables from education. The above explained statements are made by Redu (an untouchable *Bajigar*) in response to Sundri, whom he brings up as an orphan child, when she expresses her desire to study after looking at the upper caste girls who study in gurdwara.

Chitta Lahoo can be considered as a trend setting novel in Punjabi fiction because before its publication Punjabi novel was mainly dominated by religious propaganda; and the representation of untouchables was deliberately avoided by the maintream novelists who mostly emerged from the middle class Hindu and Sikh communities. Nanak Singh's portrayal of untouchable characters was a new area waiting to be explored by the Punjabi novelists. It seems that Mulk Raj Anand took the idea of Dalit representation from Nanak Singh and explored it in his novel *Untouchable* (1935)[5] which brought him popularity across the world since it was written in English. The sufferings of untouchables which were confined to the Indian boundaries got an exposure to the world and won both the national and international sympathiers.

Dalits representation in Punjabi literature did not happen all of a sudden; rather it was the result of socio-political situation which emerged in 1920s in India in general and in Punjab in particular. Due to the increasing political importance of untouchables, the Indian literature of the 1920s and 30s is fraught with the issues of the Dalits' exploitation. The novels like *Malapalli* (1921)[6] [original written in Telagu by Unnava

Lakshminarayana and translated into English in 2008], *Chomana Dudi* (1933)[7] [written in Kannada by K. Shivaram Karanth and translated into English 1978], *Untouchable* (1935) and *Kanthapura* (1938)[8] [both written in English by Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao] are concerned with the untouchables' exploitation in the Hindu social system. Among all the above mentioned novelists, who are recognised as progressives, a common concern regarding the untouchables' conversion to Christianity is expressed with a sense of fear for the decreasing strength of the Hindus. These are some of the novels which are available in English but in fact, the vernacular literature of the 1920s and 30s is fraught with the issues of untouchables since during this period both Gandhi and Ambedkar grilled the tradition of untouchability.

Punjab was one of the major centres of nationalist activities in 1920s since the Gadar Movement, Kirti Kisan Party, the Congress and Muslim League were actively playing their role in the region. In Punjab four communal groups the Hindu, Muslims, Sikhs and Christian were struggling to lure the untouchables for the political benefit. Looking at the socio-political scenario of Punjab when the Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and Christian were forced to include untouchables under political pressure, in such volatile situation, Bhagat Singh wrote an essay *Achchut Da Sawal* (Question of Untouchable) in 1928 in which he criticises the caste system:

> People are discussing this question very enthusiastically (whether untouchables can be included into Hinduism and Sikhism or not?). Special attention is being paid to the untouchables. Whether communal politics has helped in the growth of desire for freedom or not but it has sensitised every community to increase its strength to demand more rights. Muslims paid more attention by giving them equal rights and they have already started converting untouchables. Hindu got hurt by such actions and as a result communal riots happened in Punjab. Sikhs thought we should not stay behind and they started converting untouchables. There were riots between Hindus and Sikhs since Hindu converted lower caste Sikhs by shaving them and Sikhs converted lower caste Hindus by cutting their sacred thread. Now all three communal groups are fighting to allure them. On the other hand Christians are offering them material benefits.[9]

By birth Nanak Singh was a Hindu, born in a merchant family but later on under the influence of Sikh ideology, he got converted to Sikhism. Nanak Singh participated in Akali/Gurdwara Reform Movement (1920-25) and visited jail as result of his involvement.In *Chitta Lahoo* the protagonist Bachchan Singh is the symbolic representative of Singh Sabha's ideology. Like Arya Samaj, Singh Sabha initiated the idea of education in gurdwaras and Nanak Singh mediates this idea through the character of Bachchan Singh who in his village Gurudwara arranged a *Giyaniji* to teach the village children. Nanak Singh romanticises the problem of Dalits' inclusion in Gurdawaras and educational institutes through an untouchable character Sundri who is an upper caste by birth but being brought up by an untouchable, she has lost her original identity. She is recognised as an untouchable in the novel. Sundri like Iklavya learns reading and writing herself by listening to the teacher from the outside who teaches to the upper caste children in gurdwara. But one day she is caught by the *Giyaniji* and Bachchan Singh when she is writing on the earth with her finger behind the wall at the gate of the gurdwara.

Giyaniji is surprised to see her talent because without any help she has learnt all those things which he has taught to his students. He offers study materials to the untouchable girl and makes a separate arrangement for her sitting at the gate of the gurdwara as Nanak Singh writes: "Giyaniji wanted the girl to sit among the other girls but he was expecting trouble if did that, to avoid such problems he arranged a carpet at the gate of the gurdwara for her sitting, where she would sit and study alone." [10] (89) The above mentioned situation raises two points –first regarding the Sikhism which is theoretically based on the idea of casteless society but practically as much casteist as Hinduism. Second it points to the politics of 1920s in Punjab when the Hindus, Muslims, and Christians were trying to woo the untouchables with the socio-economic benefits. Singh Sabha also introduced the Dalit inclusion policy and Nanak Singh's portrayal of Giyaniji as a reformer, who does not bother about caste, is the mediated form of Singh Sabha's agenda as it is confirmed from the statements made by the Sikhs who could not stomach the scene of reading and writing by an untouchable girl at the gate of gurdwara; then Baba

Bhan Singh says:

> Hey! Look at your educated people. You may get offended with the truth but I cannot control my tongue. What kind of education Jeeva has offered to his son, he has rather destroyed him. With the learning of English these newly educated youngmen start preaching for the inclusion of *Chuhras* and *Chamars*. Yesterday night Variyama told me that under the influence of Bachchan Singh Giyaniji started teaching the daughter of a Bajigar. (90)

Another says, *"Aaj gurdware jaan lag pai te bhlke khuh te ja chdugi."* (Today she started going to gudwara, tomorrow she will go to the well.)[11] One more person says, *"te haho ki, ih kamin lok talan wale nhi? Pta je Ravai pind vich kida psad machiya si. Bildari khalsa valiyan duaan chuk kita aakhe shuddhi karaange."* (Yes these bastards cannot be stopped. Do you know what happened in Ravai village? [Bildari kahlsa means the Khalsa Biradri] Bildri Khalsa educated youngmen created a stage by saying that we would reconvert the untouchables.)[12] (91).

The above mentioned statements which narrate the story of untouchables' inclusion into Sikhism by the newly educated Sikhs point to the history of Sikh and Arya Samaj conflicts over the issue of untouchables' reconversion or *shuddhi*. The *Khalsa Biradri* was a radical group in Amritsar which advocated the inclusion of untouchables in Sikhism as Mohinder Singh writes:

> As stated earlier, the priests at these temples did not like the action of neo-Sikhs who were converting 'low-caste' persons and advocating their free integration into Sikh social life, including community-dining and inter-marriages. The Khalsa Biradri of Amritsar led them in a procession to Golden Temple. The Temple priests resisted their admission and refused to accept their offerings and Prasad.[13]

The resistance of illiterate people to the inclusion of untouchables into Sikhism was obvious since they could not comprehend the politics of the newly educated radical Sikhs who had understood the political importance of untouchables. In the eyes of illiterate upper caste Sikhs the untouchables were uncivilized *chandals* and their inclusion into Sikhism, though not against the spirit of the religion, but in reality, was viewed as a potent danger, sufficient enough to wreck havoc with the social fabric of the upper caste sikh-society. The upper caste Sikhs psyche replicates

the rituals and practices carried out by the subjects of Hinduism. It does not accept the idea of untouchables' inclusion as it is confirmed from the collective reaction of the upper caste Sikhs who protest against the *Giyaniji* who allows an untouchable girl to sit and study at the gate of gudwara.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century Sikh and Arya Samaj conflit over the issue of untouchables' conversion became visible. If we analyse this conflits between the Sikhs and the Hindus from a Dalit perspective we find that theoretically Hinduism and Sikhism propagate two different philosophies but in Dalit context their implication is almost same as the villagers answer collectively to Bachchan Singh when he asks as to why did they beat the untouchable girl Sundri who entered into the gurdwara secretely to listen to the preaching of *gurbani.* They answer: *"Asi sab kuch jan gae haan', dharam da nash ho giya', 'kalyug de chamatkar', 'sada beda gark kar dita', 'aina kadah parasad kidhar jau' aadi."* (We came to know everything, our relgion has been destroyed, miracles of *Kalyuga,* we have been polluted, where will go that much prepared *kadah-prasad* etc.)[14] (100).The answer given by the people to Bachchan Singh is a reflection of Hindu ideology which cannot tolerate the entry of an untouchable into religious place. The Sikh psyche, as expressed in the above statement, is completely obsessed with the idea of purity, pollution, *karma, dharma* and *kalyuga.* The villagers' attitude towards the untouchables expressed in the novel is not just a figment of Nanak Singh's imagination rather it stands very much vindicated today. Nanak Singh creates a situation in the novel where he makes an indirect comparison between the treatment given to untouchables and the animals by the upper caste Sikhs as he writes:

> It was late morning and the sun had already appeared. At this time a *namberdar*'s son came into the gurdwara, with him one dog, moving his tail, entered into the gurdwara. As soon as the dog saw his owner-*namberdar,* the dog went straight to him and sat in his lap, moving the tail and raising the neck the dog tried to lick the *namberdar*'s face. Perhaps the dog was excited with the smell of the dishes prepared in gurdwara. By moving his hand on the dog *namberdar* started loving the dog as someone loves the children...*kdaha parsad* was ready again and people started eating. The *namberdar* feeded the dog not only with the part which he got for the dog but gave most of his own part to the dog and ate only one fourth of his part.[15] (102-103).

Voice of dissidence against caste discriminatory practices became more vociferous by the late 1920s. In 1928, Bhagat Singh while writing an article in *Kirti* (an organ of the Ghadar Party) entitled *Aachchut da Sawal* observes:

> Think, a dog can sit in your lap, enter in your kitchen and move there but if you touch a human being (lower caste), you get polluted! People like Malviya who considered themselves great social refomers and the well-wishers of untouchables, first they accept the garlands from a sweeper but then they think that they won't be purified without having bath with cloth. .... We can worship animals but we cannot allow a human being to sit beside us."[16] (105).

The relation between Bhagat Singh's criticism of caste discriminatory practices and Nanak Singh's portrayal of the same issue in the novel can be easily traced as there is not much gap between the publication of the essay (1928) and the novel *Chitta Lahoo* (1932). Immediately after the beating of the untouchable girl by the Sikhs in the gurdwara, Nanak Singh portrays a *namberdar*'s dog having food among other fellows in gurdwara.This is Nanak Singh's implicit attack on the dominant caste and class psyche which can adjust with the animals but not with the human beings (lower castes). In other words it is the politics of literature as Engels writes: "The more the opinions of the author remain hidden the better the work of art." [17] This is what Nanak Singh does in his novel by portraying the Punjabi village world with its social realities and making the caste discriminatory practice an issue of literary debate in the Punjabi fictional world in 1930s.

Reading Gender

Women exploitation is another contemporary issue which is interestingly raised by Nanak Singh in *Chitta Lahoo*. A youg widow Gurdai has been badly beaten up and thrown out of the house by her stepsons to grab her share in the family property. This injustice is done to the poor woman just because of her lack of education as she could not read the paper on which her step son got her thumb impression as a symbol of her consent and as a result she lost her share in her husband's property. Nanak Singh considers illiterarcy as one of the major reasons for the miserable condition of women. Due to the lack of economic security, woman has to enslave herself to man's desire as it happens to Gurdai. But how the religion plays its role in the exploitation of women and how their

slavery is legitimatized by the religion, are some of the questions which we need to look at. Gurdai does not speak against her father who marries her off to an old man who already has sons and grandsons. Her silence is not her "yes" rather the compulsion of a girl who has been brought up in such a socio-cultural atmosphere where she cannot express her desire against her father's decision. In other words where a woman does not have any voice or she is obliged to follow man's decision. Such a kind of psyche is constructed by the religion which decides the moral codes and traditions of a society. In Hindu society a girl is expected to follow the *Sati-Savitri* image of woman which is propgated by the religion as role model for women. Nanak Singh's criticism of Hinduism is communicated through the victimisation of Gurdai who could not protest against the socio-religious normative and assents the injustice as her fate.

In caste society Brahmins are considered to be the advocates of the Hindù ideology. In the novel Pandit Radha Krishan performs this crucial role. He is the representative of Hinduism and responsible for its degradation as is confirmed from his statements, which he makes in response to Mohan Lal's suggestion to bring Gurdai back to her house as she has stayed for one night in the house of a Muslim who finds her lying wounded and unconscious on the way, "what did you say? Can she be brought back?" After saying this Panditji looks at the *namberdars* and says, "Look at this stupid fellow?" Then looking at Mohan Lal he says, "Did Aryans teach you this lesson?"

> Then all people sitting there start criticising Mohan Lal for his suggestion against Hindu tradition. But Mohan could not control himself and speak again, "I am sorry Panditji! I did not say anything wrong. If she is included in the community again what is wrong in doing that. Afterall she is a young widow, if Lala Kram Chand and his family cannot takecare of her then find some suitable groom for her..... ". This time Panditji got furious and interrupting Mohan Lal, he says, "Stop stop! Don't use such uncivilised language again. Do you think a donkey after having wash with a saop can turn into a cow? Talking about widow-remarriage in Hindu region is like stigmatising it, do you not feel shame while talking such things? (in frustration he slapped his forehead) Friends it is beginning of the dark time. These Aryans and Akalis have destroyed the Hindustan.[18] (41)

The dialogue between Pandit Radha Krishan and Mohan Lal is implicitly a dialogue between Arya Samaj and the degraded form of Hinduism which is representated in the personality of Radha Krishan. The politics of Nanak Singh's representation of the Pandit Radha Karishan as the saviour of traditional values lies in the fact that it was due to the Brahmans that the moral values, which are expected to keep on changing with the passage of time, became rigid and inflexible. And this rigidness and infexibility of religion and moral values became a hurdle in the development of society. The emerging middle class intelligentsia's (Arya Samaj and Akalis) exposure to the modern education, introduced by the British Raj, enlightened them to question all irrational traditions and beliefs including religion.The question of women's equality, widow-remarrige and untouchables' inclusion were some of the issues which they began to address in Punjab in the early twentieth century after the introduction of modern education. That is why Pandit Radha Krishan's question "Did Aryans teach you this lesson?" points to a kind of contradiction between modern education and traditional values.

The problem of child widow was first noted and addressed by a Bengali reformer Ishwar Chandra Vidhyasagar. He was deeply touched by the miserable situation of the child widows in Hindu society and it was the result of his efforts that the British Raj passed the Widow Remarriage Act in 1856. But its implication was negligible, especially in the context of Punjab where educational reform began to take place almost hundred years later (around 1850s) than Bengal. So the mindset which was required for the social change and reform was not there in Punjab till 1930s when Nanak Singh wrote the novel. Above all Nanak Singh in his personal life had closely observed the sufferings of widow's life. 'His father died when he was just eleven years old and his mother had to struggle to survive in the male dominant society. Being a widow his mother had to protect her chastity from the relatives, since in Indian society a widow is an easy prey. But she could not protect herself for long time. Once a close relative tried to rape her and in protection she jumped from the first floor and got her both legs broken.Nanak Singh had fallen in love with a child widow Savitri with whom he wanted to marry but could not marry since the widow remarriage was not permitted in Punjabi society at that time.[19] The suffering of Gurdai in the novel is either the reflection of Nanak Singh's mother or his beloved Savitri since both of them were victimised by the Hindu religion.

The politics of Arya Samajis and Akalis' was to create a space for the marginalised subjects like women and untouchables in the society where they have been exploited for centuries. Nanak Singh depicts the negative response to Arya Samaj's policy of social reform by the conservative Hindus like Pandit Radha Krishan and his followers but the next generation, which is representated by Sundri and Bachchan Singh, is portrayed as the follower of the Sikh ideology. Why does Nanak Singh transfer the centre of the narrative from Hindu characters to Sikhs after Gurdai's departure to Delhi where she has to accept prostitution as a mode for survival? Why does he portray Sundri as the follower of Sikhism, despite she is being brought up by Redu an untouchable who is a Hindu? These questions need to be addressed since they are rooted in the socio-political background of Punjab in 1920s.

Nanak Singh's politics of transferring the centre of narrative from Hindu characters to Sikhs indicates the transition in the history of Punjab during the 1920s when the Sikhs were in minority. The 1920s was a prominent period in the history of Sikhs since during this period the Sikhs organised themselves and the Sikh organisations like Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandak Committee (S.G.P.C.) and Akali Dal came into existance. Gurdwara reform movement was started by the Sikhs in the 1920s to remove the *Mahants* who used to be appointed by the government. Under *Mahants*' control Sikh shirnes were getting coloured with Hindu practices and it was the time when the Sikhs were getting conscious of their identity different from the Hindus due to the conflict between Arya Samaj and the Sikhs. Akalis organised compaign against the *Mahants* all over Punjab and it was the result of the Akali compaign that Sikhism emerged as the saviour of moral values. Sikhs succeeded to get control over Sikh shirnes after a long struggle of five years from 1920 to 1925 and during this struggle Sikhs had to sacrifice a lot. Their struggle brought fruit in the form of transition from Hinduism to Sikhism.Nanak Singh's depiction of Sundri by birth a Hindu but accepts Sikhism as an emerging religion better than Hinduism suggests this historical reference.

Nanak Singh's politics of caste and gender lies in the fact that he portrays Sikhism as a saviour of the marginalised subjects like untouchables and women which are representated by Sundri. Both women and untouchables were denied education in Hindu social order. But Sundri gets education despite being an untouchable girl and fights against the social evils like a fearless woman. On the other hand her mother Gurdai who was a Hindu could not do so and became a victim of the Hindu

fundamentalism. The portrayal of Sundri as a brave girl is a way of Nanak Singh to propagate Sikhism. This mode of characterisation was started by Vir Singh in his novels *Sundri* (1988) and *Satwant Kaur* (1988). In other words Nanak Singh makes a comparison between Gurdai who is a Hindu and helpless victim and Sundri who converts to Sikhism and does not give up before the social evils. Nanak Singh did the same thing as Bhai Vir Singh did in his novel *Sundri* but not as explicitly as Vir Singh did. He used literature as a medium for his agenda as is suggested by Sartre who considered writing as a 'purposeful reflection of the world.'[20] If something is purposeful, then there is always a politics behind the purpose and politics can never be impartial. In that sense, literature has its own politics, so it can never be impartial. Nanak Singh suggests Sikhism as a better option for the emancipation for the marginalised subjects but if we analyse the present situation of marginalised subjects in Sikhism we notice that the exploitation of such categories still exist among the Sikhs. *Chitta Lahoo* is the master piece of Nanak Singh and it is the first novel in Punjabi which reflects the contemporary society by sensitising the issues of caste, and gender.In Punjabi fictional world, Nanak Singh's *Chitta Lahoo* paved the way for the sucessors to the unexplored world of the marginalised subjects.

The next author I propose to investigate is Jaswant Singh Kanwal (b.1919-) who comes from Malwa region of Punjab. He is one of the well known novelists in Punjabi after Nanak Singh and before Gurdial Singh. His two novels *Civil Lines* (1956) and *Lahoo Di Lau* (1977) are imbued with the caste, class and gender issues which are the focus of my paper. I want to investgate Kanwal's portrayal of middle class and gender politics in *Civil Lines* as well as the sarcastic language which is used by the upper caste characters in his novel *Lahoo Di Lau.*

> My novel *Civil Lines* is not only a stroy of city life but also represents the upper-middle class society. I reflect the weak, poor, dirty and artificial life of this class which is economically getting strongerday to day. I am not in favour of writing much about this class, because it is fundamentally wrong to expect struggle from the *hizda* characters to create a society free of evils.[21](Civil Lines 5)

This is the statement made by Kanwal in the preface to his novel *Civil Lines*. His attitude towards the upper middle class whom he addresses as *hizda* is the reflection of his caste background since Kanwal himself is a

Jatt by caste, for him other castes are inferior. This word *hizda* is the reflection of his unconscious mind since in the history of Sikh Jatts considered themselves as warriors and others as cowards. Banias were the urban upper middle class in the 1950s in Punjab when the novel was written. Banias being the businessmen are considered money-minded who do not follow the moral values set by the Sikh gurus. In other words middle class values are determined by the money, not by the religious or humanistic values.

The word *hizda* in Indian context is used for those people who are neither men nor women, especially those who do not have strength to fight like a man or those who have their own limitations. The upper middle class society which is busy in money making and money making is way of class construction. The class concept is basically a division of society between the lower and upper, the rich and poor. So, the casteless and classless society which was imagined by the Sikh gurus cannot be constructed by the selfish people. That is why Kanwal addresses them as *hizdas*. They cannot make any contribution in the construction of a casteless and classless society. The novel basically presents a conflict between the middle class and upper middle class moral values. The 1950s was the period after Independence when educated middle class especially the governmet employees began to migrate to cities for the educational and other material gains. It was the time when the society was being divided between the working class and the educated middle class which had separated itself from manual works. Gurbachan Singh Grewal's migration to Civil Lines, Ludhiana marks the representation of transition from rural to urban values. Urban world is an individual world, where people are not as strictly obliged to socio-religious values as they are in the country.The degradation of moral values is portrayed through the character of Gurbachan Singh Grewal who first promises to marry his daughter to his Army friend's son Prakash but later on turns back to his promise for the material benefits.

Grewal is a surname in the Jaat community in Punjab.In popular Punjabi imagination it is considered incumbent upon a Jaat to remain true to his words. The Jaat community, which populated a larger rural area in Punjab and maintained a feudal outlook, did not allow girls to mix up with the boys. The news of honour killings is a commonplace in the local media and it confirms this trend. The protagonist Darshan Grewal's

apologetic statement, which she makes after getting pregnant as result of her pre-marital relation with Bahal who denies to marry her, points to honour killing: "..... Brothers killed the characterless sisters and threw them in rivers, gunned them down, you just wake up and kill me whichever way you like."[22](253). Her statement speaks volume of a tradition at whose altar innocent girlsare sacrificed.

The novelist's psyche which is conditioned by the Sikh religious values finds it difficult to adjust with the upper middle class values which are determined by the material interests. Gurbachan Grewal being a Jaat is supposed to be true to his words and community values and traditions, but he gets indifferent to his community values and permits his daughter to develop a relationship with a police inspector Bahal. His assent to Darshan's relationship with Bahal as well as his denial to return the money and jewellery to Prakash, who is the son of his friend who had left money and jewellery with Grewal before dying, is the reflection of his transition from the middle class to the upper middle class where money is the determiner of human relations. It is also the symbol of class consciousness since Mr. Grewal tries to convience his wife Pratap Kaur (who insists to be true to words which they have given to Prakash's father by saying that they will marry Darshan with Prakash):

> "You do not know anything about modern world, your thinking remained stick to old values like the country people. We can never search such an alliance like Bahal, you should thank to Waheguru."
>
> "We have decided to marry Darshan with Prakash, though we have not finished formality. That guy is hundred times better than Bahal." Darshan's mother clearly expresses her desire.
>
> "O stupid woman! How can you compare Bahal's status with Prakash? When Prakash will complete his M.A. and then find a job, during this period of unemployment. No, no." Grewal moves his head, "it is true Prakash is clever, intelligent, deserving and we consider him as our own child but according to modern values, in comparison to Bahal, Prakash looks small in every aspects of judgement."[23] (133)

Grewal's attitude changes with the change of place and atmosphere. Earlier he was a villager and stuck to the moral values. But now he lives in Civil

Lines which itself is a symbol of class and under the influence of the upper middle class society his values undergo change. That is why he says to his wife that her thinking remains stuck to the old values like the country people. Women are considered to be the carriers of culture of the society which they belong to. In the same way Pratap Kaur could not give up her values and reminds her husband to be true to his words. To her, human qualities and moral values are more important than material gains. The conflict between husband and wife is the representation of the country and city values since being a house wife she does not have any exposure to the world outside the house, her values remains unchanged while the husband gets coloured with the upper middle class values.

The class consciousness which emerges after Grewal's migration to Civil Lines does not allow him to marry off his daughter to a person who is below his class status. As Lukacs says, 'nothing happens without a conscious purpose or an intended aim.'[24] Grewal's intention is deteremined by socio-economic interests which he expects to be fulfilled by marrying Darshan with a police inspector Bahal. Here moral values are not determininant; rather the economic interest which suits the materialistic nature of upper middle class play vital role.This specificity of the upper middle class, Kanwal, finds problematic since he cannot expect from an army retired Jatt captain to adjust with such alien values. Alien in the sense that Jatt community has control over female sexuality and does not permit girls to have relation with boys before marriage since it might dishonour the community as is suggested through the pregnancy of Darshan Grewal. But in the upper middle class society due to modern education a space is given to pre-marital relation, such values are alien to the Jatt community whose psyche considers pre-marital relationship as sin.

The major concern of the novelist is to sensitise the middle class society especially the Jatt about the danger of the upper middle class values which can destroy their honour as is portrayed through the victimisation of Darshan. Kanwal seems to be in unison with the eighteenth century English view of women's chastity which considered that the only option left for a woman, after commiting folly, was to die. Let me quote a few lines from Oliver Goldsmith.

WHEN lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray,
What charm can soothe her melancholy?
What art can wash her tears away?
The only art her guilt to cover,
To hide her shame from ev'ry eye,
To give repentance to her lover,
And wring his bosom is—to die.[25] ("When Lovely woman Stoops to Folly" Oliver Goldsmith).

But coming back to my major concern, the novel depicts, on the one side, the sufferings of a girl as a result of pre-marital relationship which is a way of sensitising women's issues. But on the other side this might be a way of propagating community values and traditions since the adoption of the middle class values, as Kanwal shows in the novel, results in dire consequences which is an indirect appreciation of traditional values and criticism of modern values. At the end of the novel, Prakash saves the wretched girl, who was tacitly engaged to him, from commmiting suicide which, in turn, attests the progressive stance of the novelist.It also displays the novelist's confidence in the power of the working class to subvert the class equation in the society. Kanwal writes in the preface: "...the solid, hardworking, and reliable characters of working class, who are the urgent need of our society, cannot be found in the upper middle class."[26] (*Civil Lines* 6) This statement in the preface and the end of the novel with the portrayal of the working class character as the saviour of the humanity and moral values confirms the novelist's faith in the working class which can bring a change in the society. But one question which echoes again and again in the reader's mind is: Why the author does not go ahead with the option of abortion in the case of the protagonist, Darshan, when she is found to be pregnant? The one possible answer can be that the author is standing midway in the process of cultural transition that was taking place at that time; he is torn apart between the progressive ideals and retrogressive values. He wants to project himself as a liberal in his outlook but the burden of the inevitable Punjabi readership does not allow him to manoeuvre much. Kanwal cannot afford to project a protagonist who could say 'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over.' and could move about in the room with ease by putting 'a' record on the gramophone.'[27] (*The Waste Land*)

Jaswant Singh Kanwal's other novel *Lahoo Di Lau* (1977) dwells a great deal on the Naxalite Movement in Punjab. Naxalite Movement emerged in Punjab immediately after it started in West Bengal in 1967. Naxalite Movement was centred mainly in Malwa sub-region of Punjab and dominated by the Jatts who were dissatisfied with the land reform policy since in some of the places most of the land was still under the control of landlords. For instance, 'General Balwant Singh of village Kila Hakim in Sangrur owned 1500 acres.'[28] In this sub-division the *Chuhra/ Mazhbi* was the major Dalit community who used to work as bounded labourers as well as daily wage labourers. Being in touch with the Jatt community as the farm hands and labourers, a good strength of the *Chuhras/Mazhbis* was involved in Naxalite Movements. This novel gives an account of their involvement. My concern here is to look at the politics of inclusion, or how the *Chuhras/Mazhbis* have been lured and used by the Jatts? Did their sacrifice bring any solution to the socio-economic problems of the community? And how does the language used by the upper caste characters reflect their unconscious mind?

Sipping tea Jalwant addressed his village fellow Jawala Mazhbi: "Saliya *inklab* would be a solution to your problem, without any expense you will become partner in land-ownership."[29] The statement, made by a Naxalite Jalwant Singh, espouses the upper caste mind-set which tries to allure untouchables in the name of economic equality after *inklab*. The Naxalite leaders knew that without the cooperation of the labour class the landless untouchables-they could not make it to the mass movement. This romantic idea of land distribution amongst the untouchables which was floated by the Naxalites works very nicely. The idea was an emotional blackmail to the suppressed untouchable psyche since the idea took them to the imaginary world of equality where downtrodden could have a piece of land for survival. This was not the first time that a new world was imagined for the untouchbales by the Naxalite in 1967. Before them Gandhi also imagined *Ram Raj* much before the Independence. But after Independence *Ram Raj* could not bring any solution to the problems of untouchables; neither economic nor social. Now after 24 years of Independence in 1967 Naxalites promise again to bring socio-economic equality in India.

How nicely Jalwant Singh's statement works on the suppressed psyche can be noted from Jawala Mazhbi's response: "You people used

us like ox from generation to generation. We would take revenge. You still have time, asked your father to transfer two acres in my name."[30] (53) Jawala's words express the 'collective unconscious'of the whole Dalit community. Jawala's demand for two acres land is not only the demand for economic independence but it is also the demand for equality since land is the symbol of status/power in rural Punjab and this nexus of power/land is enjoyed mainly by the Jatt community. His demand for the two acres is the demand for share in power.

Jalwant answers to Jawala Mazhbi: "Father told you send your mother, he will transfer two or four acres in your name."[31](54) For Jalwant this is a joke but indirectly it is repressed account of untouchable women's sexual exploitation by the landlords in general and his father's sexual relation with Jawala's mother in particular. Freud writes about jokes:

> Like dreams, jokes use the same techniques of condensation, indirect representation, and displacement. But unlike dreams, which are unintelligible, asocial, and coaked in mystery and disguise as to motivation, joking is highly social, quickly understood, and explicitly exposes the undelying thought in blatant defiance of accepted modes of conscious expression. The energy directed to censoring forbidden impulses or wishes gets discharged in laughter. What renders the joke so intensely pleasurable is this circumventing of the censor and expressing our inhibited thoughts.[32]

Jawala is a bonded labourer in the Malwa region of Punjab. Bonded labourer (which is called *Siri* in Punjab) had a kind of relationship with the landlords where Siri's family was allowed to collect fodder for the cattle. In the Siri-landlord relationship, Siri's wife was often sexually abused by the landlord. In other words, it was the hegemonic mode of relationship in which Siri was obliged to allow landlord to have liaison with his wife. Confirming the sexual exploitation of the Dalit women by landlords, Parmod Kumar and Rainuka Dagar write: "The acceptance of upper caste men having access to sexual favours of Dalit women was reported by 91 per cent of the Jats and 88 per cent of Dalits in 1994. A similar trend is reflected in a 2000 study with this acceptance being around 80 per cent."[33] Jalwant's joke is suppressed history which cannot be expressed directly and joke is an 'accepted mode' or 'defence mechanism' used by Jalwant.

Jawala responds to joke: Dear don't worry, I'll first shoot your father."No matters, whether the father dies hundred times, dear you are not going to get *numberdari*. In revenue records, the land will get transferred tomy name, then you will need to simply send your Balbiro to me" Jalwant remarked laughingly.(54) "Do you think when your turn will come, we won't have bullets? Jawala added challengingly while taking shooting position with his arms. Dear, just let me have guns, I will set ablaze all *sardaris*. Then, I would also find out a slender- thin *Jatti* for myself...Perhaps you may not get a Jatti, but I am afraid your *Balbiro* would have to put up with *Redu Saad*. Then who would thrash her back home?" Jalwant held his thumps up.[34](54).

The joke exchanged between Jalwant and Jawala Mazhbi suggests at the least possibility of destabilization of the hegemonic hold of the upper caste. Jawla's claim to shoot down Jalwant's father and to find out *Jatti* for himself hints at the vindictive unconsciousness of the Dalit character.Jawala's desire for a 'slender-thin Jatti' is an unconscious exposure of his revenge for the untouchable women's exploitation by the Jatts. The much-eulogized perception of the Jatti in popular Punjabi imagination percolates down into the psyche of a Dalit character as well. Jawala's desire to possess a slender thin-Jatti reflects this cultural interpellation. But Jalwant Singh covertly threatens him for nursing this sexual craving which could eventually cost him his life.

The novel opens up with the Naxalites' promise for land distribution amongst the *Chuhars/Mazhbis* and other lower caste land-tillers; but it ends with most of the Naxalites getting murdered in police encounters and rest being put into jail. The sacrifice which was demanded from the lower-caste land-tillers, they rose up to that occasion and played a decisive role in the movement but they did not gain the desired advantage. Jaswant Kanwal's representation bears close resemblance to the social reality especially in the context of the Dalits; and two prominent Dalit Naxalite poets Sant Ram Udasi and Lal Singh Dil also rue about this fact that the Dalits did not get to taste the much-needed fruit of land distribution.

Nanak Singh initiated the tradition of marginalised subjects in Punjabi literature in 1930s. Jaswant Singh Kanwal promoted it by exploring the

untouchables' contribution in Naxalite movement and later on the issues have been taken up by the successors like Gurdial Singh but one question remains unanswered: did literary articulation of marginalised subjects bring any change in the social order?

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Asian Spirituality in Beat Movement - A Cultural Synthesis

—Ashima Bhardwaj

The Beat movement was a post-war attempt of the American fifties to articulate dissent at every possible front. The Beats spearheaded a spiritual revolution through an East-West cultural synthesis and challenged the state ideology by means of spiritual evolvement. The amalgamation of broader spiritual vistas enhanced the secularism of the American counterculture and its world-wide impact. The bridge they laid across the antipodes is being traversed till date, embodying a 'multicultural spiritual synthesis'. The paper would trace the role of Beat writers and their contribution in challenging the 'climate of consensus through spirituality'. The spiritual shift generated by the Beat writers became the trellis of crusades against totalitarianism. A new religious vision was generated in Post-war America through the efforts of Beat writers. They modulated Asian spirituality in their thought and did more than any other literary group in shifting America's cultural focus.

The term 'Beat' was neologized by Jack Kerouac. He infused the meanings of "beaten down" and 'beatific' with the conviction of attaining 'beatitude' for the marginalized American voices. The Beat rebellion is said to have spurted from the Six Gallery poetry reading in San Francisco, March 1955. This watershed event was adamant to distribute 'free *satori*' and enlightenment to all who reveled in poetry, music, wine, drugs, jazz and in the process created a unique bohemian identity. Some Beats including Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder and Peter Orlovsky became pilgrims to the holy cities in India, Tibet and Japan. They wanted to attain '*Satori*' from trans-national cultural synthesis. They epitomized the 'Beat' threatening the state with its honesty and constant serious efforts to liberate minds. The emergence of Beat literature and alternative spirituality sought by Beat artists and poets provided the foundation stone of the counterculture of 1960's as well.

David Bell exclaims that, "where religions fail, cults appear" (Bell 474). The anti- institutional belief of the Beats gave way to the acceptance of syncretism. In his article *Religion in the Sixties*, Bell claims that among the Beats a creation of private myths could be observed, be it the, "eastern –influenced poetry of Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder, the peppermint-mysticism of Jack Kerouac, and the popular Zen manuals of Alan Watts".

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33. Kumar, Parmod and Renuka Dagar. "Gender in Dalit Identity Construction in Punjab" in *Dalits in Regional Context*. Ed. Harish K. Puri. Jaipur: Rawat Publication, 2004, 286.

Their "esoteric" element transformed into the "exoteric" phenomenon of the sixties. The Beat writers gave signposts of the advent of Counterculture. The present conflation of Indian-American religious revivals in American fifties is a unique "cosmic consciousness" which became a value in itself. The nascence of the need to look towards "East" is an iconoclastic phenomenon in history. The contemporary influence of Indian religiosity and its American partaking has its sources in the bent of some Beat writers towards Asia. They ventured to go beyond the European boundaries and in doing so established Hinduism, Indian Mahayana Buddhism, Native American Paganism and Japanese Zen amidst Christianity. The contemporary fusion of East-West spiritualism has to be analyzed from the beginning of the generation of such an interest. The twentieth century transitions takes us back into history where the first cross cultural vibes were generated through a desire to tame the "heathen" into the folds of Christianity. The American belief was formed on the Eurocentric Papal and Protestant ideology. The Europeans blurred the mythical and real Asia. The "Newfoundland" had to evolve through the butchering of "Pagan Native American culture" and enlighten through the torch of European Christian doctrine. The Quakers in the 17th c. America along with Shakers of the 18th C. had a considerable influence on the conservative religious tradition. Transcendentalists provided a new version of spiritual thought but the 'Tranquilized fifties' had graver problems to deal with. American Dream was at its peak and had become a tool of exploitation in the hands of state. The American Dream was at the core of the Federal State institution. The Beat movement offered a resistance to State through the writings and lifestyle of Beat writers. Among them Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder inculcated Asian spirituality in their writing. The historian Carl T. Jackson describes three stages in the encounter of America with Eastern thought. Hostility was shown in the primary stage towards the pagan world. In the second stage a 'qualified appreciation' develops for the ideas which are similar to Christian virtues and finally there comes the "acceptance and assimilation" of the Eastern concepts. The post-War America was in its third phase with the coming of Beat generation writers. Jackson remarks that the Beats were:

> ...the vanguard in a significant shift in post-World War II American religious consciousness, marked by rejection of institutional religion, a questioning of Christian values, and an affirmation of the possibility of new religious meaning to be found through mystical experience, hallucinogenic drugs and Asian religions (Jackson 2).

In pre-War scenario, the Asian meditation and yoga was limited to a particular class comprising of literati, dilettantes and Hollywood celebrities. But with the advent of Beats, spirituality could be shared by tramps, drug-peddlers, bohemians, pimps and prostitutes. They could participate as 'Dharma Bums', the road figures for whom East had opened doors for an "apprehension of truth by direct experience." The institution of religion has survived primarily as a conflict in the formation of American identity. As Romila Thapar maintains that, "a new language and a new literature can only emerge if they fulfill a need for the society in which they are rooted" (Thapar 22). Beats gave voice to the growing dissent among the marginalized masses. According to Romila Thapar, the absence of Satan in Indian religions sustained the "fundamental sanity of Indian Civilization" (Thapar 15). Indian spiritualism offered a confluence of Native and Being. The Judo-Christian philosophy culminated into the Judgment Day but Hindu-Buddhist stance stressed on nothing absolute. The Beats deliberately flouted the sanctity and sacredness of the religious orders. The rules of catechism were subverted and the effort was to make the vices holy. They indulged into other eastern mystic orders, belief systems and molded them to suit their purpose. Drugs, sex, jazz, ecstasy, drinks, inter- racial relations were all celebrated by these people who survived on the margins. All this was done to refute the prevalent social structures. A constant attack has also been made on the academia in America as it failed to "address the spiritual ravings of the post-sixties period". The Beats embodied the anxiety underneath the veil of order and prosperity. Beat writers had infused drug hallucination, blue jazz tones, sexual experimentalism with Zen, Buddhism and Hindu mantra chanting. American critic Camille Paglia writes that:

> Psychic repressions perhaps produced by Protestant rationalism and intolerance of dissent among the Massachusetts Puritans erupted in the Salem witch-trials (1692) whose lurid imagery of sex and demonism oddly resembles that of modern popular culture. The compulsive cycle of sexual license and puritan backlash remains a deep-seated pattern in American culture (67).

Beat writers' first full-fledged interventions into Asian thought can be seen as a need to incorporate a religious flexibility. In the beginning the Hindu Vedanta philosophy found a strong foothold with the visit of Swami Vivekananda, the disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa to the Parliament of Religious at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago

(in 1893). Transcendental Meditation was a major Asian cult in the sixties and was founded in India as the Spiritual Regeneration Movement by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in 1957. The Maharishi University of Management of Maharishi had a following of five million people and the present celebrated Yoga-Guru Deepak Chopra broke with him in 1993. The upcoming cults took over youth. The *Hare Krishna International Society of Krishna Consciousness* (ISKON) was founded by Swami Prabhupada who organized chanting of mantra at Tompkins Square Park. His society in San Francisco invited a huge hippie following. A "Hindu Boom" (Paglia 71) could be observed with the coming of *The Divine Light Mission* (1971) brought forward by Maharaj ji who was around 13 years old. He conflated Sikh and Hindu philosophy and by 1973 had 38 ashrams in U. S.

The American Hinduism gained ground through Allen Ginsberg's works and lifestyle. He could be seen as a prominent Beat and later a counterculture figure masquerading in saffron robes, thrumming his cymbals. He chanted 'OM' mantras and it was through him that the Hindu Vedanta philosophy flourished among hippies and yippies. Ginsberg had been in a constant search to gain a beatific vision. In 1948, he had a 'Blake' vision in Harlem. He stated that the, "the sky was the living blue hand itself...and '(I) felt a sudden awakening into a totally deeper real universe" (Baker 19). Allen Ginsberg had spearheaded the Six Gallery meeting where his poem 'Howl' acclaimed how he, "(I) saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked" (Baker 19). These best minds were starving for an aperture to rip the armor apart. In 1962, Ginsberg undertook a pilgrimage to India along with his lover Peter Orlovsky. He became friends with young Bengali poets: Shakti Chattopadhyay and Sunil Gangopadhyay. Ginsberg was a friend of Pratibha Patil and Pupul Jayakar. By Sixties, Ginsberg could be seen roaming like Indian *sadhus*. He went deeper into Asian thought as he once wrote that the Indian sojourn elevated him from the "corner I painted myself in with drugs" (Clark).

Though Beat movement transformed into counterculture, Ginsberg remained a prominent figure in Hippie revolution as well. He became a close friend of A.C. Bhakti Vedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of Hare Krishna movement. Ginsberg conflated mantra chanting with hippie music and participated in 'Mantra-Rock Dance.' He also greeted Bhakti Vedanta Swami along with hundred hippies at San Francisco airport and later introduced three thousand hippies to the concert of Hare Krishna Mantra chanting with Bhakti Vedanta Swami. Ginsberg gave a performance

of a 'Krishna song' in William F. Buckleys' T.V. show *Firing line*. He chanted 'OM' sound for hours at stretch at the 1967 *Human Be- In*, in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park and in the Black Panther rally at Yale Campus (1970). He also influenced the Hungraylist poets of Bengal and in particular Malay Roy Chaudhari. In 1971, Ginsberg met Chongyam Trungpa Rinpoche, a Kagyu and Nyingma Tibetan Buddhist meditation master. Ginsberg practiced *Vipasana* and took refuge in Tibetan Buddhism.

Allen Ginsberg's friend Jack Kerouac dealt with a Buddhist – Christian syncretism. Frustrated with the attitude of publishers, Kerouac sought refuge in Buddhism around 1954. He practiced a 'Modified Ascetic life' of strenuous discipline for fifteen years. He aligned with Indian Mahayana Buddhism and traced a link between Zen-Buddhism and his planned twelve-novel sequence '*The Duluoz Legend*'. This alignment was the outcome of the postwar scenario, where America was torn in a conflict between capitalism and Soviet communism. Buddhism offered a third-way to offer solace to the Beats. The Dharma Bhikkus, spread a 'second spirituality' that perceived America and *Dhamma* together. A reverence for mysticism, American coyote-lore, Mayan myths, Transcendentalism and Zen were visible in the quest of the Beats. The bhikkus celebrated life, art, music, nature and sex. They sought liberty from 'mind control' and mundane subservience to the demands of consumerist servility. A "Zen Boom" could also be observed in the fifties, through an interweaving of the Zen mysticism and western technocracy as an antidote to the "Overmachinization of the West". Kerouac's works in this period depicted 'Zen lunatics', who tried to live with the basic necessities in the age of blind consumerism. The Dharma Bum way was to believe that the world is, "a dream, like a bubble, like a shadow, like vanishing dew, like a lightings flash" (*The Dharma Bums* 114). This spirituality brought 'beatitude' to the down-trodden and 'beaten down' masses. He studied the Diamond Sutra, Lao Tzu, Vedas, Confucius and Patanjali Yoga. He called himself "an old time bhikku in modern clothes". For him the simplicity in living, meditation, sex and music became a force that broke the hyperreality of American consumerism, where human being was being reduced to a cog in the State machinery. He explored Buddhist sutras in his works –*Some of the Dharma* and *The Scripture of Golden Eternity*. For instance in one of his reflections, he says, "A hummingbird can come into a house and a hawk will not; so rest and be assured. While looking for the light, you may be devoured by the darkness and find the true light" (qtd. in Charters 583). The message was in the form of *koan*

riddles and haikus which were favorites of the Zen masters. Kerouac wanted to experiment with new genre in scripture writings and go beyond the "Catholic Dualism" between good and evil. His works *On the Road* and *The Dharma Bums* paved the way for the Rucksack Revolution. The Beat saints in his work were the defiant embodiments of anti-consumerism. They refused to be commoditized by the market.

The Beat poet Gary Snyder looked forward to China and Japan for '*Satori*'. He went to Japan and practiced Zen with Roshi Oda Sesso at Rinzai branch of Zen Buddhism. For Snyder Buddhism was not a religion but a meditation. Japhy was the famous alter ego of Gary Snyder in Kerouac's work *The Dharma Bums*. The works by Snyder have been molded by Zen thought. He translated twenty four poems of Han Shan's "Cold Mountain Poems". The poems are further divided into four sections: "Far West", "Far East", "Kali" and "Back". He has written remarkable essays such as "Passage to More Than India", "Buddhism and the Coming Revolution", and "Poetry and Primitive". While in India he visited Swami Sivananda's ashram. In his works he conflates eastern spirituality with Asian and American ethics. He believes that one tradition can contribute to another by incorporating the missing elements rather than imposing itself on another. He once said, "Oh, its all one teaching. There is an ancient teaching, which we have American Indian expressions of, and Chinese, Tibetan, Japanese, Indian, Buddhist expressions of" (qtd. in Jackson 64). The Beats, "proclaimed a program of "spiritual" treason against the "Traditional American Way." This treason was an expression of freedom in the spiritual domain. They announced the death of "spiritual malaise" of Post War America. As Ann Charters, the American Beat Critic says that Beats were:

> The Subterranean heroes who'd finally turned from the "freedom" machine of the West and were taking drugs, digging bop, having flashes of insight, experiencing the derangement of the senses' talking strange, being poor and glad, prophesying a new style for American Culture, a new style, ... a new incantation. (Charters 551)

Beats were successful in creating a battlefront through a literary revolution. They tried to construct 'modern scriptures'. Their message was to transcend the conventional Christianity and redefine spirituality. Their iconoclasm helped in the generation of universal consciousness which was the first step in shattering white supremacy. Though they did not

follow the rigid conventions of any religion yet they bred a 'progressive cultural synthesis'.

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'The Madwoman in the Attic': A Gendered Reading of Bimal Roy's *Bandini*

—Namrata Nistandra

Bandini (1963), Bimal Roy's last directorial output, is a film that excels on many grounds. It is remembered for the understated but powerful performance of Nutan, the charisma of Dharmendra, and the seriousness of Ashok Kumar. The film's theme of moral uprightness and abandonment of individual happiness for a higher cause i.e. freedom of the nation gives it an unparalleled sublimity. The film is memorable because of a number of other features too: the haunting music of S D Burman, lyrics of Gulzar and Shailendra, and the richness of symbols. The film's focus on the predicament of woman in patriarchal society reaffirmed Bimal Roy's greatness as a director. All these aspects have been written on by film critics. My focus in this paper is to explore a neglected element in the plot, an element not given the textual space it deserves i.e. the politics of representation in the film. The sub-plot of the film is a discursive element that threatens to subvert the stability of the main plot and subsume it. It provides a vital clue about the gender relations in society and the manner in which a woman's self is a construct. This paper is based on Sigmund Freud's analysis of hysteria and the theories of prominent feminist thinkers.

Bandini has a flawless structure. The events are woven into a seamless narrative. The film begins in a women's prison where Kalyani (Nutan) is a prisoner. Her simplicity, beauty and selfless generosity set her apart from other inmates. These qualities also make the prison doctor (Dharmendra) fall in love with her. She does not reciprocate his advances because she does not wish to taint his life. Kalyani has an acute sense of guilt as she perceives herself as a fallen woman. Her past is told in the form of flashback and we learn that Kalyani is the daughter of a village postmaster in Bengal during the days of freedom struggle. She is in love with the revolutionary Bikash Ghosh (Ashok Kumar) who fails to keep his promise of marrying Kalyani. She is later informed that he has married somebody else. This sets off a series of trying events in Kalyani's life. Unable to bear her father's disgrace in the village, she leaves for city where her friend helps her find work as maid in a hospital. She loses her father in an accident and discovers that the woman patient she is taking care of is Bikash's wife. An insane rage causes her to murder the woman

but she is ready to face the consequences of her crime and atone for her guilt. The end of the film finds Kalyani experiencing a difficult moral choice. She has to choose between the doctor and her revolutionary lover who is now terminally ill and whose marriage was a part of the strategy against the British rule. The film ends with Kalyani going back to the freedom fighter Bikash.

The film has a highly evocative title. It connotes that imprisonment in its myriad forms is the ultimate destiny of a woman. Sometimes the bars of a prison are visible and sometimes not. The prison inmates, the married woman in the haunting lyric 'ab ke baras bhej bhaiya ko babul', the hysteria patient in the hospital are women smothered because of different institutions. A character in the film describes women's foray into domesticity as a never ending imprisonment. As Michel Foucault informs us, the institutions of society like the prison, the hospital (one could add here the institution of marriage) have power over us and regulate our behaviour. Power operates by creating a stifling apparatus of social surveillance. Foucault uses the metaphor of the Panopticon, a type of prison designed by Jeremy Bentham, the eighteenth century philosopher, to explain the power of different institutions over us. In this prison, the inmates could be observed from a central point of observation without the observer becoming visible. For Foucault, the major effect of the Panopticon is:

> to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they themselves are the bearers. (quoted in Bertens 150)

In the film, the prison and the hospital are repressive structures that create the binary oppositions sane/mad, harmless/dangerous and normal/abnormal. There are very few scenes that show women as free and happy. The prison inmates long to be free like a bird flying in spring but the bars of prison offer them only a partial view of the season. Imprisonment

seems to be the norm rather than an exception. The theme of captivity at the personal level merges into the struggle for independence. The whole film resonates with the ideal of national freedom pursued by male protagonists whereas the female protagonists passively accept their lot. Thus, the text blends nationalistic and patriarchal discourses together and reinforces the stereotype constructed by dominant nationalistic discourse.

The film is not a unified whole, but conceals a hole or an aporia that reveals its ideological underpinnings. It is the unsaid that carries more weight than the said. The gaps and alterities point to the manner in which the subaltern is created. The privileging of one character at the expense of another is not a neutral activity but indicative of the author's (director's) power over their characters. As Terry Eagleton points out:

> It is in the significant *silences* of a text, in its gaps and absences that the presence of ideology can be most positively felt. It is these silences which the critic must make 'speak'. The text is, as it were, ideologically forbidden to say certain things; in trying to tell the truth in his [sic] own way, for example, the author finds himself forced to reveal the limits of the ideology within which he writes. He is forced to reveal its gaps and silences, what it is unable to articulate. Because a text contains these gaps and silences, it is always *incomplete.* Far from constituting a rounded, coherent whole, it displays a conflict and contradiction of meanings; and the significance of the work lies in the difference rather than unity between these meanings...The work for Machery is always 'de-centred'; there is no central essence to it, just a continuous conflict and disparity of meanings. (34-35)

The film generates contradictory meanings when the main plot and the sub plot are revealed in juxtaposition. We are given an insight into the workings of Kalyani's mind and the motives behind her actions, but Bikash's wife is denied this privilege. She never gets the textual space to tell her own story, probe the workings of her mind and analyse her actions. The film delves into the manner women are denied a chance to carve their identity. Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that a woman is not born but made is a telling statement of the manner in which gender politics works in society. Writing within an existentialist framework, Beauvoir shows how the male is the norm and the female a deviation. Existentialism "denies

the existence of a pre-ordained 'human nature', and emphasizes the freedom and responsibility of each person to create him or herself as a self-governing individual" (Tolan 321). Borrowing Hegel's idea of identity formation in terms of 'self' and 'other', De Beauvoir argues that man is always perceived as the subject, the self and woman as the object, the other. A woman's self is a hollow, a negation, a lack. The lack of self is apparent in the portrayal of women as ciphers in literature and culture. They are the embodiments of male desires or fears but not autonomous individuals. Women's subjectivity is usually denied and repressed by patriarchal discourse. Our subjectivity is not something innate but a construct shaped by factors beyond our control. Similar to the idea of identity, subjectivity "implies always a degree of thought and self-consciousness about identity, at the same time allowing a myriad of limitations and often unknowable, unavoidable constraints on our ability to fully comprehend identity" (Hall 3). The subject is a site where things happen and not a centre that makes things happen. Woman is conventionally seen as passive and dependent on man. As Brownmiller points out, "the feminine principle is composed of vulnerability, the need for protection, the formalities of compliance and the avoidance of conflict- in short, an appeal of dependence" (16). In *Bandini,* Kalyani is often associated with a delicate plant or flower that can be plucked by any insensitive passerby. Her life is shaped by the decisions taken by patriarchal society.

In *Bandini*, the theme of disunity among women runs like an undercurrent. Women are depicted as harming the interests of other women. The suffocated environment of the jail makes the women inmates experience rancour for other women. Whereas the male prisoners have glorified ideas of patriotism, women have nothing to comfort themselves with. The psychoanalytic feminist theories explain how women come to identify with patriarchal interests. These theories are based on Sigmund Freud's theory of psycho-sexual development. The basic premise of these theories is that I is always a gendered term. Girls and boys go through different modes of identity formation. The process is relatively easy for boys as the construction of masculine identity involves the boy's identification with the authority of the father. The identity formation is more complex for girls because they suffer from castration anxiety and to overcome this anxiety, shift their allegiance from the mother to the father. As Deborah L Madsen points out, the girl never loses her pre-Oedipal identification with the mother: "This places the girl in a position of

ambivalence where she belongs completely to neither the mother nor the father but still she seeks to belong to the powerful masculine culture" (95). Madsen further adds that the Oedipus Complex produces 'the male-identified woman' who betrays her residual allegiance to her mother in order to promote and serve the interests of the father (ibid.) In Lacanian revision of Freudian concept of identity formation, the Symbolic phase represents the Law of the father whereas the Imaginary phase represents the realm of the mother. Julia Kristeva argues that the subject's strong links with the pre-oedipal mother figure result in some sort of mental illness:

> The subject whose language lets such forces disrupt the symbolic order, is also the subject who runs the greater risk of lapsing into madness for the symbolic order is a patriarchal order, ruled by the Law of the Father, and any subject who tries to disrupt it, who lets unconscious forces slip through the symbolic repression, puts her or himself in a position of 'revolt' against the regime. (Moi 12)

In the film, the normal (sane) women serve the male interests by nurturing a hatred for their own kind. The woman jailor is harsher and stricter than her male counterparts; ruthless in exercising her authority. The women in her village ridicule Kalyani because of Bikash's failure to keep his word. The film constructs the dichotomy between the angel woman and the monster woman. In this respect, it is no different than other texts written by men. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their path breaking work *The Madwoman in the Attic* show that the images of women as "angel" and "monster" are ubiquitous in texts written by men. The angel woman embodies the "eternal feminine virtues of modesty, gracefulness, purity, delicacy, civility, compliancy, reticence, chastity, affability, politeness" (23). An angel woman is purely selfless. The monster woman, on the contrary, is a woman who refuses to contain herself in the male text. She wishes autonomy and is a threat to the existing order. A monster woman is a freak, an oddity, a repulsive and dangerous creature. For Gilbert and Gubar, these women "incarnate male dread of women" (29). Kalyani in *Bandini* is a typical angel woman. She self-effacingly serves others: it might be taking care of a seriously ill prison inmate or tending a woman suffering from hysteria. She offers herself where nobody else is willing to help. At home, she takes care of her old father and ailing Bikash. All her life and choices are governed by self-denial. She refuses the special diet offered in the hospital; thus conforming to the pale and frail image of the

angel woman. A woman who starves herself willingly finds acceptance in the patriarchal society. Kalyani always sacrifices her own happiness for the dictates of conscience. She epitomises patience, a sense of duty and a strict adherence to moral principles. She suffers because of Bikash's decision to marry another woman but she internalizes her pain and never feels any anger or hatred for the man.

Bikash's wife is a monster woman as she rages against her confinement in the hospital and the indifference of her husband. She is a rebel who cannot contain her anger. The monster woman is not only a foil to the angel woman but her double. She embodies the rage and anxiety that is repressed in the angel woman. In a brief but significant scene in the film, Kalyani looks into the mirror and is shocked to find a reflection of Bikash's wife there. The annihilation of the monster woman amounts to the silencing of rebellion against patriarchy. The film adheres to the patriarchal discourse by allocating power to the male and powerlessness to the female. The text punishes the transgressive woman and thus strengthens the patriarchal code. Transgressive women "are incomprehensible," as women "only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility" (Butler 22). As Lennon points out, society punishes the deviant woman by alienating and isolating her: "Alienation is a key ingredient to keeping...women performing according to a plan. It's the backup system just in case the initial instructions on being female don't sink in" (qtd in Findlen 125).

Bikash's wife upsets the social codes of feminine behaviour by deviating from the norm in her appearance and language. Her demeanour is not what is conventionally defined as 'feminine'. She has a dishevelled appearance, coarse language and unpleasant manners. Being a patient of hysteria, she is considered a dangerous woman. We are not told whether she was ill before her marriage, but a sham marriage is certainly one of the precipitating factors of her illness. Hysteria, a disease particularly associated with women, was thought to arise because of disturbance in the female reproductive system. Sigmund Freud's analysis of many female patients established that hysteria was a response to some traumatic event which had got repressed in the patient's mind. It is now understood that hysteria is an outcome of patriarchal socialization. The repression of healthy drives inevitably leads to mental and physical illness: "To be trained in renunciation is almost necessarily to be trained in ill health,

since the human animal's first and strongest urge is to his/her *own* survival, pleasure, assertion" (Gilbert and Gubar 54). Bikash's wife's hysteria is an attempt at the self's rebellion against patriarchy. As she is a threat, she needs to be obliterated from the text. An interesting parallel is seen in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* where the mad wife kills herself to pave way for the happy union of protagonists.

The term 'hysteria' does not have precise connotations. The adjective hysterical often signifies awkward, difficult and childish attention seeking behaviour. Freud distinguishes between two types of hysteria: anxiety hysteria and conversion hysteria. W H Trethowan points out that in anxiety hysteria, anxiety remains free-floating though the situations engendering this remain repressed. In conversion hysteria, functional changes take place in the body that are a distorted expression of the repressed material: "In essence the process consists of the subject ridding himself [sic] of his anxiety by *repression,* that is, shutting it out of conscious awareness; bolstering this repression by *dissociation,* that is separating that part of the mind containing the repressed material off from the main stream of conscious awareness; and finally converting this repressed, dissociated anxiety into some apparently physical symptom" (253). It is now accepted that severe traumatic experiences in adults could evoke hysterical symptoms even when they never had personality disorders earlier. Hysteria is often a disguised need for an intense need for approval and affection. "Hysteria may be regarded as a protective mechanism to safeguard the person from stresses and strains of life and anxiety which are difficult to tolerate" (Rees 213).

The work of Freud and Breuer was instrumental in challenging the idea that hysteria was an outcome of physical degeneration. For them, hysteria was a kind of traumatic neurosis where memory played a significant role. In their essay 'On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena', they wrote:

> the operative cause of the illness is not the trifling physical injury but the affect of fright- the physical trauma. In an analogous manner, our investigations reveal, for many, if not for most, hysterical symptoms, precipitating causes which can only be described as psychical traumas. Any experience which calls up distressing affects- such as those of fright, anxiety, shame or physical pain- may operate as a trauma of this kind. (56)

Freud considers the primary role of repression in hysteria. The traumatic experience is so severe that it cannot be assimilated by the normal mental processes of the person. The memory of the trauma acts like a foreign body that remains active long after the actual experience is over. Freud and Breuer conclude that "Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences" (58). In the film, we see that the freedom fighter Bikash marries a girl to use her as a means to aid his struggle against the British and to divulge secrets from her. The ruthlessness of this action is never questioned as individual happiness counts little in the country's freedom struggle. The trauma and painful memories she suffers from never receive the focus they deserve.

Since films are a popular cultural medium; their narrativization of femininity becomes significant. In patriarchal society, only two roles are created for women: conformity and transgression. Both these roles are equally confining and fail to do justice to the complexity of human nature. The culturally sanctioned idea of femininity is an ideology that women tend to internalise without questioning. In this way, they become willing participants in their own subjugation. For all its excellence, *Bandini* presents a flawed portrayal of women. It constructs a myth of femininity in defying plurality and diversity of women's experiences and choices.

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Popular Indian English Fiction: A Cultural Critique

—Rajpal

Popular culture is also portrayed as 'mass culture'. The very act of defining popular culture as 'mass' culture stems from capitalist politics of domination over the proletariat. Therefore it becomes the duty of a politically aware reader to look at the politics of language. Through the use of such terms (i.e. 'mass culture' and 'culture of dissident') capitalists attempt to legitimatize their culture as the culture of common man. Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel term "flattery of mediocrity" (60). Some critics go with the capitalist ideological flow as they romanticize the idea that popular culture is a democratized form of culture. But Alan Swingwood reveals politics in his book *The Myth of Mass Culture* wherein he reads popular cutlture as a phenomenon of late capitalism. He makes an overt marxist statement: "There is no mass culture, or mass society; but there is an ideology of 'mass' culture and mass society" (119). Alan Swingwood's belief that there is no mass culture can easily be justified through the example of the most popular Indian game (i.e. Cricket). In contemporary India, cricket is the most popular game. It has been called *des ki dhadkan*. But the moment we look at the whole economic structure of the game then it becomes the *dhadkan* of a chosen sector of society including players, the owners of broadcasting channels and members of BCCI. The rise of I.P.L. (Indian Premier League) is largely inspired from the heavy benefits involved in the game.

It is very difficult to pin down the fixed and singular point of origin of popular culture in India or anywhere in the world. Such a difficulty is embedded in the transient nature of popular culture. The predominant practices in a popular culture at a point of time go into oblivion with the passage of time. For example, the bell-bottom style of trousers is completely out-dated today but it used to be a dominant mode of popular fashion in 1970s and 1980s. The objective behind tracing out the rise of popular culture in Indian is to gauge the influence of Western lifestyle on the native culture and sensitize the readers towards the ongoing politics of cultural imperialism and globalization. It aims at finding how and to what extent Western lifestyle has penetrated the cultural stream of India. For this crucial cultural inquiry we need to ground our analysis on the foundation of ideology of social change in India since Independence.

At the time of Independence there seems to operate two major ideologies of social change – one is led by Nehru, and another is led by Gandhi. Nehru believes that the path of modernization goes through industrialization. On the contrary Gandhi believes that the path of modernization goes through villages. The Nehruvian ideology gains currency over Gandhian. This results in erosion or negation of native culture. In the pre-industrial era, India has been dominated by the feudal mode of production, and the culture has been more or less folk. The folk cultural tradition has primarily been oral. With the advent of industry oral culture is replaced by print culture. Most of the changes are either brought about by British Raj directly or they are triggered by it. Some of such major changes which contribute to the rise and expansion of popular Indian culture can be enumerated as follows –(1) Industrialization marks the decline of feudal system completely. Therefore peasants are transformed into factory workers. As a result the folk culture, which has been organically associated with the peasants, is bound to undergo now. (2) There is the rise of entertainment industry in the form of Parsi Theatre, Gymkhana Cricket, Hindi Cinema and *Aakashvani* (Radio).

The entire history of cricket in India and the sub-continent as a whole is based on the existence and development of the British Raj via the East India Company. The first official cricket match was played between Parsis and Europeans in 1877 A.D. Now Cricket has become an integral part of popular Indian culture. Ashok Malik discusses the contribution made by cricket in Indian pop culture in an article. Commenting critically on the rapturous reviews and sizzling ticket sales, Malik raises a question: could *Lagan* have been made the location of anti-colonial protest without reference to cricket? The film is clearly anachronistic and ahistorical. In the early 20th century, the period in which it is set, cricket is decidedly an upper crust pastime in India. It was largely played by westernized Parsis. If sport had a role in the early stirrings of Indian nationalism, it was in the form of football. For example one may quote Mohun Bagan's victory against an English army team in the IFA Shield final in 1911. The 1911 IFA Shield final has been immortalized recently in a Bengali film called *Egaro* (The Eleven). But ironically *Egaro* does not climb the heights of *Lagaan*. The makers' choice of cricket for the plot of the movie serves the need of current market forces. Contemporary India is a one-sport society and the chances of a cricket-centric film succeeding are exponentially higher than that of a football film. This truism points to why the overwhelming majority of sports-based films in India have featured cricket. For examples there is

a plethora of movies based on cricket such as: *Iqbal* (2005), *Stumped* (2003), *Awwal Number, Patiala House* and so on and so forth. Apart from the beginning of cricket, there are so many cultural changes which take place during the *Raj*. On the basis of this observation one may say that popular culture in India emerges out of the collapse of "Sanskritization"[1] (Srinivas 1) into "Westernization" (Srinivas 1). In his book *Social Change in Modern India* M.N. Srinivas defines Westernization as referring "to changes introduced into Indian society during British rule and which continue, in some cases with added momentum, in independent India" (1).

The word 'popular' has a long and contested history. This is reflected through the fact that the word has been connoted differently over the last three hundred years (McCracken 19). The term 'popular' has always been contested because on the one hand it signifies the authentic voice of the people and on the other their ignorance, vulgarity and susceptibility to manipulation (Shiach 27). This conflict reflects not just two different versions of the same thing, but the fact that in the mass societies of modernity, to be is also to be powerful and that power is fought for by political and economic interest groups (Williams *The Politics of Modernism* 109). Popular fiction, like other forms of popular culture, is subject to that contest. Some critics regard popular fiction as a product of democratization of fiction. On the other hand some other critics consider it as cheap literature. For example see the following To-Do List from a popular novel entitle *Just Like in the Movies* by Rahul Saini:

- Clean the room
- Unpack the bag
- Separate the washed clothes from the dirty ones
- Buy fruits (find out what apples cost these days. ask mom)
- Join gym (by all means)
- Hire a maid to cook and clean
- Save up for ipod (4).

On reading this extract from Rahul Saini's novel *Just Like in the Movies*, one would criticize the writer severely for lacking depth in his writing. But if one looks at it objectively then this is the only reality we are left with. The modern day youth is, in 'reality', left with such an ordinary To-Do list. Therefore, we have become accustomed to abide by trivialities of life. This way the writer is not deconstructing the protocols of writing. For the

critics of the first camp such kind of extract bespeaks a lot about the empty and ordinary postmodern life. They would go all out to praise popular writers for being realistic in their writings. The critics who follow this line of argument adhere to the "mirror theory" (16) of mass media. They believe that mass media is the reflector not the effecter of popular tastes. In this connection Klapper maintains that mass media are more likely to reflect and reinforce attitudes and opinions rather than to change them (Klapper 16). Commercial fiction is more susceptible to audience desires and is under pressure to reflect audience tastes in order to carry on a profitable operation. Popular fiction falls squarely in this class of mass media. Consequently, fiction in popular text is very likely to reflect sex-specific and class-specific stereotypes that prevail in their 'reader community' (Gecas 681).

On the other hand, are critics believe in the "model theory" (Laswell 80) of mass media. These critics consider mass media as effecter of people's behaviour. Laswell states that one of the functions of mass media is that of socialization through the presentation of models. DeFleur also cautions against the "hypodermic"[2] (39) view of mass media's effect on audiences. The chief function of these models is the transmission of values and attitudes. Reflecting on the shaping influence of media, Rimmy, one of the characters in Rahul Saini's novel *Just Like in the Movies*, very appropriately remarks:

> I can turn him around. Yes! I can use the power of media for that. I will make him watch some movies. Some nice, mushy, romantic comedies. That will influence him. After all he belongs to the same generation as I, one that is extremely influenced by the media. Our lives are governed by the media (52).

Popular fiction is a misnomer. The real pulps have been fiction magazines (such as *Argosy-Black Mask*, *Weird Tales*) printed on mechanical wood pulp. But over the time, pulp has become shorthand for mass-produced fiction that is formulaic rather than literary. Contemporary popular Indian English fiction is the product of a huge entertainment industry. Because of its entertaining nature it is considered that popular narratives pose no philosophical questions. Promising light, stuff the popular writers design the blurbs of their novels with the content that at once strikes the readers. To illustrate this characteristic of popular Indian English fiction it would be beneficial to undertake the discourse analysis of some of the blurbs of

popular Indian English novels:

(Blurb of Shariq Iqbal's novel *To Whom It May Concern*)

Say hello to our three 20-something friends,

AMIT

-'All said and done, we must not destroy our environment.'
-'Yes, I am frustrated with my job (Urban Planning)'
- 'My girlfriend is more beautiful and gorgeous then anyone else's.'
- 'And I think I still need to figure out what I want to do in life.'

Would I ever get any kind of satisfaction in life?

RISHIKA

- 'It's true what my friends say – I am a strong and confident woman of today.'
- 'Like many of you out there, I also want to write a novel.'
- 'I have a boyfriend, and we are going very strong.'

How would my parents react when I would tell them about my boyfriends?
Would I ever get published?

RIMA (call me RIMZ)

- 'I don't really care much about things as long as I am having fun.'
- 'I handle major star studded events. (Can you beat that?)'
- 'I have only one dream and would do anything to achieve it – to become a pop star.'
- My only problem – my guy!

Would my love life ever improve? Would I ever become the queen of hearts?

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'This heady high of drugs and love will have a hangover effect on you!'
-The Statesman

'Fast, strong and satirical in the face... Here's a read with perfect blend of drugs, love, campus life and humor, which will definitely concern any young heart'
- Today

'...a series of ups and downs and a zany love affair!'
- The Piczo Bukzone

"If I can't get her in my bed... I still can get her in my dreams... Sorry wet dreams!"

An 'just another' young college goer ... sex, smoke and [illegible] eyes... his world it is.

But there's something that's not 'just another'. Incomplete emotions, restlessness [illegible] .. something within his head that even he can't decipher.

That dark stinky basement and the haunting silence around those walls alters his future forever...

What happens when a once marijuana addict recluse falls in an uncontrollable, beautiful love!

And the woman... she loves him too.

Based on true incidents, 'TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN' is a wild murky and witty account of a lost soul combating lethal addictions like love, lust and much more.

Will he grapple out alive?

To find Love? Luck? Or just 'my bad'?

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Thus these questions mentioned here may be raised by any aspirant youth. The first question, mentioned on the blurb of Shariq Iqbal's *To Whom May It Concern*, gives a hint of the novel being a mysterious one. Along with this question the writer also mentions: "Based on true incidents, *TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:* is a wild murky and witty account of a lost soul combating lethal addictions like love, lust and much more." Here the writer calls it a novel 'based on true incidents'. This assertion of the writer enhances the interest of the readers in it. The description of 'lost soul combating lethal addiction like love, lust and much more' makes it an adventurous novel in which the hero struggles against love and lust. The use of the phrase 'much more' is used to keep the interest of the readers captivated in it at the same time the phrase promises a huge variety of themes discussed in the novel. It is very interesting to note that Rahul Saini introduces his characters on the blurb. It gives him an extra edge over other writers as he gets an opportunity to mention the questions linked with the concerns and aspirations of both male and female sex. This way he is able to attract the attention of female readers as well. These narratives are simple morality tales — struggle between good and evil. These tales narrate the stories of unconquerable love. Readers know that the mystery will be solved. Therefore, readers do not have to strain their brain. To entertain the reader is the primary purpose of popular Indian English fiction. To consolidate the same, one may club Rahul Saini's above quoted statement with the writer of *Sumthing of a Mocktale*, Soma Das's following assertion which she makes in her 'Letter to My Reader', "...and before you embark on this journey to Fun Island, you are requested to take off your thinking caps and reasoning hats"(1).

Such assertions make one decipher that popular writers tend to cater to the demands of fun. The main reason behind providing the elements of fun is that the readers of popular fiction read such a literature not as much for enhancing their knowledge; they read it more for alleviating their burdened everyday life. A writer cannot ignore his/her reader where marketplace is "reader-driven" (no pagination). While catering so much to the needs and desires of the reader a writer is bound to be emotional. Therefore, popular fiction is considered as the fiction of emotion of raw sentimentality and visceral feelings. Its primary function is to evoke feelings. On the contrary literary fiction is primarily the fiction of ideas. It primarily aims at evoking the thought. This follows that on the basis of some parameters such as the difference in the size of the novel, theme/s of the novel, character types, language, reading contexts etc. there exists a sharp polarity between popular fiction and regular form of fiction; popular

fiction is defined in binary relation to canonical fiction as a kind of fiction that engages its readers in an ephemeral manner.

Commenting on the collective rise of popular culture and popular fiction Alan Swingwood states:

> In George Gissing's novel *New Grub Street* (1891), two representatives of the new word of mass publishing are cynically discussing the profitable living and potential fortune which await them if they transform the semi-popular paper Chat into Chit Chat and the serious Tatler into Tittle-Tattle (1).

Here one can focus on the following phrase and words: (1) 'new word of mass publishing', (2) 'profitable' and most importantly (3) 'transform'. The first phrase is important in the sense that popular culture is marked by mass publishing. The very word 'mass publishing' designates the expansion of publishing that is a mode of production. The expansion of publishing is decreasing the gap between 'reader' and 'author'. Therefore writing has become what Walter Benjamin terms the "common property" possessed by all. Second word 'profitable' in relation to the first phrase conveys the meaning that either the expansion of publishing gives birth to the idea of profit or the birth of publishing, as a mode of production, is a result of the thrust of profit. Whatever may be the case, here it becomes very explicit that popular culture has the main purpose of profit or profitability. Frankfurt School[3] critic Theodor Adorno too stresses on the fact: "... in popular culture things have the sole purpose of being sold" (100).

Third important word here is 'transform'. The usage of the word connotes that popular culture starts with the transformation of 'semi-popular' and 'serious' into popular and 'non-serious'. The rise and nature of popular Indian English fiction is very identical with the rise and nature of British popular fiction. In the context of popular Indian English fiction the transformation of serious into non-serious can be attributed to the fact that the community of readers of popular Indian English fiction comprises of college goers and young employers belonging to 20-30 age group. The writers of this sub-genre are also from the same age group. Both the producer and the receiver lack "sustained attention" (Swingwood 1). The young readers' community is under the influence of 'T-20' hangover. Therefore it is beyond their capacity to read a novel of three hundred to four hundred pages. The readers of this sort want something

to occupy them in trains, buses, and during their frustrating bouts. They want the lightest of the stuff that is spicy 'masala'—and has a bits of love affair, bits of fashion and so on and so forth. The reason behind the demand of 'masala' stuff is a result of the loss of sustained attention. As Alan Swingwood states, "....everything must be very short, two inches at the utmost; their attention can't sustain itself beyond two inches. Even chat is too solid for them: they want chit-chat" (Swingwood 1).

Those who ascribe depth and purposeful function to fiction declare the death of the novel. But the rise of popular fiction in India complicates the issue. The light subject matter in an ordinary language (i.e.; chief trait of popular Indian English fiction to a great extent) should not be marked as the death of the novel but it should be treated as a new form of novel. If one looks at the historical development of fiction, one finds that novel has never been static in its nature and function. The functions and the nature of fiction have been different with different writers in different times. For example, 'stream of consciousness' technique has been a favorite mode of writing for modern fiction writers and 'magic realism' for postcolonial writers. In post-Independent India, novelists write under the colonial hangover and they write excessively on the theme of Partition. As a result we have a plethora of Partition fiction by the leading Indian novelists such as: Khuswant Singh (*Train to Pakistan*), Amrita Pritam (*Pinjar)*, Paromita Vohra (*Khamosh Pani*).

This follows that with changing times we have different types of literatures. Popular Indian English fiction is also a part of this dynamic literary tradition. As a result it is bound to be different from earlier forms of Indian English fiction. Therefore, instead of condemning it at the very outset, we should pay heed to its whole cultural psychodynamics so that we may trace the "major shifts in the structures of thoughts" (Boulton 4) of postmodern self. This approach may help us to use popular Indian English fiction as a rich source of popular Indian culture. It bespeaks a lot about contemporary Indian culture. The popular Indian English writers do not aim Arnoldian 'high seriousness' neither are they crazy to create a current of fresh ideas through their writings. This fiction is the outcome of the empty times and economic oriented approach of popular writers. Most importantly, popular Indian English fiction is becoming a runaway success because of its approval by the readers who lack "sustained attention" (Swingwood 1). Thus popular writers are not to be deprecated alone for producing depthless fiction. The contemporary culture and the readers are equally responsible for it.

Some critics consider the rise of popular English fiction as a step towards the democratization of fiction. They become staunch advocates of popular fiction as they believe that popular fiction bails out novel from the clutches of elite class in the case of both the readers and the writers. They are correct too in their belief as the most of the popular writers in contemporary India are part-time writers. They are not writers by profession. The validity in stance can be best justified on the basis of fact that most of the popular writers are campus students. The same is about the readership of popular fiction. The readers of this type of fiction are university or college goers who do not have anything to do with the serious questions of proletarians. Of course both the writers and readers are from 'proletarian' sector of society but only on the basis of this fact the rise of popular Indian English fiction cannot be called a step towards the democratization of fiction. Earlier popular fiction has been considered as a conspiracy of ruling-class. But in present Indian context it may be called a conspiracy of marketing forces. Thus popular writers do not democratize fiction as they are de-radicalized in their colouring. They use fiction as a source of earnings. They do not aim to address the serious issues of the day. This follows that fiction that is labelled as the fiction of proletariat has nothing to do with the proletarians. The term mass fiction is deliberately used to camouflage the reality. Such terms inspire the aspirant writers to pen down their personal and cultural experiences into juicy love tales for the purpose of providing 'secret pleasure' to its readers. It is only a source of income for the publishers and young writers. It is a source of entertainment for the proletariats. The use of sublime terms such as 'mass fiction' or 'proletariat fiction' for an entertaining literature is not justified at all. It implies that popular Indian English fiction is a marketed product devoid of proletariat hopes and concerns. Therefore it does not have any claim to be labeled as 'mass fiction' or 'proletariat fiction'.

The resurgence of popular fiction in India brings 'fiction' as a genre back into reckoning. The advent of popular fiction in India has revitalized the readership in India completely. It has turned non readers into neo-readers. Although we do not have fiction that serves to reflect the struggles of common man, yet we have a fiction that has gained popularity. The popularity of this form of fiction, even it has been gained by providing 'masala' stuff; may be utilized if the writers who have gained public approval through their spicy tales attempt to correct the taste of their readers. Taking the advantage of their popularity they may take their readers from entertainment to serious issues of the day.

END NOTES

1. It is a particular form of social change found in India. It denotes the process by which castes placed lower in the caste hierarchy seek upward mobility by emulating the rituals and practices of upper or dominant castes. .

2. It is also known as the 'hypodermic-syringe model, transmission-belt model, or magic bullet theory. It is a model of communication. It suggests that an intended message is directly received and wholly accepted by receiver. The "Hypodermic Bullet" theory assumes that the media's message is a bullet fired from the 'media gun' into the viewer's head

3. It refers to a school of neo-marxist inter-disciplinary social theory, particularly associated with the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. Initially the school consists of descendent Marxists who believe that traditional Marxist theory cannot adequately explain the turbulent and unexpected development of capitalist society in 20th century. This school of Marxist aesthetics rejects realism altogether. The school consists of Theordor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Earnest Bloch, Herbert Marcuse and Jurgen Harermas.

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Re-Structuring the Experience of the Parsi Community in Postcolonial India:

A Study of *Such a Long Journey* by Rohinton Mistry

—Ranjeet Kaur

In the words of Ngugi wa Thiong'O, "literature cannot escape from the class power structures that shape our everyday life" and a writer's works "reflect one or more aspects of the intense economic, political, cultural and ideological struggles in a society" (quoted in Pathak 119). In this paper, I have focused on the experiences of the Parsi community in the postcolonial India with reference to their past history and their reactions to the changed political scenario of the nation in the novel *Such a Long Journey* by Rohinton Mistry. The writers of the minority communities have reflected the ethnic anxieties of their communities and their search for an identity in the face of a hostile race and an alien culture. The writings of the Parsi novelists are marked by their community's contemporary struggle between their glorious past during the British Empire and the feelings of their ambivalent position in post-Independent India. They have projected the preferences, problems, eccentricities and psychological vulnerabilities of their minority community. According to the international encyclopedia of the social sciences, "Minority is the separate group of the individuals who are different in respect of their race, nationality, religion and language from the other groups inhabitating the same society and the both of the groups having mutual negative feeling for each other consider themselves distinct from the other" (Hussain 20).

The Parsis are an ethno-religious minority of India who immigrated to India to save their religion from the Arabain conquest of Persia in the 7th century A.D. They have contributed significantly in the various fields in the history of India. However, they see their future in India fraught with perplexity, uncertainty and doubt. The question of their identity crisis fundamentally lies in the fact of their marginal position in the Indian society and their social mobilization during British rule in India. Kulke explains the "marginal man concept", formulated by Robert E. Park, that when two or more cultures meet one another, marginal situations appear. He further defines marginality, in accordance with the reference group theory, "...as a situation which arises out of discrepancies

between the own membership group and an external reference group" and "The core of the marginal situation for the individual is non-membership of his reference group" (244). The Parsis' marginality finds its expression in their peripheral position, as a religious minority, in the Hindu Indian society before the arrival of the British. They lived a secluded life and occupied a place of an outsider, where their contribution was felt neither in the economy nor the politics of the state. To survive as a minority and to adapt in their new socio-cultural environment, they had to internalize few patterns of the dominant Hindu culture like language and clothing, which were imposed on them as a condition of their settlement in India.

The Parsis' isolated peripheral position changed with the advent of British in India. Their community achieved a dominant position in the Indian society with their close commercial and intellectual contacts with the English. This close cultural association with the European exposed them to the European influences. Kulke's quote from a journal *The Paris* gives us an insight into the Parsis' aspiration to mimic the Europeans, "The closer union of the Europeans and Parsees is the finest thing that can happen to our race. It means the lifting up of a people who are lying low, though possessing all of the qualities of a European race... the complete Europeanization of the Parsees is now a mere matter of time"(138). Dina Mehta has delineated this fondness of the Parsis for English mannerism and Western civilization in her novel *And Some Take a Lover.* The heroine of the novel, Roshni, is aware of the affect of extensive anglicization of the community which has resulted in their estrangement from their own tradition and other communities in India and has intensified their identity crisis:

> The Parsee way of life was the most Westernized in India. More than the Anglo-Indians they could afford the tastes, the standards, the luxuries introduced by the alien rulers. She spoke English better than her adopted mother-tongue, Guajarati. She even thought in English.... She read no Guajarati books or papers. She did not know Persian, the language of her ancestors.... She did not know a word of Avesta, in which her prayers were written. She knew more about Christanity than of her own relgion.... She was more familiar with the Bible than with the Gathas, with the Acts of Apostles than with the life of Zarathushtra. (188)

The Parsis as cultural elites shaped their and their children's ideals and sensibilities upon the canon of English colonial culture that led to the formation of a collective elite consciousness within the community. The Parsis, through their remarkable economic, political, and cultural achievements identified themselves with the manly, rational and progressive colonizer, who exhibited civilized masculinity. T. M. Luharmann comments upon the cultural collusions and political relations between the Parsis, the colonial elite, and the colonizers:

> Colonial elite modeled themselves upon the colonizers,... saw the British as the agent of change, which accepted a masculinized ethos of aggressive but gentlemanly competition, and which took the existence of British domination as proof of the masculine superiority that elite Indians should emulate. (9)

They appropriated the colonialist construct of India as effeminate, irrational and backward and dissociated themselves from the backward native communities. With the rise of Indian nationalism, conflict between the Parsi minority and the Hindu majority appeared for the first time. The predominant Hindu ideological basis of the national movement gave the Indians possibilities to participate in the Indian political system and decision-making process and limited the participation and contribution of the Parsis in nation building as they had hardly any access to the Hindu culture. The increasing radicalism of the national movement under the influence of neo-Hindu renaissance disturbed the Parsis and they rejected the endeavors of the national movement as it threatened their elite status and the exclusiveness of the community. Their political orientation and attitude towards the Indian national movement stemmed out of their unwillingness of complete integration into Indian society, on the one hand, and their fear of survival as a minority after the restoration of brahmnical autocracy in Hindu India, on the other hand. This antagonized attitude and resistance of the Parsis towards the national movement is reflected in Bapsi Sidwa's novel *The Crow Eaters*. Freddie, a Parsi, defies the Quit India Movement and distrusts anybody who supports this movement against the British. The "talk of rebellion, self-rule, and Independence from the British" disturbs him and he is disturbed more by the role of a few Parsis like Dadabhai Naoroji in the protest against the English who, he thinks, are only "making monkey of themselves" (282). He wants his children to be loyal to the English. His apprehensions arise from his fear of the future of the Parsis who would

not be benefitted from such agitations and would be discarded in an independent India.

The identity crisis of the Parsis can be interpreted as a loyalty conflict as they felt their gratitude for the British rule that facilitated the social rise of their community. After the Independence of India, the Parsis who defined themselves through the western cultural values of the colonizers find themselves in a changed political order where they have to reconstruct and reorient their complex sensibilities. Their dilemma emerges from their Anglophilic dreams, their destruction, and their struggle to reconnect to their Indian reality. Nilufer Bharucha comments upon the condition of the Parsis, "This ambivalence and alienation became exacerbated during the colonial period.... Most Parsis... felt bereft at the end of Empire and the resultant loss of the special elite status they had enjoyed during the colonial period" (Pathal 135). The Parsis developed distrust towards the politics of the Congress Party, which they consider is responsible for throwing British out of India and their resultant marginal status in post-independent India. Kulke records the critical attitude of the Parsis towards the Congress politics that comes to forefront in book *The Indian Politeia* by M. D. Darookhanavala, published in 1949. This book criticizes the politics of India in general and the Congress movement in particular. It criticizes Mahatma Gandhi as a "vulgar demagogue and lawbreaker", whose political activities, motivated by hatred, had brought India to the brink of chaos while the Englishman, as the "Saviour of India", the "second Zoroaster in the history of Parsism, had brought India the best form of government that it had ever had" (264).

The Parsi novelists have also reflected in their novels this attitude of distrust towards the Congress politics that owes to their proximity with the British men and manners. In Dina Mehta's *And Some Take a Lover*, for Roshni's mother, Gandhi is merely "that scoundrel and vagrant the arch-traitor, the unmentionable, except with abuse" (38). Roshni's cousin Framroze disdains Gandhi's policy of fasting as "political blackmail." Even Roshni begins to regard Gandhi a despot, after her failure to marry her lover Sudhir, who was a follower of Ghandhi and left her to serve Gandhi. She wonders, "What manner of man was this Gandhi who would command such terrible obedience from his people? A despot, a tyrant more implacable than any feudal lord who ever reigned over the serf" (200). Though she has never met Gandhi but was "aghast when she thought of the strange, awesome power he wielded over other people's live" (219).

Rohinton Mistry has also given voice to the feelings of malaise of his community after the displacement of their elite position in the decolonized India. His novel *Such a Long Journey* portrays the apprehensions of the minority community towards the politics of Congress, which has left an indelible scar in the history of the Parsis community by throwing the British out of India. In the novel, the Parsi characters criticize the Congress Party as a group of "crooks" (68) and refer to it as "rogues gallery" (325). They think that the policies of the Congress are directed towards the promotion of communalism, which has endangered the secular nature of democracy and the existence of the minorities. The Congress politicians become the object of their verbal assault. They feel indignant for ungenerous treatment of Feroze Gandhi, a member of their community, at the hands of Nehru and Indira Gandhi. They held Nehru responsible for the "humiliating defeat" of India at the hands of China in 1962. They run down him for his political intrigues, his ill temper and his "monomaniacal fixation" with his "darling daughter Indira" (11) to make her Prime Minister of India after him. Mrs. Indira Gandhi has been severely criticized for her corruption and treachery to the Parsi community by entrapping Major Bilimoria to extract sixty lakh rupees from the State Bank of India for her personal ends. The story of the novel is based on the conspiracy case of Nagarwala of 1971 in which Sohrab Nagarwala, the chief cashier of the State Bank of India was entrapped by Mrs. Indira Gandhi and accused of impersonating her voice. He was arrested and killed in a hospital. This disgrace of Nagarwala was an insult to the Parsi community and gave a jolt to strong ethical tradition of the community. The fictionalized story of Major Bilimoria is a direct reaction against this disgrace of the Parsi community at the hands of Indira Gandhi and exposed her corrupted ways to gain political gains. Mrs. Indira Gandhi particularly has been seen as an inimical to the economic interests of the Parsis.

The economic interests and the activities of the Parsis community hold a key to the understanding of their position in the Indian community. They played a significant and crucial role in the economic development of Bombay. Most of the Parsis migrated to Bombay from Gujrat when the British were developing Bombay as a centre for trade. The Parsis' huge profits in commission business marked their influential role in the financial business like banking, insurance, money landing etc. With the advent of industrialization in Bombay, the wealthy Parsis also established their cotton mills in India. The Paris Cowasjee Nanabhai founded the first cotton mill

in 1854. Their enormous fortune in the cotton industry stimulated the formation of a modern Indian entrepreneurial class. The most important factors, which were responsible for the origin of the Parsis as the first entrepreneurial class in India at the time of British, were stable government, external security from war and invasion and internal security from strife and revolution in the colonial political system. The lack of religious taboos and dynamic economic ethics also played an important role in the economic growth of the Parsis. Among the Parsis, the profession of banking and entrepreneurship hold the top rank in social prestige and they played leading part in all the important bank foundations of Bombay. Since the colonial days, the Parsis have held the economic policies of the Congress detrimental to their economic interests. During the National Movement, the introduction of the law on the prohibition of alcohol, based on Gandhian ideals, by the Congress deprived the Parsis of their means of earnings, as alcohol remained the major trade of the Parsis. The heavy taxes on textile productions and real estate, majorly Parsi occupations, further endangered the life interests of the community. The Parsis considered these policies of the Congress as a deliberate attack to crush the Parsi community.

In postcolonial India, the nationalization of the banks by Indira Gandhi in 1969 destroyed the hegemony of the Parsis over banking system. Dinshawji in the novel feels nostalgic about the golden days of the Parsis and remember their contribution in the banking system, "What days those were, yaar, What fun we used to have'.... Parsis were the kings of banking in those days. Such respect we used to get. Now the whole atmosphere only has been spoiled. Ever since that Indira nationalized the banks" (38). He holds Indira Gandhi responsible for the rise of fundamentalist forces in the country. He blames her for "supporting the racists bugger" by encouraging the fundamentalists' "demands for a separate Maharashtra" (39) that has deepened the insecurity and dilemma of the Parsis. Bombay being the major centre for the Parsis has a special place in their lives as they settled and flourished here during the British Raj. The emergence of communal activities after the independence has threatened their existence in Bombay as the fundamentalists consider Marathas and Marathi language as superior and the Parsis feel themselves reduced to marginal position of second-class citizens who can be eliminated any time. Being a minority, they feel themselves at the receiving-end of the vote bank policies of the government whereas majority plays a central role in power politics. Dinshawji reveals his anxiety at the government supported racism

in the country, he refers to Indira Gandhi, "How much bloodshed, how much rioting she caused. And today we have that bloody Shiv Sena, wanting to make the rest of us into second-class citizens" (39).

The characters express their anguish at the changed patterns of communal relationships in the society with the rise of fanaticism, which has terrified the minorities. The westernized life-style and eating habits of the Parsi community, which come into clash with the traditional Hindu culture has also triggered hatred among the Hindus. Gustad feels hesitant to carry raw meat in bus as the staring eyes and the venom that vegetarian Hindus spit from their eyes make him anxious, "Throughout the trip he felt anxious and guilty— felt that in his basket was something deadlier than a bomb. For was he not carrying the potential source of Hindu-Muslim riots? Riots which often started due to offences of the flesh, usually of porcine or bovine origins?" (21) He abandoned to go to Crawford Market to buy beef due to his fear of riots and bloodshed over cow-slaughter. He expresses his fear, "...better to be safe than sorry where fanatics were concerned. Like all riots, it had stated with a peaceful rally. A vast congregation of sadhus wielding staffs, tridents, and various other equally sanctified religious instruments, staged a demonstration outside Parliament House to protest against cow slaughter" (21). The scattered remarks in the novel thrown at the minority by the majority repeatedly refer to the tense relationship between both groups. The racist forces threaten the Parsis by calling them "Parsi crow-eaters", we'll show you who is the boss" (39). Dinshawji blames the Shiv Sena for this "who worship Hitler and Mussolini". The aim of their communal activities is "Maharashtra for Maharashtrians"... and "they won't stop till they have complete Maratha Raj" (73). He further predicts, "Wait till the Marathas take over, then we will have real Gandoo Raj" (73).

Being a small minority group in the Hindu dominating culture, they have to cope up with the hegemonic forces. With their low status, they are more conscious of their "otherness" and their threatened future. Gustad concludes, "No future for minorities, with all these fascist Shiv Sena politics and Marathi language nonsense. It was going to be like the black people in America— twice as good as the white man to get half as much" (55). Dinshaw feels very disturbed at the change of names of the places. For him it symbolizes the loss of social identity and personal

history. He expresses his grief:

> Why change names?... Names are so important. I grow up on Lamington Road. But it has disappeared, in its place s Dadasaheb Bhadkhamkar Marg. My school was on Cornac Road. Now suddenly it's on Lokmanya Tilak Marg. I live at Sleater Road. Soon that will also disappear. My whole life I have come to work at Flora Fountain. And one fine day the name changes. So what happens to the life I have lived? Was I living the wrong life, with all the wrong names? Will I get a second chance to live it all again, with these new names? Tell me what happens to my life. Rubbed out, just like that? Tell me! (74)

The displacement of old names indicates the displacement of the colonial history that carries the glorious past of the Parsi community. For Nila Shah to have life by other name would mean an acquiescence to 'cultural alienation', 'otherness' and 'marginalisation'. What Dinshawji laments, she quotes David William, "in the loss of the old name is precisely the loss of the old logocentric security, that metaphysical reassurance via language... ultimately, he experiences the re-writing of the map of his neighbourhood as an interruption in his self-presence" (108). Mistry has delineated the struggle of the Parsi community against the displacement of their identity through the experiences of the characters who find themselves at the margins of the society. Gustad Nobel's sufferings and struggle to fulfill his aspirations and dreams symbolizes the struggle of the whole Parsi community against its alienation in the post-independent political scenario. Gustad's memory of the past glory of his grandfather and the golden days shared by his community in the colonial India recalls his community's passage through time and history and captures the fading glory of the community in general and of Nobel family in particular.

His conversation with his friend Malcom Saldana recounts the journey of the Parsis and their ancient roots. He rejects any kind of attempt by his friend to establish the historical superiority of Christanity that came to India over nineteen hundred year ago, when Apostle Thomas landed on the Malabar Coast long before the Parsis came to India in the 7th century to escape their religion from the Muslim. Gustad retorts, "but our prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your Son of God was even born; a thousand years before the Budha; two hundred years before Moses. And do you know how much Zoroastrianism

influenced Judaism, Christanity, and Islam?" (24) He stresses the strong faith of the Parsis in their religion where they cling to their ethnic roots to "resist the call of other faiths" (24). The adherence to their cultural tradition and religion is their tool to assert their ethnic identity among the other dominant religious groups. The reformer's proposal to introduce the practice of cremation in the Parsi religion is never welcomed. It would always result in flared up tempers between the orthodox and reformists. This debate brings into question the long preserved practice of the community placed amidst the dominant Hindu culture. For the Parsis their traditional values are the saviour of their community and they feel, "if tradition is lost, then the loss of respect for those who respected and loved tradition always followed" (61). The preservation of their tradition is of the prime importance for them.

Apart from the history, the novel portrays the peculiar traits of the Parsi community. The Khodadad building and the boundary wall that protects the residents from the outsiders, symbolizes the insularity of the community that has restricted their participation in the outer world. Their extensive anglicization has kept them aloof from the other communities of India since colonial period. The blackout papers on the windows of the flat indicate the darkness and troubled life of the Parsis that restricts the "ingress of all forms of light, earthly and celestial" (11). Gustad's refusal to remove the black papers from windows is an obvious metaphor of repression and shutting out the outside world that has threatened the existence of their minority community. The outside wall of the building that was used as a public lavatory earlier emerges as "a perfect example for our secular country" (214) after it is changed into a sacred place by the pavement artist by painting it with the pictures of various gods and goddesses from different religions. The artist interprets his work as an act "to promote tolerance and understanding in the world" (182). When Gustad saw the artist painting the pictures of "Trimurthi" from the Hindu religion, he expresses his preference for the portrait of Zarathustra to inaugurate the wall but then he thinks, "...this triad would have a far-reaching influence in dissuading the urinators and defecators" (183). This thought indicates his awareness of the 'otherness' and the marginal position of his minority community in a land dominated by the Hindu religion. However, the wall with painting from all religion reinforces the idea of secularism and harmonious existence for all the communities. The artist cheerfully calls it "the wall of Hindus and Muslim, Sikh and Christian, Paris and Buddhist! A holly wall, a wall suitable for worship and devotion,

whatever your faith!" (326) The demolition of the wall by the municipality symbolizes the political attack on the secularity of India, which has given rise to the communal forces and the resultant anxiety, and insecurity of the people from minority.

The title of the novel has been taken from T. S. Eliot's "The Journey of the Maggi" which signifies not only the spiritual quest but also, according to Anita Myles, "is symbolic of the re-orientation which is absolutely essential to attain higher and nobler values in life"(168). The journey of Gustad Nobel through the hardship of life symbolizes the journey of his community, from glorious past to the humiliating present where their aspirations and dreams are crumbling down in the post-colonial peripheral existence. Like Gustad his community has borne this suffering for too long with patience. He agitates at the present suffering and sorrow, which equally voice the attitude of the whole community, "what have we been all these years if not patient? Is this how it will end? Sorrow, nothing bur sorrow" (52). At the end, he emerges as a wise man who has endured the entire struggle with the strength of his spirit. The removal of black paper from the window and the entering of the sunrays symbolize the opening of his heart to life and acceptance of people. The novel gives an insight into the Paris community's sensibilities, their dilemmas and their search for identity. Avadhesh Kumar Singh commenting on the portrayal of the Parsi community in the works of Rohinton Mistry says that his "works exhibit consciousness of... community in such a way that the community emerges as a protagonist... though on the surface these works deal with their human protagonists" (119).

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Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session:* A Re [writing] of History of Women

—Shalini Attri

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1878) represents a woman bidding adieu to aesthetic fantasies, and positioning herself to become much more than a wife and a mother. Harold Pinter's play *The Homecoming* (1965) exhibits a subversive female protagonist whose actions change the lives of the men in the home she takes over. Italian playwright Dacia Maraini's postmodern play *I Sogni di Clytemnestra(1979)* exemplifies the writer's attempt to rewrite and transform the misogyny of plays like *Oresteia,* giving Clytemnestra a loud and clear feminist protest, putting greater premium on women being able to "come home" to their authority and power. Illustrating whole passages unswervingly from Aeschylus, Maraini reassesses the supremacy of patriarchy that *Oresteia* records. All these texts examine the ways in which patriarchal ascendancy is first questioned and then subverted, thereby articulating how and in what kind of circumstances the female power could possibly come to life. Vijay Tendulkar, the 'pioneer playwright' (Wadikar), has attempted something similar in his conception of Leela Benare in *Silence! The Court is in Session.* Often regarded as an extremely controversial play, *Silence* marks a complete break with the traditional notions of how a woman is either understood or represented in the Indian society. Benare, pointing finger at virtually every male in the play, not only communicates Tendulkar's support for the suffering womanhood in Indian society, but also marks a complete reversal from its conventional, stereotypical representation(s).

Through this paper, my attempt is to trace and explore various methods Tendulkar has adopted, in this play *Silence! The Court is in Session,* for re-writing the politicized historical representation of women in India. Tendulkar had been a witness to various reform movements in Maharashtra, aimed at strengthening and consolidating the underprivileged status of women. Inspired by them, he has challenged the traditional notions that often give legitimacy to the 'order' established by men. In the act of making his woman protagonist more articulate and assertive in describing her injustice, even exploitation at the hands of men, judiciary and even fellow women, Tendulkar not only externalizes the stark and bare realities of the condition of women, but also 'the silenced history of women'. By using an extremely potent theatrical metaphor of a

mock-trial, Tendulkar has triggered off a process of unmasking the multiple layers of patriarchy, hidden behind the façade of religion, politics, law, society and history.

Rewriting of history is a continuous process where an ideological frame or a new analytical insight is deployed by the historians. Although this frame or analytical insight or the methodology may fundamentally differ, yet a certain common ground is always shared that constitutes the craft of the historian. Whenever there is reconstruction of the past, this insight or methodology is strictly adhered to. It is another matter that departure from these norms often removes the distinction between myth and history. Despite the undeniable connection between history and myth, there is an important distinction between the two. Myths are essentially illusionary representations, thereby tending to be marked by reality. Still reality is embedded in every myth in some form or the other. Although myths are not verifiable like historical facts, they represent the reality symbolically and metaphorically. These symbols and metaphors pass from one generation to another, and thus become an integral part of the collective memory of a particular society and culture. To that extent, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* are integral to the lives of the Indian people. The images of women present in these myths become the prescriptive norms or ideals for the contemporary Indian women..

These representations, often meant to delimit the status of women, are controlled by men. In his *Nineteen Eighty Four,* George Orwell brings forward the significance of this control saying, 'who controls the past controls the future: Who controls the present controls the past'. (309) In a patriarchal society, men control the present as well as future, thereby writing and rewriting past according to their own dogmas. In *Mythologies,* Barthes defines myth as a mode of communication, a form of mythical signification and 'a type of speech'.(109) In his preface, he opines that it is a message of naturalized ideology channeled through collective representations like 'the newspaper, art and common sense' and also through meta-language. It shares the nature of spectacle, which is highly-encoded. Mythology is a science of reading that involves ideological critique that has a bearing on language of mass culture and semiological analysis of the mechanics of this language (9-11).

The position of women in contemporary Indian society is largely the result of their position and status inscribed in these myths. During the times of *The Mahabharata,* the ideal of a woman's loyalty to her

husband was markedly different from the one that was sanctified by the successive generations. It was customary then to acquire a son through contact with another man, especially in situations where the husband was either dead or physically incapable of producing an heir. This was called '*niyoga*', a method often considered superior to adoption. In the days of *Mahabharata,* a woman was considered a 'passive field' and all that she had to do was to produce children on demand. This compulsion to produce sons disappeared later, once adoption had become popular. Along with it, the attitude of men towards any lapse on part of a woman also became harsher, even less tolerant.

It is pertinent to mention that the position of women, as reflected in the Indian scriptures, Hindu folklore and tradition provide a realistic representation of women of those times. In *Manusmriti,* Manu mentions the laws that governed the women in society:

> *Pita rakshati kaumarai, bharta rakshati yauwanai,*
> *Rakshanti sthaviray putra, karyakshetre cha swaminah.* (as qtd Rama Jois 33)

The traditional status of a typical Indian woman is depicted in the above couplet, where a father protects her until her marriage; husband does so after marriage, a son in her old age; thus different men dominating her work-field at different times. In fact, she does not have an independent, status or position, as she is always dependent upon men for her identity, status or value. Similarly, Tulsidas in *Sunderkand* of *Ramacharitmanas* undermines the value of woman and treats her with contempt. A woman is compared to a drum that produces sound, only if it is beaten. She is also equated to an illiterate, obstinate and a mean person: *dhola, gavara, sudra, pasu, nari, sakala tarana ke adhikari.* (802) Similarly, *Satapatha Brahamana* compares women with *shudras,* dogs and crows and declares them to be the personifications of untruth and impurity. (as qtd Jhingran 91) The *Aitareya Brahamana* gives the story of Harishchandra's desire for a son instead of a daughter and justifies it by saying: "The father who looks upon the face of his son, born living to him, discharges his debt in him...the son is to him a rescuing boat...in him you have the blameless world of heaven. The daughter is a sorrow, while the son is light in the highest regions of heaven to his father" (as qtd Jhingran 92). With the invasion of Aryans, the concept of *beeja-kshetra* overruled India, established patriarchy and destroyed matriarchal organizations. In *Manusmriti,* Manu evolved a general code of conduct for society.

According to him, women are naturally lustful and ever ready to seduce men. They are frivolous, heartless and full of untruth. (as qtd Jhingran 94) Manu further relates "women with bed, seat, ornament, impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice and bad conduct" (Buhler 330).

Hindu women come from diverse cultural, linguistic, geographical and social backgrounds and their roles have been varied in history, literary tradition and society. The mythological, sociological, and philosophical perspective on women is responsible for their cultural construction, and its perpetuation. The Aryan pastoralists, who came to India from the North West around 1500 BC, were a part of Indo-European tradition. In *Hinduism,* Kim Knott states, "the focus on the uplift(ment) of women was one aspect of the trend by Orientalists and Hindu reformers to reclaim the Aryan past. The argument related to position and upgradation of women progressively became associated with Hindu nationalist cause and repeated by the Arya Samaj and later campaigners. It met with its critics, however, who doubted the historical accuracy of the claim to an Aryan golden age, and dismissed the divisiveness of favoring the Aryans above all other religious groups". (74) The Vedic pantheon was dominated by male deities, whereas pre-Aryan and post-Vedic periods were dominated by feminine images of divine. There came a change in the roles and image of women with a passage of time. This change certainly brings forward an argument, relating it to 'masculine politics'.

It is this politics that Vijay Tendulkar's deals with when he chooses to represent Leela Benare in an altogether different light, totally opposed to the position women have occupied in myth, tradition and history. It is the result of various challenges and protests taking place in India during 19th and 20th century. At that time, India was a British colony, and was also experiencing a social, political and cultural transformation. In this phase, liberal reformers concentrated on issues of women such as removal of *sati*, reasonable age of marriage, rehabilitation of widows and their right to remarry, property rights, right to education etc. Various articulate intelligentsias became the pioneers of all progressive democratic movements with emancipation of Indian women on their agenda. Raja RamMohan Roy, the founder of *Brahmo Samaj* (1828) advocated equality between the two sexes and declared that women were in no way inferior to men morally and intellectually. Supporting female education, inter-caste marriages, widow remarriage, right of inheritance and property in 1822, he published a pamphlet on 'Brief remarks on Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Women' (as qtd Suguna 25).

Dealing with the similar issues, Eshwar Chandra Vidyasagar often referred to a sloka in *Parasara Smriti* and advocated widow remarriage: a woman can remarry if her husband's whereabouts are not known or if he is dead or if he becomes a *sanyasi* or a depraved person. (as qtd Suguna 97) Arya Samaj (1875) established by Dayanand Saraswati emphasized compulsory education for boys and girls. There appeared reformers in Maharashtrian society like Mahatma Phule who questioned the injustice of Brahmin superiority and worked for women education. Ranade and Bhandarkar, the pioneers of *Prarthana Samaj* (1867) sponsored uplift of women, widow remarriage, raising the age of marriage and spread of education. Dr Ambedkar strongly believed in the 'liberation of women' and attacked the ideological foundation of 'notion of enslavement'. Supporting women's equality, Mahatma Gandhi believed that their role is complimentary to that of men, and also believed that equal rights for men and women were necessary to create a just and equitable social order. His call to women to join the national movement served as a catalyst for their wider participation in public affairs. According to him "only an inner revolution can intensify women's right against injustice" (as qtd in Chandrababu and Thilagavathi 291).

A product of these historical contingencies, Vijay Tendulkar advocated the cause of women, by giving a feminist representation to some of his plays. He admits: "It was my brother who brought the fiery spirit of nationalism into our house ....My mother told me stories of Mahatma Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak" (Choudhary and Rajan 18). *Silence* is not the only play in which Vijay Tendulkar has introduced a strong woman protagonist in Leela; in *Kamala,* too, he encourages the protagonist to step out of the narrow confines of her domestic space. In *Sakharam Binder,* we encounter assertive, vocal woman, on the one hand, and a strong, irrepressible moral force, on the other. In *Kanyadan*, the central character deals with her circumstances quite decisively. In *Encounter in Umbugland*, the protagonist is a 'new woman' who turns the tables and begins to dictate terms to helpless men, whereas in *A Friend's Story*, Tendulkar removes the masculine gender from the scene in his attempt to project complete authority of women over their situation. Such representations from Tendulkar, a Marathi iconoclast, actually create conditions in his plays where re-writing of the history of women becomes a reality in an otherwise conservative, orthodox patriarchal set-up.

The history of literature, right from the ancient epics to the modern times, illustrates that all literary creations are inherently ideological

and, in that sense, social and political, too. None can deny the affiliations of *Ramayana, Mahabharata, Illiad, Odyssey* and *Paradise Lost* with the politics of their times. In a sense, once we look at the origin of drama, tracing it back to Kalidas's *Abhigyana Shakuntalam,* we become aware of the concept of female exploitation, where a husband has no qualms about forgetting all about his wife. The gradual relocation of religion (an important component of culture) as the sustaining principle of life and society made some writers admit to politics as one of the constituents of literary writings. As the nationalistic stirrings gained momentum in India, literature, too, changed its direction away from romances, history, sociology and culture to politics, thus revealing a new kind of awareness and relationship of the individual with his specific surroundings. During the 1930s, the inevitable impact of the Gandhian Movement on Indian English literature did lead to the blossoming of realistic novels and plays.

The representation of women in Indian literature was one of the major concerns during the 19th and 20th centuries. By the start of 20th century, 'woman question' was raised by writers and critics, whose situation was governed by three components. One component was the portrayal of women within domestic space. The women were viewed within domesticity and marital framework that conditioned and governed their behaviour, attitudes, emotions and relationships with the members of a given family and the world outside. Second component was the emergence of forces challenging the tradition, generated by different organizations and movements for and by women themselves. The third component was the construction of 'new image' of Indian woman, necessitated by the spread of education, impact of Western knowledge and socio-political movements (Das 323). The representation of women challenging and protesting the existing structures of family and patriarchal ideology became an important feature of the 20th century literature (Das 324).

Joining hands with Indian women, some male feminists raised their voice by projecting women issues in literature. Rabindranath Tagore's play *Citrangada* (1892) questioned the polarity of the male and the female worlds, the public and the domestic spaces. Sarat Chandra's *Narir Mulya* (1922), a challenging prose work, is considered to be one of the stimulating feminist works of 20th century, initiating the argument with a scathing note 'value of women is not much because she is not scarce.' (Das 340) Vibhavari Shirurkar's *Kalyance Nisvas* (1933), a collection of short stories caused mayhem in Maharashtra for potent and blunt exposé of suffering women. 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of the 'women question' in

Indian Theatre, particularly with the performance of street play *Aurat* (1979) by *Jan Natya Manch* of Safdar Hashmi. Another Marathi woman to astonish masculine world was Geeta Sane who, like Sarat Chandra, did an exposition on *Bharatiya Stri Jivan* (1985), building a case for Indian women. Ismat Chugtai wrote *Lihaf* – is a story on homosexuality – and registers a revolt against the feudal morals and forbidden ethics preserved and sanctified by the Muslim society.

With the production of *Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe (Silence! The Court is in Session)* in 1967 originally in Marathi (later translated into English by Priya Adarkar), Vijay Tendulkar (1923-2008) emerged as a rebel against the established order of a fundamentally orthodox society. This is why the play became a subject of massive controversy. In this play, the heroine Leela Benare is not an acquiescent woman who is at the receiving end of scathing male gaze or assault, but an aggressive transgressor of the sexual mores of her community. As a rebel, she challenges her executors/persecutors and also militates against the levers of patriarchy operating in the play largely in absentia (Bandopadhaya in Introduction CPT xliv). Leela Benare is a school teacher, who is cross-examined in the court with absolute mockery. As the trial gets underway, all the witnesses and authorities become inimical towards her over for being 'an unmarried single mother' and her audacity in entering into illicit relations with several men. The charges against Leela Benare are levelled by the men who represent the 'collective mindscape' of the society to which she belongs. Leela struggles very hard to break free of this enslavement to 'collective prejudice', as she firmly believes that the truth and reality are experienced only when the difference between the mask and the face is finally exposed.

The play explores real life incidents of a group of amateur players, who meet for a rehearsal of a play, a la Pirandello, but end up initiating a mock-trial, deftly handled and steered by Tendulkar. It focuses on the human mind and detects the ugliness latent in it. The play is divided into three acts. The title signifies the power of coercive, imposed silence of Leela Benare, the protagonist, which descends on her during her mock trial. She is charged with crime of infanticide in the mock trial. She is a young middle-class woman of 34 years, who is working as a school teacher to earn her livelihood. She is punctual, loved and appreciated by her students in school. One of her declarations to co-actor draws the applause from the feminists: "I never had been behind with my lesson! Exercises corrected on time too, not a bit of room for disapproval, I don't give an inch of it to anyone!" (CPT 57). In her article *Tendulkar on his Own*

Terms, Shanta Gokhale remarks that 'Leela Benare is young, single, unconventional, full of laughter, full of pride in her dedication to and skill in teaching, and always happy to attack hypocritical facades and watch them crumble. In her view, men aren't superior beings by definition. They must prove themselves before they can begin to command her respect (Chaudhary and Rajan 81). She admits to Samant, a local villager, who escorts the amateur dramatic troupe members to the village hall, that little children are much better than the adults. She says: "They don't have the blind pride of thinking they know everything. There is no nonsense stuffed in their heads. They scratch you till you bleed, then run away like cowards" (CPT 57). Grown-ups in her scheme of things lack the spirit of living with utmost dedication to life itself. Later, she condemns Damle, the man responsible for her pregnancy and also deceiving her, by saying:

> I offered up my body on the altar of my worship. And my intellectual god took the offering and went his way He didn't want my mind, or my devotion- he didn't care about them! He was not a god. He was a man, for him everything was the body, for the body? That is all (CPT 118).

Benare enjoys the company of Samant, too, who accompanies her. Tendulkar has created an outspoken woman in her person. She admits to him that: "I felt even more wonderful coming here with you. I am so glad the others fell behind" (CPT 55). She has her own philosophy of life and loves her independent ways. Tendulkar has made her enjoy life to the fullest. She is critical of hypocrisy in everyone's attitude. Benare is a very serious and confident woman, who hates hypocrisy and falsehood, loves life to the hilt and is passionate about living each moment intensely. In one of her conversations with Samant, she says:

> Benare: I am the soul of seriousness! But I don't see why one should go around all the time with the long face... we should laugh, we should play, we should sing! If we can and if they will let us, we should dance too. Shouldn't have any false modesty or dignity? Or care for anyone! I mean it. When your life is over, do you think anyone will give you a bit of theirs? What do you say, Samant? Do you think they will?
>
> Samant: You are quite right. The great sage Tukaram said... at least I think it was him...

> Benare: Forget about the sage Tukaram. I say it-I, Leela Benare, a living woman, I say it from my own experience. Life is not meant for anyone else. It's your own life. It must be. It is a very, very important thing. Every moment, every bit of it is precious... (CPT 61).

A total foil to Leela Benare is Mrs. Kashikar, another female character who colludes with the patriarchal system, supposedly due to lack of economic power. Shanta Gokhale observes that "to retain a shred of self-esteem, the least she must do is to glorify her own state" making her "testimony against Benare such a bitter diatribe." (Chaudhary and Rajan 83) Benare was smart, educated and good looking and was unmarried, all of which Mrs. Kashikar found objectionable and contemptible. How she has surreptitiously internalized the process of patriarchal dominion is what is revealed to us when she says this about Benare:

> Anyone who really wants to can get married in a flash... when you get everything without marrying....they just want comfort. They could not care about responsibilities. In my time even if a girl was snub nosed, sallow hunchbacked or anything whatever, she could still got married. It's the sly new fashion of women earning that makes everything go wrong. That's how promiscuity has spread through our society... look how loudly she laughs, how she sings, dances, cracks jokes...and wandering alone with how many men, day in and day out (CPT 99-100).

That a woman's economic dependence deprives her of any political control is one of the major feminist arguments. Mrs. Kashikar couldn't have ever disclosed that she is at the receiving end of Mr. Kashikar's continuous tirade of abuse and snubs. This is what makes her into a potential victim of a habitual victimizer, who asserts his rights of being a man and a husband over her. Confirming this internalization by a married Indian woman, John Stuart Mill states, 'No slave is a slave to the same lengths, and in so full a sense of the word', 'as a wife is' (Ruthven 29).

Leela Benare doesn't spare these criticizing men and even Mrs. Kashikar, and responds to them in the same tone. She introduces all her co-stars to Samant in their absence. She sarcastically refers to Mr. Kashikar as 'Mr. Prime Objective', Mrs. Kashikar as 'Mrs. Hands that Rocks the Cradle' and that the 'Hands that Rocks the cradle has no cradle to rock'(CPT 59). They adopted Balu to get away from boredom and made a

slave out of him. She sarcastically introduces Sukhatme, one of her co-stars as: 'An expert on the law. He's such an authority on the subject; even a desperate client won't go anywhere near him! He just sits alone in the barristers' room at a court, swatting flies with legal precedents! (CPT 59). According to Ms. Benare, Ponkshe is 'Scientist, Inter failed' (CPT 59). She gets critical of even Prof. Damle: "And we have an intellectual too. That means someone who prides himself on his books, learning. But when there is a real life problem, away he runs, hides his head. He's not here today. Won't be coming, either? He won't dare" (CPT 60).

The actual play was scheduled to be staged in the night. The other characters who want to have a rehearsal of the play, a pretext for the mock trial, eventually find an opportunity to dig up Leela's past life. Sukhatme, one of the characters suggests the theater artists to make Ms. Benare the main accused in the mock trial, wherein she has to perform the role of a woman indicted of infanticide. Benare carries a child in her womb, and is condescendingly reminded of this fact by her co-actors. She is incessantly reminded by Kashikar of the traditions and the role she is expected to play in the society: "You've forgotten one thing. There is a Sanskrit proverb, 'janani janmabhumishcha svargadapi gariyasi". "Mother and the Motherland, both are even higher than heaven" (CPT 79). In her *Stri Purusha Tulna,* dealing with a full-fledged feminist argument, Tarabai Shinde ridicules all the men who used the *shastras*, *Puranas* and *pothis* to justify the superiority of women represented in mythologies (as qtd Feldhaus 205). The traditional role and images of women as ideals have been projected by males, making her state more pathetic. Tendulkar, on the contrary, challenges such notions by adding a touch of irony and sarcasm, especially when Leela Benare remarks: "Order, order! This is all straight out of a school composition book" (CPT 80).

Patriarchy, rule of the father, allows room not only for physical dominance, but also for psychological and emotional advantage of the male so that all possible avenues of female resistance are shut off. This is analogous to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), which talks about invisibility of black people, denial of equal opportunities, and apartheid. Tendulkar raises his voice against this *apartheid* against women. The relationship of Leela Benare with Prof. Damle is seen by other men only from one perspective, as all of them blame her and teach her the Gospel of morality and/or values. But the real question is: What about Prof. Damle or other male members who all secretly wish to possess Leela Benare, even lust for her? It is with a view to expose the duplicity and hypocrisy

of men in general that Tendulkar's has sought to re-inscribe the image of Leela Benare, a New Age Woman, in his play.

Men dominate speech everywhere, and they decide the rules for a woman's articulation, too. It is the male taste that decides the agreeability and propriety of her utterances. The linguistic wherewithal with which he can possibly subjugate her is also in his control and complete possession. It is he who leads the fields of political power, administration, public relations and media, with all the parameters of judgment under his belt. Through the repression of the *other*, the male characters not only wish to reclaim their hegemonic position in Indian society, (in the process, acting as guardians and representatives of colonialism/imperialism), but they also get established as pawns and victims of the ordained patriarchal system. In course of the mock trial, Sukhatme (the lawyer) says, "Mr. Ponkshe, how would you define the moral conduct" (CPT 81). A male asks another male for the relevance and reasonable conduct of a woman in the society. Males in this play are domineering and ridicule their female counterpart with harsh comments. The Judge, Mr. Kashikar, orders Ms. Benare to abort her child. According to him, to have the child without marriage is against the tradition of Indian culture. The judgment passed against Ms. Benare seems to be absurd. Mr. Kashikar says:

> The crimes you have committed are the most terrible. The morality which you have shown in forgiveness for them...through your conduct was the morality you were planning to impart to the youth of tomorrow. It must be said that the school officials have done a work of merit in deciding to remove you from the job...There is no forgiveness... No memento of your sin should remain for the future generation. Therefore the court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the child in your womb shall be destroyed... (CPT 67-68).

The other characters including Rokde and even Prof. Damle, in absentia, stand against Benare; witness to her several privations, which according to them are the result of her misdemeanor and transgression. On one such occasion, Sukhatme, the performing lawyer, poses very personal questions, which Benare has to answer in presence of the court: "Can you tell the court how you came to stay unmarried to such a mature - such an advanced – age?..Let me frame my question somewhat differently. How many chances of marriage have you had so far in your life? And how did you miss them? Tell the court" (CPT 98).

Leela Benare does not respond to the questions posed to her. Rather she prefers to maintain silence. In fact, it would be apt to say, she is forced into silence. Analyzing the silencing of women, Robin Lakoff argues that it is directly related to allocation of power. Silencing is always political (As qtd Kira Hall 250). Being a dignified teacher, Benare fights and protests up to a point, but after that, her protest is of no use. What use is her raising the voice, when a woman is not ever going to heard? Whether it is *Mahabharata* or *Silence! The Court is in Session;* women's voice is not heard. She is silenced, either by male gaze as mentioned by Laura Mulvey or her body is used as an instrument for controlling her language. Draupadi, the heroine of *The Mahabharata* was fiercely vocal and with her powerful articulation could silence the wise and the aged. When she was pawned in the game of dice/power, she lost her fierceness in face of immutable silence of the attendants; as all her desperate pleas for help had fallen on deaf ears.

While analyzing Tendulkar's creativity in his portrayal of women characters, Veena Noble Dass confirms the importance of the absence of Prof. Damle in this play, especially when the charges of infanticide are being leveled against her. She states: "If he were present, the typical backbiting attitude of the self righteous Indian male would not have helped reveal the truth. Miss Benare was thrown into the dock and there she remained trying to yoke herself out of it, but trapped too murderously by the male vultures around her. Witness after witness, charges upon charges was heaped upon her. The defense lawyer was so frightened that he only asked for a little mercy on her behalf. Miss Benare who is on the offensive at the beginning found herself trapped at the close of the play" (as qtd Pandey and Barua 10).

In Tendulkar's play, silence, at one level, characterizes the agony of muteness of the colonized Leela. The very act of silencing Leela reminds us of Helen Cixous's description of a Chinese story in her essay *Castration and Decapitation,* where General Sun Tse's decides to use the beheading of two women commanders as a war strategy that forces the rest into total compliance, and they never make a mistake of repeating that offence, again. It is a form of education, a conditioning that consists of trying to make a soldier out of a woman by force, the force that the history reserves for women, the "capital" force that is effectively "decapitation." Women have no choice other than to be decapitated, and in any case, the moral is that if they don't actually lose their heads by the sword, *they only keep them on condition that they lose them*- lose them, that is, to complete

silence, turned into automatons (Annette Kuhn 42-43). There are two images of Leela Benare, one of an extremely, fiercely articulate woman, and the other is that of a coercively silenced, decapitated woman. It is her second image that reminds us of Lacan's notion of "phallocentrism", which explains why a woman always exists outside language.

For G.C. Spivak the Kolkata born feminist, the subaltern as a female cannot be heard or read and she cannot speak either. She uncovers the instances of doubly oppressed native women caught between dominations of native patriarchy and foreign imperialist ideology. Whereas in her critique of Western Feminists writing, Chandra Talpade Mohanty in *Third World Women* argues that 'discourse of representation should not be confused with material realities. Since the native woman is constructed with multiple social relationships and positioned as a product of different class, caste and cultural specificities, it should be possible to locate traces and testimony of women voice' (as qtd Ashcroft 44). A woman here protests only in form of resolutions that are shattered with a passage of time. There are occasions in the play, where Benare gets tormented by the comments of the other characters.

Ms. Benare has been loyal to her profession. She declares in the final act that she has always kept her professional life away from her personal life. She also justifies her role of being a teacher. Ms. Benare states: "I just put my whole life into working with the children... I loved it, I taught them well... Emotion is something people talk about with sentiment. It was obvious to me. I was living through it. It was burning through me. But do you know? I did not teach any of this to those tender; young souls. I swallowed the poison, but did not let the drop of it touch them. I taught them beauty. I taught them purity. I cried inside and made them laugh. I was cracking up with despair and I taught them hope" (CPT 117).

Benare is a progressive contemporary woman, who despite being psychologically tortured strives to search for meaning in her life and existence. Tendulkar debunks the myth that women's subordinate status is a result of their inherent psychological and biological traits by revealing through the trial how the inner workings of the male-domination are actually put into practice. (Maya Pandit 9) Benare, the principal character in the play, is as sprightly, rebellious and assertive as the heroines of Shakespeare romantic comedies...Of course, Benare is a lovely spark from the thunder bolt of Tendulkar. She is a 'new woman' pleading for freedom from the social norms..." (as qtd Dhawan 36).

It can be claimed that, though Indian patriarchy sandbags women into silence, it simultaneously gives them a powerful instrument with which the "weaker sex" can threaten the allegedly stable identities that men enact or legislate about. In his construction of textual gender identities, it is these patriarchal codes of silence that Tendulkar plays with. In the male-oriented system of signs, woman's meanings are distorted and prevaricated; her truth misinterpreted and falsified; and for her rights, she must get concurrence from a super male ego. Her voice is ignored, unheard or contradicted. "The contradiction between women's centrality and active role in creating society and their marginality in the meaning-giving process of interpretation and explanation has been a dynamic force, causing women to struggle against their condition" (Lerner 5).

Kashikar, the man sitting in the patriarchal judgment seat in the play, usurps a higher position in the hierarchy with the help of other males and presents Leela 'the other' as deceitful and indulgent. Accordingly, he controls her by subjugating her to his own imperial power. In this way, his speech or the decision announced by him in the mock court trial adheres to the father-text, the male paradigm of thinking in colonial India. The father-text must be understood as a set of normative rules, which, having been socially, legally and culturally sanctioned, not only invest total control in male citizens but also require from them an acceptable conduct. The ultimate demonstration of Kashikar's (representative of all males) deafness to the female (Leela's) voice is articulated when looking at his watch, he says, "The time is up. The accused has no statement to make. In any case, it would be of no use" (CPT 118). This refusal to listen to someone is closely related to the cultural deafness of men to female self-articulation and testifies to a deliberate separation of the two discourses, which, socially imposed, prevent their mutual exchange and influence, thus guarding the patriarchal hierarchy of gendered subjects. Contemptuous of Leela Benare, his patriarchal views are discernible as he claims that the marriageable age for a girl should be lowered down to their puberty.

> Kashikar. All right. She's not less than thirty four. I'll give it to custom of child marriage. Marry off the girls before puberty. All this promiscuity will come to a full stop. If anyone has ruined our society it's Agarkar and Dhondo Keshav Karve. That's my frank opinion, Sukhatme, my frank opinion (CPT 98).

Various women characters in Tendulkar's theatre undergo a series of torments and tortures as the victims of the hegemonic power-structure. In her seminal work, *Colonialism/Post colonialism* (1998), Ania Loomba theorizes that the female body is an object of male sexual fantasy and desire, which has been theatrically presented by Tendulkar as a close scrutinizer. Tendulkar's women are essentially marginalized objects in the interlocking system of 'sexual politics' and 'power politics'. There is undoubtedly politics involved in making women silent and not allowing their voice to be heard. This is deliberately done by the dominant voice, the masculine one. Those who are in power deconstruct the conventional thought and values. It is evident through the evolution of women's silence that 'being silent' and 'becoming silenced' are two entirely different things.

Vijay Tendulkar admits that his perception of reality, drawn from personal experiences of life, forms the basis of his writings. Unlike the "Raw realism of John Osborne and Joan Littlewood, which gave expression to marginal voices in England at this time, in Bombay" realism ....carried, not the voices from neglected margins of society, but from the mainstream, the educated middle class, the upholders of norms, and also those who carefully defied them, in whom was invested the responsibility for creating a modern society in their newly independent country" (Gokhale 116). In an interview *Face to Face with Vijay Tendulkar,* Wadikar shares Tendulkar's viewpoint:

> A man can superficially enter into any relationship and step out of it, but so is not the case of a woman. Even if she is a downright feminist, progressive, conscious, having put up the relationship for some time, she cannot come out of it like changing clothes. The relationship is life –long and goes deep into the very skin. Many a time, it acts as a hurdle for her. Even now, it is happening, repeatedly. When she has been advised for divorce, when women's groups are formed from demonstration against her husband, (whether in the play or in actual life), who has set her on torture, she is reluctant to act, Why is it so? Because she is still entangled in that relationship (Wadikar 150).

The construction of an ideal Indian woman had both political and religious aspects — political aspect being the outcome of colonial rule which made Indians defensive thus constantly reaffirming Indian cultural superiority, a part of political agenda. The 'New Woman' became the object of ridicule

as some of the writers made Western woman stand against traditional Indian woman. Tendulkar believes that women themselves ought to be determined to liberate themselves; otherwise, there remains a vacuum which is very painful for a woman. For him, men and women are only two elements psychologically with a superfluous distinction. The availability of these elements varies from one individual to other. On his feminist stance about his writing, he states that some men have feminine sensibility; surprisingly, some women don't have that as the sensibility doesn't seem to be shared, which, in fact, is shared (Wadikar 152).

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