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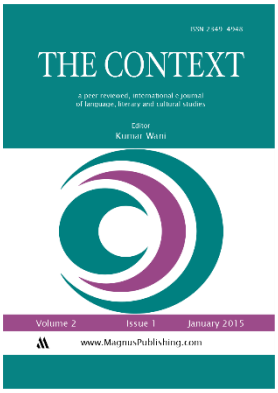

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Cultural Dilemma in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter*

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Abstract

This paper delineates cultural dilemma in *The Tiger's Daughter*, the first novel of Bharati Mukherjee published in 1972. It portrays Tara, the protagonist who goes to America for higher education and marries with an American to overcome the fear of being ignored in a foreign country. After seven years she decides to come back to India but finds herself a stranger in her native place. Her entire outlook has changed. When she was in America, she idealizes her home country and cherishes nostalgic memories of it but when she has come to India, she starts hating the hostile circumstances and dirty surroundings here. During her stay in America, she was not happy and was always conscious about the rootlessness. But now in India also, she does not feel better. She finds herself alienated and faces identity crisis. She suffers with a constant dilemma at psychological level and has a clash between two cultural traits—American and Indian.

Keywords: c*ulture, conflict, rootlessness, split-self, expatriation*

Cultural Dilemma in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter*

Dr. Vijeta Gautam

Bharati Mukherjee is one of the major novelists of Indian Diaspora. Her intellectual quest covers a period of about thirty years in which her five novels and two story collections, besides other non-fictional writings appeared. Her creative characters come from every walk of life and belong to diverse ethnicities and cultural preferences and various religious faiths. She explores the complexities of her choicest theme of expatriate experience. Her first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* was written in 1972 when she was staying in Canada. This work delineates cultural conflict and portrays an upper caste Bengali Brahmin girl, Tara who goes to America for higher education. To overcome the fear of being ignored in a foreign country, she marries with an American. After seven years she comes back to India but finds herself a stranger in her native place.

The novel starts with the grand wedding ceremony of the daughters of Hari Lal Banerjee, the 'Zamindar' of village Pachapara. Two years later Hari Lal Banerjee fell a prey to an unseen assassin while he was mediating a dispute. With his death all the reputation of the Banerjee Zamindar family died. The great granddaughter of Hari Lal Banerjee and the daughter of Bengal Tigers, the owner of famous Banerjee & Thomas Co. Ltd. is nobody else but Tara Banerjee, the protagonist of *The Tiger's Daughter.* Her father sends her America at an early age of fifteen for higher study. She feels anger and is afraid of American way of living.

> For Tara, Vassar had been an almost unsalvageable mistake. If she had not been a Banerjee, a Bengali Brahmin, the great granddaughter of Hari Lal Banerjee, or perhaps if she had not been trained by the good nuns at St. Blaise's to remain composed and ladylike in all emergencies, she would have rushed home to India the end of her first week. (Mukherjee 10)

In America she feels homesickness and faces discrimination for being an Indian. She always defends her culture and her country instinctively. When at the end of the academic session every student around her prepares to go home, she is afraid of even to going back home.

> She saw herself sleeping in carton on a sidewalk while hatted men made impious remarks to her. Headless monsters winked at her from eyes embedded in pudgy shoulders….She suffered fainting spells, headaches and nightmares….She complained of homesickness in letter to her mother who promptly prayed to Kali to save Tara's conscience, chastity and complexion. (Mukherjee 13)

During her studies she falls in love with an American boy named David. At the Greyhound bus stop, she by chance meets him, "Within fifteen minutes of her arrival at Greyhound bus station there (at Madison), in her anxiety to find cab, she almost

knocked down a young man. She did not know then that she eventually would marry that young man." (Mukherjee 14)

She gets married with David Cartwright who is wholly western and does not know anything about Indian culture. Tara never communicated her family background and Calcutta life with him. In India a marriage is the bond of two families, cultures and two individuals but in America their marriage is union of two persons only and not of two families. It is simply a contract between two persons. David is opposed to parentage and does not like to expand his family tree. Whenever Tara shows care for his family, he mistakes her love for over dependence. She feels completely insecure with him as he often asks foolish questions about Indian customs and culture.

Tara plans to return to India after seven years. She thinks on reaching her native place all her fears and worries would be disappeared. But it is not so as the new Tara who is America returned, fails to perceive India as a native but views India with the avidity of a foreigner. Her entire outlook has changed. When she was in America, she idealizes her home country, India and cherishes nostalgic memories of it but when she has come to India, she starts hating the hostile circumstances and dirty surroundings here. All the dreams and ideals fall apart.

When she returns to India and is welcomed by her relatives and friends on Bombay Airport she did not feel happy on hearing her nickname 'Tultul'. She becomes upset as it feels strange to her. She finds it very childish thing. While on her way to Calcutta, she strikes with disgust on seeing shabbiness. She "thought the station was more like a hospital; there were so many sick and deformed men sitting listlessly on bundles and trunks." (Mukherjee 19)

In the train Tara happens to share her compartment with a Marwari and a Nepali. She thinks that both of them will spoil her journey to Calcutta. The tiny Marwari is very ugly and seems impudent while the flat nosed Nepali is equally wicked. Her reaction is voiced in the following line: "I have returned to dry holes by the sides of railway tracks, she thought, to brown fields like excavations for a thousand homes. I have returned to India." (Mukherjee 21)

As she reaches to Howrah station, she is appalled by "squalor and confusion of Howrah station." (Mukherjee 27) Although she is surrounded by the crowd of relatives, vendors and beggars, she feels herself completely alone. Her father has come to receive her who "seemed to have become a symbol for the outside world. He had become a pillar supporting a balcony that had long outlived its beauty and its function." (Mukherjee 29) On reaching home she feels peace of mind and is thankful to be again at her own home:

> After seven years abroad, after extraordinary turns of destiny that had swept her from Calcutta to Poughkeepsie, and Madison, and finally to a two-room apartment within walking distance of Columbia, strange turns that had taught her to worry over a dissertation on Katherine Mansfield, the plight of women and racial minorities, Tara was grateful to call this (her father's) restful house home. (Mukherjee 33)

Coming back to Vassar, America looks like a dreamland to Tara. She recalls the days when she had shaken out all her silk scarves, ironed them and hung them to make her room look more Indian. She assumes New York an extraordinary and exotic place.

> New York, she thought now, had been exotic. Not because it had Laundromats and subways. But because there were policemen with dogs prowling the underground tunnel. Because girls like her, at least almost like her, were being knifed in elevators in their own apartment buildings. Because students were rioting about campus recruiters and far-away wars rather than the price of rice or the stiffness of final exams. Because people were agitated over pollution… New York was certainly extraordinary, and it had driven her to despair… (Mukherjee 34)

During her stay in America, she was not happy and was always conscious about the rootlessness. But now in India also, she does not feel better. With her relatives she is unable to establish relations as good as she was having before shifting to America. Now she does not become happy on meeting her old friends. She herself wonders at her foreignness.

> How does the foreignness of spirit begin? … Does it begin right in the centre of Calcutta, with forty ruddy Belgian women, fat foreheads swelling under starched white head-dresses, long black habits intensifying the hostility of the Indian sun? Or did it drift inward with the winter chill at Vassar, as she watched the New York snow settle over new architecture, blonde girls …? (Mukherjee 37)

Tara realizes what she has lost in America when she forgets one of the certain rituals on doing worship with her mother. "It was not a simple loss… this forgetting of prescribed actions; it was little death, a hardening of the heart, a cracking of axis and centre." (Mukherjee 51) Now she has become a foreigner to the rituals, customs and natives values. She feels the rootlessness and loss of identity and realizes that it is the great loss which America has done to her.

> Tara was literally, neither here nor there. She was a misfit with her Calcutta milieu and she was always under stress in America– trying to be correct, trying not to be a gauche immigrant, trying to be American. Tara is intelligent, highly educated and capable of self-analysis. She is conscious of her instability, insecurity and unhappiness. (Chowdhury 95)

Her friends throw many parties in honour of Tara's return in The Catelli-Continental Hotel on Chowringhee Avenue. She thinks that her friends would understand her attitude and circumstances. "Her friends had seemed to her a peaceful island in the midst of Calcutta's commotion. She had leaned heavily on their self-confidence." (Mukherjee 55) But gradually she realizes that she is wrong in her expectations to her friends. "Her friends let slip their disapproval of her. They suggested her marriage had been impudent that the seven years abroad had eroded all that was fine and sensitive in her Bengali nature" (Mukherjee 55). Her friends were more interested to listen stories about America than Tara's plight. She notices a drastic change in her friends as they often make her realize the mistake she made in marrying an American. "In India she felt she was not married to a person but to a foreigner, and this foreignness was a burden." (Mukherjee 62) She is very confused as she cannot share the feelings of her

relatives and friends with her husband. For her relatives and friends, she has polluted the society as well as herself by marrying a foreigner. According to M. Sivaramkrishna,

> Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter* finds it difficult to relate herself to her family, city, culture in general since her marriage to an American, her western education are enough signs to brand her as an 'alienated' westernized woman. The implicit logic is that since she is exposed to the West and has absorbed its values she must be necessarily alienated. Therefore, even when she tries to 'voice' her continuing attachment for an identity with India, the voice does not carry conviction for it is at variance with the usual stance – of indifference and arrogance – one generally associates with the 'westernized' (exiled) Indian. (74)

She realizes that she has completely changed. Now she does not feel the same happiness as she used to do earlier. Tara's westernization has opened her eyes to the gulf between two worlds that still makes India the despair of those who govern it. She looks all the ugly aspects of India. For her, it is full of disease, despair, riots, poverty and filth. All the time she remains confused about the past perception for India and newly changed perception. Now she has become a foreigner, an American, that's why her perception has changed.

> Tara's consciousness of the present is rooted in her life in the States and when she looks at India anew it is not through her childhood associations or her past memories but through the eyes of her foreign husband David. Her reactions are those of a tourist, of a foreigner. (Jain 13)

She has started viewing India with the eyes of a foreigner as a land of poor people living in unhygienic conditions and suffering from starvation. On her way to Observatory Hill in Darjeeling, she is stopped and teased by some rowdy boys. This incident makes her upset. She meets the politician Tuntunwala, the same ugly Marwari fellow with whom she had shared her train compartment while coming to Calcutta. He proposes her to show a new township, Nayapur and unfortunately she accepts his proposal. This meeting ends with her seduction by this cruel politician. She does not tell about her rape to anyone for fear of disgrace.

> She could not share her knowledge of Tuntunwala with any of her friends. In a land where a friendly smile, an accidental brush of fingers, can ignite rumours – even lawsuits – how is one to speak of Mr. Tuntunwala's violence? (Mukherjee 199)

Tara Banerjee has not fully adapted to American culture, but alienated to the values and customs of India. She shows omissions and oppositions in her native practices that give an abundant environment for the reader to ruminate her cultural plight.

> Tara's psyche is always tragic as a result of the tension created in the mind between the two socio-cultural environments, between the feeling of rootlessness and nostalgia. She feels both cornered and neglected at the same time. Neither can she take refuge in her old Indian self nor in her newly discovered American self. This difficulty of choosing lies in her refusal to totally condemn any one world. It might have been easier for Tara to leave her past untouched if she could find her old home unworthy, but she does

> not. She does not fit in any longer. The outcome of this encounter is her split personality. (Mehra 239)

In the concluding part of the novel, the entire city is burning with violent demonstrations. Tara plans to go back to her husband David and invites her friends at Catelli Continental to announce her decision. But unfortunately she is surrounded by rioting mob. "Tara, still locked in a car across the street from the Catelli Continental, wondered whether she would ever get out of Calcutta, and if she did not, whether David would ever know that she loved him fiercely". (Mukherjee 210)

There is no clear-cut or obvious conclusion in this novel as it creates a situation of illusion. The novel poses so many questions for the readers. Does Tara succeed in going back to her husband David and start living her married life happily keeping all her nostalgia aside or she falls a victim to the rioting mob? She finds herself alienated and faces identity crisis. She suffers with a constant dilemma at psychological level and has a clash between two cultural traits—American and Indian. She wants to behave like an ordinary Indian but her American-self-made ordinary practices strange to her. She realizes her rootlessness and gets confused over it.

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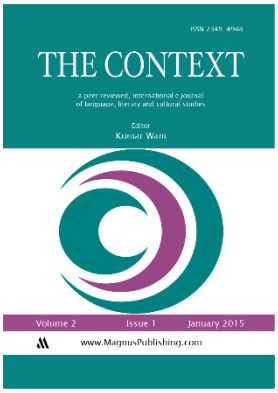

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Crucifixion in *Amen: The Autobiography of a Nun*

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Abstract

Sr. Jesme's *Amen: The Autobiography of a Nun* alleges that sexual abuse and homosexuality are very high in the Catholic Churches in Kerala, India. The book unfolds the sexual harassment that she faced in the convent at the hands of both priests and Nuns. She alleges that the Church alternately tried to bribe her not to write the book and threaten her. She raises very important issue of the status of women within the Catholic Church. She is an outcast from the Church due to her refusal and protesting the life in the Church walls. Barely seventeen, she was convinced that her path was serving her Master as his bride. She accuses the Congregation of rampant corruption; the huge chunk of money raised during admissions hardly goes through any accounting. She also refers to the corruption and the politicization of religion prevalent in the Catholic Church. The present paper tries to focus on the problems of women in Christian monasteries when they choose nunnery to serve God. Nuns carry the rope of identity card with crucified Jesus around their necks but it has to be realized that they are also in turn crucified to suffer like living corpses on account of oppression, domination and violence.

Key words: *Nunnery, crucifixion, CMC, homosexuality, sexual abuse, gender discrimination, oppression, reformation, social cause and liberation.*

Crucifixion in *Amen: The Autobiography of a Nun*

Dr. K K Sunalini

M Raja Ambethkar

"I would have been still within the 'religious enclosure', enduring the 'Crucifixion' until my last breath, if only they hadn't forced the psychiatric treatment upon me" (Jesme 170). The blog page of the novel describes that Sr. Jesme's *Amen: The Autobiography of a Nun* is a plea for reformation of the Church. She is concerned to awaken the Christian community's conscience. Sr. Jesme's autobiography occupies unique approach in emphasizing the futility and the failure of the Christian missionaries and the contradictions within their ideals. The helplessness of the Nuns to initiate any significant rebellion against the injustices indicates that they inevitably comply with secular authorities and discourses. The agony of the Nuns is emblematic of Jesus's crucifixion. The inward turn of Sr. Jesme is ultimately social not individual, in its constitution. The process of bringing out the religious abuses to the surface signifies the struggle for liberation and individualism.

Sr. Jesme is treated insane and advised by the Pope to have treatment for being mentally disturbed. She is also exploited by the false medical reports as a thyroid patient. Jesme feels that she has reached the pinnacle of suffering and can endure no more. She finally decides to take VRS and reaches home emotionally upset. She visits her father's grave and gets blessings to leave CMC, she prays to Ammol, her dead seven month old niece, to give strength to leave CMC. The Bible also gives messages for her to leave CMC. She pleads her Anna not to send her back. They wish it is better for Jesme to elope with anybody or commit suicide rather than entering her parental house. A rumour is spread that she is undergoing mental illness. Fr. Joseph in Delhi provides her a temporary refuge in nursing sister's hostel. Her final sentences "I would have been still within the 'religious enclosure' enduring the 'Crucifixion' until my last breath, if only had not forced the psychiatric treatment upon me" (170). Sr. Jesme ends up *Amen: The Auto Biography of a Nun* with a note of relief "I relax on his lap and just thank Him for saving me from the 'Formidable Fortress and welcoming me into His Safe Anchorage" (172)

Over the past several decades, the electronic and print media has been exposing the problem of priestly sexual abuse of women and even Nuns within the Roman Catholic Churches. It is pathetic to note that the sexual abuse is subjected even to the holy innocent Nuns. Domination resonated in the form of sexual abuse (homo and hetero), gender discrimination, and corruption. Here are some incidents of sexual harassment against Nuns. In1995, a Parish priest in the Changanacherry Archdiocese, allegedly entered into a two-year sexual relationship with a 15-year old school girl who gave birth to his child in1998. A case of rape and abduction was registered against the priest. On August 11, 2008, Sister Anupa Mary committed suicide in St. Mary's convent, in

Kollam. She left a suicide note that a senior Nun, in the convent has accused her. On February 11, 2009, Sister Josephine who lived in The Daughters of Mary Convent, in the Syro-Malankara Archdiocese in Thiruvananthapuram, committed suicide. It was alleged that they were also abused at the hands of other Nuns that forced Sister Josephine to suicide. In October 2008, a 60-year-old Nun belonging to the Congregation of Daughters of Mary Convent, Anchal, alleged that young Nuns from the convents were being forced to have abortions and that Priest and Nuns were having limitless affairs. She further alleged that a Nun Serenna Jacob has committed suicide because she could not handle the trauma. Father Shibu Kalamparambil in his memoir Oru Vaidikante Hrudayamitha (The Heart of a Priest) wrote that they heard the cry of a baby from the bathroom of one of the inner rooms along with the sobs of a woman. They used their might to force open the bathroom door and saw an incident that breaks anyone's heart. It was a Nun who had given birth to a child and was pushing the head of the baby into the closet. The bathroom was filled with blood. The legs of the child, which were sticking out of the closet, were kicking for life. Sister Mary Chandy in her autobiography Nanma Niranjavale Swasthi (Peace to the One filled with Grace).On the gentle slopes of Pulpally, Wayanad, where the Naxal movement once sent terror into the hearts of the land-owning gentry, a lone ex-Nun, Sister Mary Chandy, raised the hackles of the Catholic Church. Her autobiography, Nanma Niranjavale Swasthi, portrays her miserable life in the convent, which is littered with pregnant Nuns and weaned Priests. The 67-year-old Sister's memoirs came into light after 14 years after she walked out of the congregation of the Daughters of Presentation of Mary in Chevayur, Kozhikode, in North Kerala. The Church was quick to proclaim that Sister Mary was never a Nun in any of their convents and asked the laity in Wayanad not to associate with her. Sister Jesme's autobiography alleges that sexual abuse and homosexuality are very high in the Catholic Churches in Kerala, India. The book comes in the wake of a spate of sex scandals, Nun suicides, and murders that shook Kerala's Clergy. The Catholic Church in Kerala, India, which has barely recovered from the Sister Abhaya's case, allegedly murdered by two priests and a Nun, finds itself in another controversy. Sr. Jesme does not claim her autobiography great like Mahatma Gandhi's or Kiran Bedi's, but she says that she has poured out her blatant experiences which will enable the society to glance at the reality. She further draws a comparison of her life to that of late Sr. Abhaya and Sr. Anupa Mary," […] my case today is spoken of alongside those of the late Sr. Abhaya and the late Sr. Anupa Mary. Both are no longer alive to narrate their experiences" (Jesme Author's note).

52-year-old Sister Jesme, a former Nun, formerly-Principal of St. Mary's College in Thrissur, Kerala, said that she had quit the Congregation of Mother Carmelite (CMC), in August 2008. Sister has written a book Amen: Oru Kanyasthreeyude Atmakatha (*Amen: The Autobiography of a Nun*) which has blown the whistle on the alleged sexual abuse that Nuns have to face in convents. In the author's note Sister Jesme has mentioned that her exceptional step of leaving her thirty three years of convent life as a Nun is like a journey of passing from one significant phase of life to another like the train journey from Ernakulum to Delhi. In her words "In this moment of inner turmoil and turbulence all around, writing provides a cathartic relief and a space for self-reflection" (XI) the book unfolds the sexual harassment that she faced in the convent at the hands of both Priests and Nuns. Sister Jesme has alleged

that the Church alternately tried to bribe her not to write the book, and threaten her. In her book, Sister Jesme, writes an anguished account of her experiences as a Nun. She raises the very important issue of the status of women within the Catholic Church. She questions why nuns are treated different from priests particularly in the matter of the Vow of Poverty.

Her last posting was the Principal of the prestigious Amala College in Kerala. As the college is a Government–aided institution, she is provided modest pension. Sister Jesme is living in a small flat in Kozhikode outside the walls of the Congregation of Mother of Carmel. She is an outcast from the Church due to her refusal and protesting the life in the Church walls. Over three decades ago, when she consigned herself to the nunnery, life seemed to have made a beautiful promise to Sister Jesme. Barely 17, she was convinced that her path was serving her Master as his bride. She chose her new name as a Nun, Jesme by adding 'me' (herself) to the first three letters (Jes) from Jesus's name. Amen is just 178 pages with the frankness and sincerity of narration. She accuses the Congregation of rampant corruption, the huge chunk of money raised during admissions hardly goes through any accounting. Dr. Sr. Jesme also refers to the corruption and the politicization of religion prevalent in the Catholic Church. The book also brings an important point of gender inequality that a Nun has to wear only the prescribed dress code of conduct whereas, a father can choose to dress the way he likes. A Nun cannot marry, whereas a Father can. The Nuns do menial jobs while Fathers do not. Homosexuality seems to be horrible to many young girls who have to silently endure at the nunnery. Yet another taboo she talks about is how a few Church Fathers force themselves sexually on Nuns. Sr. Jesme discusses the importance of breaking the silence and bringing the perpetrators of crime into public notice. She deals with the growing crimes against women and how most of them are going unreported fearing social stigma. The book tries to bring awareness among the community of Nuns and also to create a sense of guilt among the Church Priests, Fathers and Nuns. Sr. Jesme believes that Jesus chose her to do the needful. "My story had to be told. He chose me to let the world know the truth. I hope there will be a change for better." (The Hindu 14 November 2009) She feels that she has written the book because it was important to declare that she can think coherently and not insane as the Congregation alleged. She also wanted to show that her love for Jesus has not dwindled even after much suffering. Thirty three years cannot be penned down in 180 pages but there are points that she makes about the capitation fee, the quarrels that happen within the Church, about the homo-sexuality and the hetero-sexuality.

Meamy Raphael, Later Sr. Jesme was the fourth child of her parents. She was a University II ranker in University Degree Course. She continued her P.G. at Amala College. In 1974, she started her religious training with special sanction and was permitted to continue her higher studies for MPhil and PhD on merit scholarship from Government of India. Sr. Jesme is a very good researcher. She worked on Robert Frost with title "The Parabolic Pattern in the Poetry of Robert Frost" for M.Phil. She compared and contrasted many of his poems with the parables of Jesus. Being the class tutor, she tried to inculcate some social consciousness in her students. She entrusted herself in extracurricular activities too .Since 1980 she has been teaching and served many administerial positions as Principal and vice Principal for three years at

Thrissure. Sr. Jesme left the Congregation of Mother of Caramel in August 2008 applying for voluntary retirement.

Sr. Jesme makes an attempt to disclose the hidden life inside the enclosures of the convents. Her aim is to bring about the reformation of the Church. She uses the words like Iron curtain, stinking corners, closed walls, chained souls, dungeon like interior, and prison like enclosures to the situations of Congregation. She wants to accomplish through *Amen: The Autobiography of a Nun*, that thirty three years of her religious life gives a journey of passing from one significant phase of her life to another. Her escape from Formidable Fortress to His Safe Anchorage is purely her independent decision. She questions," My repeated question is: Why is so much secrecy created around ordinary things? I believe that the church should be transparent in its dealings. Why? And whom are we afraid of, if we go along Jesus' Way?" (XII) She feels it is important to share her experiences to the society. In her view the religious authorities teach, guide interfere, provoke and console, touching every aspect of the lives of people. Like a true Quaker she believes that the Church should be transparent in its dealings. According to her, secrecy lies only when there is injustice, dishonesty and unfair dealings. Sr. Jesme's thoughts resemble the Quaker's sense of inner oneness that rejected the mediation of the priesthood between God and Man. Quakers expected uncompromising honesty, simplicity of life, non-violence and justice from the followers. They boldly opposed slavery in America. Just like the Quakers who opposed the church and their authority, Sr. Jesme also opposed the Congregation in search of inner spiritual religion. In her words," Throughout my life in the convent, I was misunderstood by the other sisters, namely the Superiors. My questioning their decision and actions in the light of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus always irritated them (3)

The novel is only a revelation of a part of her life which is a life of enclosure to exposure. She describes the change as from black and white experience of God's beauty to a multi coloured rhapsody of God's diversity and splendor in Nature. She speaks of the immoral tendencies prevailing in the Churches referring to the deaths of Sr. Abhaya and Sr. Anupa Mary. Throughout her life, in the convent, Sr. Jesme was misunderstood by the other Sisters, mainly by Superiors. Her rational attitude of questioning the authorities in the light of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus always irritated the priests, Superiors and Fathers. Sr. Jesme was tortured, threatened in order to dismiss her from the post of the Principal on the basis of an anonymous letter, false allegations declaring her as insane, which made her escape the Convent. Initially she was frightened that she might be forced back into the Convent. She ignored the phone calls of Fr. Joseph for whom she worked in Delhi. As a narrative technique of stream of consciousness in the train journey, she recollects her childhood days as a student when she enjoyed her life in colourful dresses, carefree life with friends and classmates. Though watching movies and reading novels was her passion, she never neglected her studies. She was always a topper in studies. As she was inspired by heroic characters, she proved to be a rational lady. Her love for music has made her to organize devotional programs of music. Her life style was lavish. She had a secured family life. They used to discuss the topics of the movies they had watched. Her mother used to guide with the examples from the movies. Sr. Jesme had three brothers and four sisters. Despite enjoying the worldly pleasures, she experienced spiritual and mystical pull

within her towards Jesus during her Confession and First Holy Communion. Unconsciously Jesus became her beloved friend and communion. Sr. Jesme is sometimes rationalistic and questions the "Closed Retreat". Students stay in the college for three days. Sr. Jesme does not like this idea because one cannot reap a good spiritual harvest from a Retreat conducted by a college. For the first time in her life she begins to think seriously to give up reading novels, to combat the unquenchable thirst for the latest in clothes and fashion and the yearning for worldly pleasures in the outcome of Closed Retreat. Once the meeting of the Holy Communion takes place, She does not have the right to opt herself for marriage or worldliness. Her final decision of sacrificing her life for the holy religion keeps her attending the Holy Masses. On account of the financial troubles, during her Pre-Degree Course, she takes the help of the Bishop Kundukulam, Parish Priest with 15.50 rupees every month. Without having any knowledge about Nun's life she makes a decision to become Nun. Her silly doubts were "can they laugh? Are they allowed to have innocent pleasures? How much pain do the sisters have when they undergo operation to remove their breasts? (Her understanding is that breasts are of no use for Nuns. So why keep them?) Do the nuns live according to the will of Jesus? Do they feel duped after entering the convent? Are they genuinely happy and satisfied? "(Jesme 2009:17)For choosing nunnery she is criticized by her relatives with the comments like selfish, running away from the troubles of life, escapism and so on. Later, she attended Vocation Retreat in which the preacher educated about the differences between marital and religious lives. Those who choose religious life are assigned with duties like teaching, serving in a hospital, attending Mass prayers daily, Novena (special prayer recited to some saints, or to Mother Mary or St. Joseph) and so on. Sisters are kept under observation to know whether they are fit for religious life or not. Motherly instincts are aroused in the class when she assists children in the toilets. She even washes their knickers. She also performs some house hold works like sweeping the room, mopping it twice a day is also done. Though it was very difficult for her to withstand the temptation for luxurious and comfortable life and curbing her love for worldly life like wearing long skirts and blouses after teaching hours. She successfully dedicated her life for the religious motto. There are three stages of religious training. They are: Aspirants, Postulants, and Novices. The Rule of touch, Rule of Silence, Rule of sight are very strict in the Convents. Groupism is another factor that no one expects in a convent. During the six month period of Postulancy, the trainees are taught a little of the Bible, Theology, CMC congregation, recitation of prayer. She enters ASPIRANCY and POSTULANCY where she wears white sarees. The next stage is The Retreat and the prayer sessions deepen her bond with Jesus. Though she expects pious life in religious sacrifice she is exposed to the bitter truths of life. Sr. Jesme, is intolerant to the aspect of homosexual friendship in the college hostel. The craze for romance at that age takes the wrong path and ends up in their own gender. She says about the undesirable scenes where a Chechie and Anujathie are entwined. Her close relationship with Pretty is regarded as a blot on her religious life. Sometimes there are minor sexual aberrations taking place among some student sisters. During the course of her training before becoming a Nun, she faced many trials and punishments. She is being severely tested. Sometimes they doubted if she became arrogant on account of her academic success. Some major punishments include removing from the job temporarily or permanently. Minor punishments were like kneeling down in the refectory. Next training after

Postulancy is Canonical Novitiate. The selection is done on the basis of interview and evaluation. The period is one year. They attend classes on the vows of obedience, chastity and poverty. Every movement, word and action are scrutinized by the authorities. They have constant fear of being sent away. Forced by Mother Provincial, Sr. Jesme attends staff interview and gets selected. In this situation she is obliged to interrupt her preparation for Canonical Novitiate and go back to Amala College as a teacher. The records show a discrepancy in her date of joining. She is compelled to sign in for a week from 14th to 21st October though she was not in College. Her deepest protest is that she started noble profession with false signature. After four months of teaching she returns to the Novitiate. Once again her suffering enhances on account of the primary illicit relationships and lack of honesty, the unpleasant comments. She says, "I would have come back home with my luggage, but for Jesus. Life here has become unbearable. But I stay on because he wants me to"(36). On the other side Sr. Jesme also speaks about the old age problems of Nuns quoting the example of Jainamma and Vincentamma. All their suppressed emotions explode in their old age as they lose their self-control. She speaks positively about the priests who respond to them a little so that they are not frustrated. It is a consolation that the sisters in their old age are well cared for in the Convents. One cannot expect this much attention and caring even in one's own family. The aged Nuns are given some duties to perform so that they do not feel useless at any time.

Although she wishes divine intervention from Jesus after re-entering the Novitiate, she experiences duly bitterness and negation. She lives on hope with the priests' Sermons which overflow with the love of Jesus, however Sr. Jesme attempts to expose and critique the regimes of sexual abuse prevailing in the Churches. For instance, she is upset on the day of Confession, Kusumam and Mari by the habit of the priest in taking kisses from the students in the name of holy kiss. He says "It is in the spirit of the Bible and Jesus. He proves "St Paul writes: "Greet on another with a holy kiss" (I Cor: 16: 20) Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss; Greet one another with a Holy Kiss of love. Sr. Jesme protests, "Father, I think I understand what you are trying to prove. In the west such physical expression of love is part of their culture. Among us it is provocative in many ways (39).On the same night she experiences a physical experience of the Lord possessing the body. She feels that Jesus is close to her body and soul. "This is the pure gift of Jesus. He will give it to every one of His Brides" (40) Sr. Jesme is an actress on stage too. She enacted the role of Esther from Old Testament. Having a deep husky voice, she sang for male characters on stage. She is highly interested in Theology. She read Nikos Kazantzakis, The Last Temptation of Christ. She speaks of the VI chapter Jesus nearing the brothel of Mary Magdalene. She does not appreciate wavering Jesus, because He is the one with strong convictions and faith at all times. Here the readers get a clue on her faith in Jesus. "I doubt whether my strong faith in Him will ever be shaken," (42).

After the training she is ready for Vestition, "First Vows". She speaks of "wedding ceremony". It's like marriage ceremony. Printing invitations, tea party etc. But the oath taking nuns are forbidden to meet the parents. They will be seen on the next day in the church. All these sufferings are met in true spirit for the sake of Lord Jesus. All the trainees are prepared for the ceremony physically and spiritually. It is a heart rendering moment, parents often break down but the brides are supposed to suppress

their sorrow. Each one proclaims the Vows of Obedience, Chastity and Poverty publicly. After that they are given the Habit, A chain with CMC emblem (Congregation of Mother of Caramel). For five years after Vestition they remain as Jr. Sisters under the surveillance of a Jr. Mistress. They are evaluated for their behaviour, conduct and manner based on personal interview which follows final profession. In the Refectory during meals one of the Jr. Sisters wears the crown of thorns on the head carries the cross and walks up to the front and kneels. Repenting for the sins. This is a symbolism of Christ's Crucifixion. Sr. Jesme dwells on Vow of Obedience and gives the example of topica. Which sprouts on both sides. Talking on blind obedience, she is rational in questioning "Sister, in this ultra-modern age, why do you still lecture on blind obedience?" She asks to develop responsible understanding discarding blind obedience.

Sr. Jesme speaks of class distinction among sisters. The less educated and the less-privileged among the professed Nuns belonged to a lower class. These Nuns cannot sit on chairs alongside but only on their trunks. 'Fair Ethlelamma' 'Dark Ethlemma'. The fair belongs to the higher strata and dark one to the lower, not only because of the difference in the complexion but mainly because of the disparity in education and wealth" Despite their proclaiming the ideas of justice and equality before God, such class distinctions exist in the Convents and Seminars.

Sr. Jesme talks of 'Special Love' which is supposed to be sinful. Sr. Vinny in Malayalam Dept.is caught having homosexual relationship with a student while she was a warden. The boys on the road comment "Sr. does the girl give you enough warmth, if not shall we come to you? " (50) Once again Sr. Jesmy is troubled by Sr. Vimy. She writes love letters and leaves them in canonical prayer books when all are asleep at night, she creeps into Jesme's bed and does indecent things. "She tells me that she is cautious to have sex only with women lest she becomes pregnant." (51) Occasionally, she goes to the priest for sex. Sr. Jesme gives the example of Sr. Tressilla who had a secret and wayward relationship with a senior sister. Later on tried to elope with smart priest. When she was forced to confront the issue, she shouts in defense that she had decided to elope. Another example is Sr. Laudia head of the department in Amala College with Sr. Charisma.

Sr. Jesme opposes the corruptive nature of some Sisters who have taken the vow of poverty, still, secretly take money and other valuables to their own families and relatives. Sisters in charge of social service funds, are not allowed to use them for helping their poor relatives. Sr. Jesme dares to question regarding Kshama's case for giving conduct certificate with low grade .Eight before final professions as part of the 2nd year Novitiate and Regency, Jr. Sisters attend classes and write exams for Theology, Liturgy, Caramel spirituality, Christology, Mariology, Spiritual psychology and the Bible. Besides plenty of manual work like cleaning latrines, scrub drains, decorate the chapel, gardening etc. If one gets through these, they are given black belt, the symbol of the Final profession. They are considered as senior Sisters without Jr. Mistress to guide.

Speaking about the punishment like ex-communication with other Sisters. Sr. Jesme says that she was asked to take mental treatment for exercising freedom and the ways she adopted to achieve it. They could not adjust her mixing of spirituality and

aesthetics in order to reach God. Her frankness and straight forwardness may lead to many of their secrets being revealed. Her questioning of many of their decisions and practices had reaped displeasures of the authorities. This may be the reason why they tried to curb her, break her and silence her. When she approached the Principal for pursuing PhD she was asked to withdraw her research proposal and to go for one and a half years leave on loss of pay.

Sr. Jesme speaks of her emptiness. There are days of spiritual aridity in her life, "I feel so dry inside me that I can't pray." (81).She gazes at Jesus hanging from the Cross "Who are you? Who am I" are her constant questions. She comes out with a hope, "He will touch me." (81) The incident follows. Cassette recording called "Sannidhi" artists from Ernakulum. She advises Govind not to waste time in recording due to his negligence. He takes it lightly and asks her name. He plays with it that is coined from Jesus and Me and asks to replace Jes with his name. When he jokes she declares" Don't play with Jesus or me. It's like playing with fire,"(82).She thinks that Mother Euprasia was with Govind as an agent, Jesus has broken her granite like soul and made her the channel of His love, peace and joy. She experiences the presence of Jesus," I look at the tiny cross hanging in the room. 'Jesus, who is Govind compared to you? You are the most handsome man I know- the wealthiest, the smartest, the wisest and the most sincere and caring' Within the twinkle of the eye, a stream of love wells up within me from nowhere, and I experience of joy of being His bride again"(82). As he touches her, her spiritual aridity has given place to ecstasy. "Very soon I am brought back to earth". (82) Which shows that Sisters are also human beings who need love and affection.

Sr. Jesme speaks about the strange experience when she had attended a refresher's course at Dharwad University. The Father assures her royal welcome. The priest who receives her hugs her in a very excited stage impatiently waiting for her. He seduces her in his room. In this context she remembers Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*. Where she describes 'the head of a tortoise' the priest compares semen to "thousands of lives". She says, "Although I resist undressing myself, after repeated persuasion, I oblige, and show him 'a female' She questions, "We least expect molestation of this type. Are we not safe even within four walls of seclusion?"(88). Meanwhile, the priest tries to pursue her and wants to carry on with her over the telephone not to confess publicly. "I carry this burden of guilt within me until a new priest performing penance and some prayers that he suggest, I feel pure again."(89). She shares with Jesus her innermost secrets, weaknesses, failures, wrong deeds in mind and action, "My freedom with Jesus is limitless. I share everything with Him, even my innermost secrets, my weakness, failures and the wrong deeds in mind and action. "(96).

Sr. Jesme talks about her enjoyment with a group of six doctorates, calling her Panchali. She organises Jaala Kangal, eight minutes duration of short film. Chetana Media Institute, as chief coordinator of the first campus film of Amala College. The film receives recognition at the Gargi festival, Award of 1000 rupees in a competition held at the Engineering College Thrissur.

Sr. Jesme reflects feminism by referring to the Bible. Woman of Samaria of the well. Christ's way. She also refers to St. Paul's perspectives. "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness" (1 Timothy 2: 8-15).She says "I admit that St. Paul is the

most spiritual of Apostles but his anti-woman attitude is lamentable. The tradition of belittling woman has continued in the church till date (111). Attempts to redeem her status happen in writing but who challenged hard-hearted men about to stone to death a woman caught at adultery, saying, and "Let him who is without sin among you to be the first to throw a stone at her" (118). I am fit enough to release Nalini's book. She says, as a teacher of Literature, I teach Bernard Shaw's Mrs. Warren's Profession without shame. A literary work is a contribution to society and is to be honoured. She further asks "who wants a woman to remain a sex worker? It is the need of a male chauvinistic section of the society?"(118).

*A feature about Sr. Jesme comes out in Vanitha Magazine, she permits to interview the film club members in her college. Mother Provincial gets furious with all these things. In no time she is named a 'cine-nun' by many and she feels proud of the epithet. She believes that films play a very important role in shaping the youth. Films and songs are discussed in terms of spirituality. During a film festival in a valedictory, she mentions the problem lesbianism while evaluating the festival. For this she is considered for encouraging the screening of vulgar films in college. She is targeted for severe criticism by the Sisters. She believes in freedom with responsibility. Men and women may interact living in a society comprising both, learn now on how to treat the opposite sex. A lack of responsibility will lead to this freedom being curtailed. She urges not to misuse freedom. Another example of her daring is the release of the book "Oru Laingika Thozhipalyude Aatmaakatha" The auto Biography of a social worker who works with women, about how the Sisters will react to her decision. Sri Kunjali Kuty who presides. His name is connected with the ice-cream parlour sex scandal involving a girl, Regina. In another instance When Fr. Benny hears about the release of the book, he cautions her "Are you aware of what you are doing Jesme? Or has anyone tricked you into it?" She says to hate sin but love sinners and says that she loves Nalini as a woman who has undergone suffering. She wants to preach the all-embracing love of Jesus, His mercy, His forgiveness and understanding. "If I can be proud of a Jesus who very rarely in convictions or deeds". She questions why do priests have more freedom than the Sisters?" Her only answer is that there exists discrimination against women in the local church. The priests travel and go for movies in lay dress, officiate or attend weddings and even consume liquor. Their financial status is quite sound.

She questions "Nowhere it is laid down that Sisters should not go for movies and should only be dressed in the Habit" (112). In 1999 during a refresher's course in Hyderabad, she went to see *Kutch Kutch Hota Hain* with students. One of her course mates was terribly upset for being a Sister interested in the film somehow meant disrespect to the Habit. Daring to attend such events in nun's dress have speeded up her fall from the good books of the religious authorities. But her cause has been the freedom that the women and the nuns should have along with the men and the priests. She wants to prove that films are not detrimental to spirituality, instead they deepen it. Another allegation against Sr. Jesme according to the anonymous letter is about constantly viewing blue films and forcing the attendee girls to view them. Mother Supreme asks "Have you asked to remove her top?" For all these allegations she feels it better to quit the convent for the first time she thinks of leaving. Very soon she is

forced to resign the job as a Principal. She asks" Sister will you remove from nunnery also?"(144).

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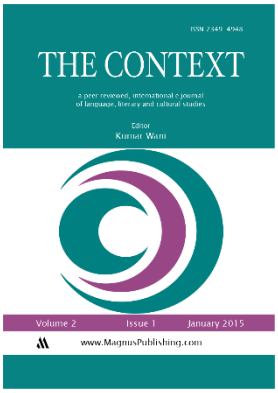

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Anthem for the Doomed Green: An Ecocritical Reading of *The Lord of the Rings*

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Abstract

In spite of Tolkien's denial to the presence of any allegorical message in *The Lord of the Rings*, the text can be studied as a withdrawal to the pastoral idyll during the turbulence of the World War II. The pastoral is used as a trope to counter the "progress" of a pro-industrial society. The paper attempts to highlight that Tolkien's invocation of the pastoral trope was merely a temporary and unconvincing retreat to the ideal; he was quite conscious of the impossibility of the restoration of the natural order. The author rather looks back with a tinge of nostalgia to pre-Christian pagan animism. However, the recurrent use of the wasteland motif is a reminder of the different ways in which natural world is violated. The evil necromancer Sauron, his powerful aide Saruman and the repulsive Orcs all attempt to destroy the pristine natural world. Though at the end, with the fall of Saruman, Tolkien endeavors to restore the natural order yet it remains unconvincing. The king is returned to the throne but there is no suggestion that Aragorn and his descendants would protect nature better. The rise of the humans at the end coincides with the rise of anthropocentric view of nature as pagan animism gets replaced by Judeo-Christian dualism. The pastoral wasteland does not get reinvigorated; it waits for human domination over the natural world, including the threat of nuclear war.

Keywords: *allegory, pastoral, wasteland, deep ecology, anthropocentrism*

Anthem for the Doomed Green: An Ecocritical Reading of *The Lord of the Rings*

Dr. Samrat Laskar

J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) is a difficult (often cumbersome) read and a problematic text to criticize. The novel[1] has elicited contradictory responses, from ecstatic admirations for its broad, epical sweep to supercilious dismissals for its jejune simplifications. A sequel to the more enjoyable *The Hobbit: There and Back Again* (1937), *The Lord of the Rings* invites us to dive deeper to appreciate the multiple meanings hidden underneath. The most popular, among these multiple meanings, must be the one which detects contemporary resonance embedded in the text. Written during the troubled years of the World War II, the novel cannot be dissociated with obvious allegorical readings. Tolkien himself has denied the presence of conscious allegory in his writings. In the Foreword to the Second Edition of the novel, he rather takes stance against any allegorical reading of the text:

> As for any inner meaning or 'message', it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical... Other arrangements could be devised according to the tastes or views of those who like allegory or topical reference. But I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence. (Tolkien xvi-xvii) [2]

But in spite of this denial in no uncertain terms, a post-war reader cannot but read the novel without taking into account the obvious allegorical associations. Even Tolkien recognizes the role of applicability which "resides in the freedom of the reader" (xvii). The Ring must have had certain associations with the nuclear bomb, Sauron and Saruman with the fascist leaders and the War of the Rings at the end might well be considered as an epical counterpart of the World War II. The regular invocation of the pastoral can of course be studied as Tolkien's deliberate retreat to the pastoral idyll in time of the breaking of nations. The trope of the pastoral is introduced to counter the threats of a pro-industrial society, the enormity of which flummoxes the composure of Tolkien. At the end of the novel with the destruction of Sauron and the consequent defeat of Saruman, the hitherto threatened greenery seems to have been saved and reinvigorated. The king is restored to the throne, the hobbits return to Shire and restore its pristine beauty, and the possibility of any imminent evil is not entertained. It looks like the restoration of the order, of harmony but I refuse to entertain this element of optimism. I rather believe that Tolkien was quite aware of the limitation of his revivalist approach. His vision of the restoration of the pastoral idyll is only an idle wish-fulfillment. He rather strews suggestions galore in the work that he is unconvinced of the restoration of natural order. There is nostalgia for the bygone era of pagan animism and a gnawing pain of awareness that it is going to be supplanted by Judeo-Christian anthropocentrism. The novel is not a celebration but a nostalgic recollection of the pristine pastoral which is now destined for destruction.

The Lord of the Rings presents the natural imagery in a series of binaries — the pastoral idyllic landscape of Shire/Lothórien is contrasted with the Crack of Doom of Mordor; the fertility of the hobbits with the sterility of the Ents, the amiability of Tom Bombadil with the cynicism of the Treebeard; the reclamation of Shire with the destruction of forest. The pastoral appears in two of its manifestations in the Shire, the county of the hobbits and Lothórien, the land of the elves. According to Peter V. Marinelli "if pastoral lives for us at all at the present time, it lives by a capacity to move out of its old haunts in the Arcadian pastures and to inhabit the ordinary country landscapes of the modern world, daily contracted by the encroachment of civilization and as a consequence daily more precious as a projection of our desires for simplicity" (3). Shire in *The Lord of the Rings* represents this model of the pastoral. The idea of Shire develops from any ideal English countryside, unsoiled by "progress" - a pre-industrial, agrarian English hamlet. Even Tolkien slips out that Shire "has indeed some basis in experience, though slender... and much further back" (xvii). Tolkien's childhood experiences spent at Sarehole, near Birmingham had something to do with the formation of Shire. He recollects the time when his country "was being shabbily destroyed... in days when motor-cars were rare objects... and men were still building suburban railways" (xvii). The hobbits of Shires are no shepherds of classical pastoral but they love farming and undisturbed life with more than adequate food and music. They share an inherent distrust for any machines which are "more complicated than a forge-bellows, a water-mill, or a hand-loom, though they were skillful with tools" (1). The hobbits are surely no elves who can communicate with trees and animals; they are not also guided by any pagan animism. Yet, Shire presents a picture of inviolate natural world far from the madding world of Isengard and Barad-Dûr. Lothórien is the more idyllic version of the traditional pastoral. It is a special elfish dwelling in the heart of nature, ruled by Lord Cereborn and Lady Galadriel. The elves in this place used to be tree-dwellers once - they were named Galadhrim or Tree-People. They now continue to live in close proximity with nature; trees, rivers, streams are loved here. It is a place of Eternal Spring, free of sickness and deformity where "Time almost ceases to pass and seems even to reverse" (Nitzsche 89). In this Arcadian existence evil doesn't occur unless they appear in the shape of the outsiders. It is not surprising that the hobbits feel most comfortable in Lothórien because deep down the elfish ways of living remind them of a similar lifestyle they used to have at Shire. However, Lothórien appears too perfect to be true or if it is indeed true, it is too good to be shared. The Fellowship can only linger there for a while; they are not allowed to stay permanently. Lothórien is an anachronism even in the Middle-Earth universe.

In contrast to these idyllic pastoral spaces, there are the industrial worlds of Isengard and Barad-Dûr with its belching smokes, miasma of pollution and unnatural copulations. Sauron's[3] primary aide, the evil wizard Saruman and the Orcs are the worst offenders against the pastoral. Initially, Saruman befriends the Ents to elicit their secrets and use those against them in his future exploitation of the vegetative world. As his minion Orcs continue to hew down large numbers of trees to fuel the furnaces needed for production of arms; the Ents feel threatened of their existence. They are angry against both Saruman and his Orcs for the mass scale destruction; in contrast Gandalf is revered as he is "the only wizard that really cares about trees" (455). The ancient Ent, Fangorn or Treebeard offers a detailed account of Saruman's ecological destruction to Merry and Pippin:

> Down on borders they are felling trees - good trees. Some of the trees they just cut down and leave to rot - orc-mischief that; but most are hewn up and

> carried off to feed the fires of Orthnac... Many of those trees were my friends... many had voices of their own that are lost forever now. And there are wastes of stump and bramble where once there were singing groves. (462-63)

This ecological exploitation might well be compared to the destruction wrought by Europeans, at the height of their colonial power, on indigenous natural resources. It was Alfred Crosby who introduced the term 'ecological imperialism' to designate this form of environmental destruction caused under the supervision of Western imperialism. According to him, European imperialism is integrally associated with invading the indigenous region with 'portmanteau biota' (his collective term for the organisms brought by the colonizers) and/or exploiting the natural resources for their own benefit. In fact, there is a direct correlation between Western imperialism and environmental degradation in the colonized countries. The European colonizers created 'Neo-Europes' in regions which are climatically similar to the European countries, they were apparently less successful in the Middle East, China and Indian subcontinent. But this apparent failure is more than compensated by the unrelenting destruction of natural resources, flora and fauna, for their mercenary gains. Saruman's desire to colonize the forest through a mass-scale ecological destruction associates him with the colonizers who relate "progress" with destruction of natural world.

Persuaded by Merry and Pippin, the Ents finally join in the battle against Saruman to destroy his dark army. This may be considered as a botanical version of indigenous resistance — a revenge of the pastoral. Saruman is defeated temporally but after Sauron's fall he is brought back as Sharkey intending to destroy the pastoral peace of Shire. The four hobbits return to find their Shire transformed by the strides of industrial "progress". I read it as a warning that in changing times, no part of nature remains, or can remain, inviolate. The Shire is finally reclaimed by the hobbits but with a disturbing anticipation for a similar violation in the future. Saruman is dead but his legacy of destruction would be continued by pro-industrialists of future times.

Not unlike T. S. Eliot, Tolkien too makes use of the wasteland motif introduced in Jessie L Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. Fertility, or rather the lack of it, is a predominant concern in Tolkien's universe.[4] The world of Middle Earth is strikingly bereft of women and children. All the primary characters are old and mature; even the four hobbit friends are not as young as they appear. The forest is old, the Man Willow is old and so are the elves, despite their eternal youth. The female characters like Goldberry, Galadriel, Arwen or Éowyn are not shown as mothers, though the latter two bears the possibility of mothering children in the near future. Only Sam's wife Rosie Cotton gives birth to several children. Treebeard rues the lack of Entwives in their lives; there are no Entings or the young Ents. The myth of the restoration of a wounded (Fisher) king in a blighted wasteland is realized as "Gandalf comes to Théoden's court, rouses the old king from illness... and thus restores the leader to his people and the land to its formal vigor" (Keenan 9-10). The inertia of Denethor, the steward of Gondor, also brings similar associations but unlike Théoden he cannot be restored at the personal level. However, the wasteland of Gondor gets restored with "the reforging of the broken sword, the return of the kingdom to its rightful owner, and the consequent revitalization of the city and its inhabitants" (Keenan 10) Frodo and the hobbits restore Shire to her pre-industrial fertility. The return to fertility becomes evident when Sam as the gardener plants the seeds given to him by Galadriel and new vegetation grows with spring-time blossoms. There is a promise of restoration

of the blighted land but it is inadequate to overcome the general sense of death and decay that overwhelms Tolkien's world.

Tom Bombadil confuses me, as he does most of the readers. Tolkien himself has not helped the readers by refusing to elaborate on the role he is playing in the novel. Whatever he slips out, adds more to the element of confusion. In a letter to Naomi Mitchison, Tolkien states that "Tom Bombadil is not an important person - to the narrative. I suppose he has some importance as a 'comment'... [I]f you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, then the question of the rights and wrongs of power might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless. It is a natural pacifist view, which always arises in the mind when there is war."[5] He appears primarily in three chapters of *The Fellowship of the Rings* when he saves the hobbits from the Old Man Willow, gives them shelter in his house for couple of nights and saves them again from the barrow-wights. He is often viewed as the natural man, living in harmony with the natural world. I refuse to fall in line with this optimistic reading as Tom Bombadil doesn't appeal me as a lover of nature. He is not even an extension of Beorn's character in *The Hobbit.* In Tolkien's earlier poem "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil", Tom rather is seen fighting with the natural world, rivers and trees. His prime adversaries were the river-spirit Goldberry and the wily Old Man Willow. At the end of the poetic adventure, Tom conquers Goldberry and makes her his wife. This is a typical allegory of the dominant masculine conquering and taming the natural feminine. Though Goldberry appears as a contented wife to Tom, the background story of conquest is too disturbing to negate. Tolkien presents Tom as an amiable man, with his penchant for ready music but nowhere does he appear to be a lover of nature. As a character, he predates every character:

> Tom was here before the river and the trees; Tom remembers the first raindrop and the first acorn... He was here before the Kings and the graves and the Barrow-wights... He knew the dark under the stars when it was fearless - before the Dark Lord came from Outside." (129)

Though he lives in the Old Forest, he scarcely takes interest in the natural world. He knows of the Ring, but shows no particular interest in it. In fact, he remains unaffected by the magic of the Ring. At the end of the story, he shows no real interest in the outcome of the War. It is only the ancient Ent, Treebeard who could generate any semblance of interest in him. His wife describes him as Master "of wood, water and hill" (122). Though she uses master in the sense of a steward, Tom always gives me an uncomfortable feeling of mastering over the natural world.

The Ents are no less problematic. They are initially hostile towards all human and human-like creatures. Merry and Pippin get no immediate welcome from them. They prefer to live alone in the forest undisturbed by any human interference. As Treebeard says:

> I am not altogether on anybody's *side,* because nobody is altogether on my *side*, if you understand me: nobody cares for the woods as I care them, not even Elves nowadays... And there are some things, of course, whose side I am altogether *not* on; I am against them altogether... these Orcs, and their masters. (461)

Treebeard's anger against the Orcs is of course justifiable; the Ents could not be branded as misanthropic but in their general apathy, if not hatred, against humankind I could not but hear a mild echo of misogynistic discourse foregrounded in Deep Ecology. There are some Deep Ecologists who are notorious for their misanthropic associations. Some of them even take a predominant anti-humanistic stance by segregating human concern leading to an advocacy of eco-brutalism or eco-fascism. The fourth of the eight planks states that "the flourishing of human life and culture is compatible with a substantial decrease in human populations; indeed, the flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease" (Devall and Sessions 70). Taking cue from this principle, eco-fascists like David Foreman and Christopher Manes have made inhumane and misanthropic statements about population control. It then comes as a relief that ultimately the Ents, inspired by Treebeard, decides to shake off this stance of apathy. This positivism seems to counter the negativity associated with Deep Ecology or does it really? The doubt still lingers on.

The novel ends with the restoration of Aragorn in Gondor's throne and a celebration of life with the fall of evil. Aragorn's coronation, however, brings no note of hope in the pastoral world. A new age, the Fourth Age, begins with the rise of Man which entails an implicit anthropocentrism. Aragorn, despite his obvious sympathy with fellow inhabitants of the Middle-Earth doesn't exactly give the impression of an admirer of nature. He is a king of the dominant species, humans, who give scant attention to the welfare of nature. The worlds of Tom Bombadil, of the Ents as well as of the elves are coming to an end. The pagan harmony between nature and these living beings are equally coming to a closure. Despite his Christian predilections, Tolkien seems to look back with sadness at the passing of pagan animism. The anthropocentric worldview anticipated in the end rather equates it with Judeo-Christian espousal of the dominance of natural world. Lynn White Jr. in his probing study of the "Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" talks in some detail on the anthropocentrism inherent in Christianity:

> …Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. . . Man shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature. Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religion (except, perhaps Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism between man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends. (9-10)

This view of Christianity is not espoused by Tolkien but he is also aware that it is this anthropocentric worldview which would continue to dominate the world. The Fellowship of the Ring has ended, the ring-bearers have decided to leave the Middle-Earth and the world will no longer be the same again. In *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien sings the anthem for the doomed green in wistful tone; reminding that the pristine pastoral world of natural harmony can never be revived again. The Ring can never be destroyed with finality; the threat of any source of substantial power, be it magical, political, nuclear or otherwise, would always be there to expose the vulnerability of the natural world.

Notes

1. It is a usual mistake to designate it as a trilogy. In actuality, *The Lord of The Rings* is a single work of six books. The first two books comprise *The Fellowship of the Ring*,

the next two books are called *The Two Towers* and Book 5 and 6 form *The Return of the King*.

2. Tolkien's friend C. S. Lewis also protested with equal vehemence while readers identified Christian allegory in his *Narnia* stories. Lewis stated that he "couldn't write in that [allegorical] way at all . . . that element pushed itself in of its own accord" (qtd. in Jacobs 267). There is no reason, however, to take their protestations entirely at the face value.

3. Sauron rarely appears in person in the text. But it is mentioned in the novel that he had always been equally culpable in exploiting natural resources.

4. I am indebted to Keenan for the ensuing discussion on wasteland motif in Tolkien.

5. The above quotation is accessed from <http://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/lor1.htm.>

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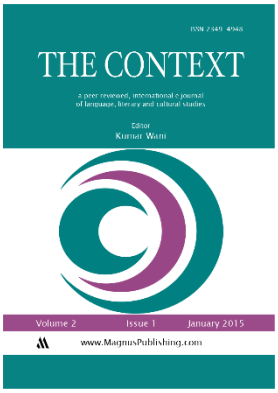

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Conflict between Familial Responsibility and Lure of Self-Fulfilment in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*

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Abstract

Tennessee Williams's play The Glass Menagerie deals with the memories of Tom Wingfield, an officer in the Merchant Navy, who had deserted his poor mother, Amanda, and disabled sister, Laura, in order to pursue a life of adventure but suffers from acute remorse due to his realisation of what his helpless family must have gone through in his absence. The objective of this paper is to study the reasons of Tom's abandonment of his family and his perpetual anguish as its result. He feels obligated toward yet burdened by his family. He realises that he needs to break his family ties to get rid of his drab and dreary existence. As Tom feels like a trapped animal inside his house and the place of work, he goes to movies every night. Amanda is suspicious about his frequent nightly absences from the house. She accuses him of jeopardizing the security of his family. Amanda's doubting his loyalty to his family angers Tom greatly.

Key words: *conflict, family, responsibility, self-fulfillment*

Conflict between Familial Responsibility and Lure of Self-Fulfilment in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*

Dr. Harish G Tapadia

Tennessee Williams is one of the most outstanding playwrights in American Theatre. His play *The Glass Menagerie* premiered in Chicago in 1944 and was an instant hit. It is set in the days of the Great Depression of 1930s when unemployment, inflation and shortage of necessary things had made the lives of people all over the world miserable. The playwright has sought to evaluate this era that caused financial as well as emotional trauma through depiction of the plight of a middle class family living in St. Louis, Missouri. The play deals with the memories of Tom Wingfield, an officer in the Merchant Navy, who had deserted his poor mother, Amanda, and disabled sister, Laura, in order to pursue a life of adventure but suffers from acute remorse due to his realisation of what his helpless family must have gone through in his absence. The objective of this paper is to study the reasons of Tom's abandonment of his family and his perpetual anguish as its result.

At the beginning of the play, Tom Wingfield tells the audience that he is the play's narrator as well as a character in it. The play takes place in his memory. After giving a brief introduction of other characters and social background, he joins his mother and sister at the dinner table. Amanda finds faults with his eating habits and gives him a lecture. She tells him not to push food with his fingers and chew it properly. Tom does not like her constant directions and gets angry. Amanda asks Laura to be prepared in case any gentleman caller visits. She starts telling her children how she had been visited by seventeen gentlemen callers a Sunday afternoon when she was an unmarried girl in Blue Mountain. Actually Tom and Laura have heard about this incident many times. But they allow her to tell it because she loves to talk about it. Her bitterness at having married the wrong person comes out through her comments. She regrets that she chose Mr Wingfield, a telephone man, over other worthy suitors. Mr Wingfield abandoned his family leaving Amanda to fend for herself and her children. Laura tells Amanda that she is not expecting anyone to visit her. A childhood illness has left her crippled. This has made her a delicate, fragile and alienated person. As she does not mix with persons of her age, she has no chance of getting any visitor. Amanda refuses to acknowledge this fact and keeps harping on the gentleman callers. Tom realises his sister's agony. So his mother's talk makes him angry and bitter.

Laura has developed an inferiority complex due to her physical disability. Amanda enrols her in Rubicam's Business College to learn typing. But Laura's hands shook so that she could not hit the right keys. She dropped out after attending the course just for a few days. She could not muster the courage to tell Amanda about this. So she pretended to attend the classes and spent her time in the art museum and the bird-houses at the zoo. Eventually Amanda finds out her deception. She realises that it is very difficult to make Laura self-dependent. Getting married is her only chance of

living a happy life. So the idea of getting a gentleman caller for Laura became Amanda's obsession.

There is a violent quarrel between Amanda and Tom in Scene III. Tom likes to read D. H. Lawrence's novels. Amanda feels that they will not be a good influence on her son and so opposes his reading them. Tom does not like such intrusion in his private life. He raves and rants: Look! – I've got nothing, no single thing – …In my life that I can call my OWN! Everything is – (Williams 253)

When Amanda declares that she will not tolerate such behaviour in her house, he retorts that he is paying the rent on it. Tom wants to be a poet. He wishes to have a life of adventure. But he cannot pursue his own dreams as he is forced to work in a warehouse for his family. While commenting upon Tom's restlessness and desperation, G. S. Bedagkar writes:

> There is a longing burning in his mind, he wants to break out of the trap and go out on an adventure. In spite of the great opportunities, he is still condemned to live in the warehouse. (Bedagkar 327)

As Tom feels like a trapped animal inside his house and the place of work, he goes to movies every night. Amanda is suspicious about his frequent nightly absences from the house. She does not believe that he goes every night to the movies. She accuses him of jeopardizing the security of his family. Amanda's doubting his loyalty to his family angers Tom greatly. He tells Amanda that he has become a hired assassin in the underworld. He visits opium dens every day. He even runs a string of cat-houses. Adam Alonzi observes that movies have skewed Tom's outlook on reality, he speaks of the actors on screen as real people with whom he is in competition, as if the line between his life and the unreality of the silver screen has blurred beyond recognition. (Alonzi)

Amanda comes to know that Tom wishes to join the Merchant Navy. She asks Tom to find a suitable boy for Laura before leaving the house. Tom is a sensitive person who wishes to escape to preserve his creativity which he thinks, will be destroyed if he remains in the warehouse. The poetic, imaginative Tom is not the sort of man to cultivate a normal career leading to success and wealth. He says: Man is by instinct a lover, a hunter, a fighter, and none of these instincts are given much play at the warehouse! (Williams 261) He also says: I go to the movies because – I like adventure. Adventure is something I don't have much of at work, so I go to the movies. (Williams 261) Such perception of the present circumstances leads Tom on a path of escape. Amanda's suggestion that he simply has to work hard to succeed is not acceptable to him. Amanda does not understand that Tom is at the end of his patience. He says: It seems unimportant to you, what I'm doing – what I want to do – having a little difference between them. (Williams 254) Tom feels that if he had been selfish, he would have followed his father's example long ago. Amanda keeps reminding him of his duty to his family. She says: I've had to put up a solitary battle all these years. But you're my right-hand bower! Don't fall down, don't fail! (Williams 259)

Tom is fully aware of all this. He feels obligated toward yet burdened by his family. He realises that he needs to break his family ties to get rid of his drab and dreary existence. There is a severe conflict between familial responsibility and lure of self-fulfilment in Tom's mind. Anna Yaguexta comments that Tom retreats to his delusion

of movies when he cannot find meaning in his life unable to cope with reality and through his character, the play expresses the conflict between the duties of self-sacrifice versus the duties to one's self. (Yaguexta)

Tom's disdain for the humdrum nature of daily life comes out during his soliloquy in Scene V. Compared to outside world, his uneventful life in a residential building in a backstreet in St. Louis makes him restless. He muses:

> In Spain there was Guernica! But here there was only hot swing music and liquor, dance halls, bars, and movies, and sex that hung in the gloom like a chandelier and flooded the world with brief deceptive rainbows… (Williams 265)

The usual pastimes of people around him do not interest him. The thought of escape comes back to him again and again. The failure to express himself as a poet stifles him. He tries to take refuge in the imaginary world of movies. He wishes to emulate the stars he has seen at the movies. Instead of satisfying his longing for adventure, they only make him angry and jealous. Tom tells his colleague, Jim:

> Yes, movies! Look at them – All those glamorous people – having adventures – hogging it all, gobbling the whole thing up! You know what happens? People go to the movies instead of moving! Hollywood characters are supposed to have all the adventures for everybody in America, while everybody in America sits in a dark room and watches them have them! (Williams 279)

Thus Tom's vicarious experience of movies and the incongruity between the drabness of domestic life and adventure of the outside world makes him more and more desperate.

Tom has great affection for his sister, Laura. He is acutely conscious of her distress as a result of her disability. He accepts Amanda's suggestion to look for a suitable boy for her at the warehouse. He invites Jim O'Connor for dinner. Amanda is ecstatic and goes overboard in preparation for his visit. Tom's suggestion that she should not expect too much from Jim's visit, falls on deaf ears. Actually Tom does not know that Jim is already engaged. Jim also does not realise any hidden agenda behind Tom's inviting him for dinner. When the truth is disclosed, both Laura and Amanda are left heart-broken. Amanda is angry with Tom for not checking Jim's background beforehand. Tom expresses his helplessness and is about to leave for movies as usual. Amanda bursts out: Don't think about us, a mother deserted, an unmarried sister who's crippled and has no job! Don't let anything interfere with your selfish pleasure! (Williams 303) Amanda's onslaught is too much for Tom to bear. He replies: The more you shout about my selfishness to me the quicker I'll go, and I won't go to the movies! (Williams 303) The statement of Tom is far-reaching as it clearly means that he is leaving the house to join the Merchant Navy.

Tom's abandonment of Amanda and Laura can be interpreted as an act motivated by selfishness. But his quest for happiness turns out to be an illusion. It is because he manages to get over his mother's memories but can never forget Laura. He says: Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be! (Williams 304)

The spectre of his sister's memories continues to haunt him wherever he goes. Ordinary things like a familiar bit of music and a piece of transparent glass torture him by reminding him of Laura. Walter S. Zapotoczny comments:

> …when Tom follows his father's example and walks out on his family, he finds that however far he travels; he remains trapped by the reach of memory. He cannot forget his sister and her plight. (Zapotoczny)

Tennessee Williams explores the psychology of Tom's character by a process of unravelling his memories. In spite of his great hopes, Tom is not able to achieve anything spectacular. There is nothing heroic or challenging in his departure. It is little more than the snap of a twig in the wind. Thus Tom comes out as a self-centred escapist who suffers from deep anguish due to his abandonment of his disabled sister. The lure of self-fulfilment proves stronger than the sense of familial responsibility in his case.

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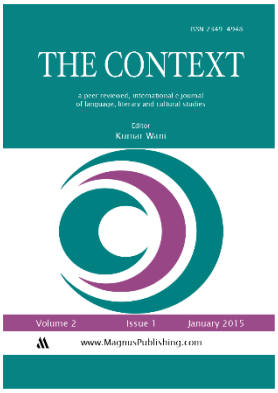

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History and Cultural Memory in I. Allan Sealy's *The Trotter-Nama*

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Abstract

This paper examines the treatment of history in I. Allan Sealy's famous novel *The Trotter-Nama*. It is argued that Sealy's subversive and fabulative novel utilizes the mode of cultural memory in the re-telling of the history of the Anglo-Indian people from the colonial times to the present. Through a revisionary narrativization and memorialization of history, the novel not only addresses the gaps and distortions of traditional histories but also effectively charts the cultural and historical life-scapes of the Anglo-Indians. As a product of cultural memory, Sealy's novel is engaged in an active communication of historical memories which he had inherited as a member of the Anglo-Indian community. It becomes clear that Sealy intends to address the abuse and historical injustice suffered by these people at the hands of the colonial British, and also the native Indians. He writes them into almost all the major events of Indian history. This gives the Anglo-Indians a chance to see them in new historical perspective.

Keywords: *Sealy, Anglo-Indian community, colonial, marginalization, history, cultural memory*

History and Cultural Memory in I. Allan Sealy's *The Trotter-Nama*

Dr. Arindam Sarma

Introduction

The Trotter-Nama by I. Allan Sealy is an extravagant piece of fictional history of India written from the perspective of the Anglo-Indian community. This hugely mock-epic saga of seven generations of the Trotter clan spanning 200 years becomes the history of the Anglo-Indian community itself. It incorporates a wide spectrum of historical events and figures, and faithfully documents all aspects of Anglo-Indian life-world, thereby making it possible to see it as history from the viewpoint of a people that has suffered erasure and dispossession in the hands of History itself. For a long time, the contribution of this socially and culturally uprooted community to the national culture has been overlooked. The Anglo-Indians have disappeared from the national imaginary. They have been much maligned, neglected, subjected to sneer as "country born" by the British and so unwanted by them for their dark skin, and as "chee chees" by Indians. Sealy, in this novel memorializes the long history of dispossession, neglect and eventual decline of the Anglo-Indian community—a community "shipwrecked by history" (Boehmer 198).

Through a subversively farcical narrativization of history that displaces the dominant discourse of history, Sealy attempts to write these people into the national imaginary. The history of the community, from the colonial times to the present, has been told by Sealy in a way that gives voice to the silences and gaps in the traditional histories. This re-telling or-re-enactment of history plays the crucial role in the cultural assertion and historical reparation of the community as it gives them an opportunity to take account of its past. This paper examines how Sealy retrieves the long forgotten history of his community regarding the origin, contribution, and historical wounds of the community. The paper argues that it is through the utilization of the mode of "cultural memory" that Sealy presents a revisionary narrativization of the history of the Anglo-Indians.

Narrativization of History and Recent Indian English Novels - An Outline

In India, history has remained an embattled territory. From Orientalist (mis)construction and imperial distortion to nationalist and communal appropriation, historiography in modern India is characterized with fissures, cracks and dilemmas. Since the beginning of the 1980s, historians, mostly with revisionary agendas, have been appealing for and practising a mode of writing history which would not be directed by Western paradigms and frameworks of history, and at the same time would be able to give voice to the silences surrounding many areas of India's past. The Subaltern School of historians have been on the forefront of this revisionist enterprise of Indian history. On the one hand, the Subaltern Studies historians have vigorously contested the European or Orientalist metanarratives, and on the other hand revealed the weaknesses and dangers of nationalistic claims as embodied in the postcolonial

nation-state. The revisionary historiography has its parallels in the novels of the 80s and the 90s. The emergence of Salman Rushdie and other novelists of the 80s and the 90s coincided with the time of disenchantment with official (Congress) nationalism. Jon Mee elaborates:

> Various economic and social pressures have led to the end of the so-called Nehruvite consensus in India....The issue of imagining the nation, the issue of the fate of the children of the midnight hour of independence, has become a pressing one throughout India. It is an issue which has been debated in all languages. The better novels in English of the past twenty years participate in this larger debate. (Mee 127)

The novels that emerged in the 1980s are both political and literary, and they can be seen as "æsthetic equivalent(s) of a third form of history or a maverick attempt at doing history (?)" (Mukherjee 61). In their attempt to narrativize history, Indian English writings from the 1980s onwards have made serious, consistent and multifarious engagement with historical materials, politics, ideology, and dialectical dilemmas of Indian history from the colonial to the present times. These novels participate in a kind of historiography that is both "frankly revisionist" and "fiercely theoretical and intellectually insurrectionary" (Said v), and can be regarded as supplementary and corrective to, and in contestation with imperial, colonial, neo-colonial, nationalist historiography. Revealing the textuality of history by foregrounding the question of history-fiction interface, these novels present their own unique versions of history—history told and mythologised by common people. In these versions of history the subaltern classes are posited against the grand colonial and neo-colonial reason and monologism. Writers like Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, Rohinton Mistry, I. Allan Sealy and Mukul Kesavan employ this interventionist historiography which blurs the boundary between "fact" and "fiction". This revisionary process, both in historiography and in fictional writings, has drawn considerable attention to the inherited problems of historical representation. Historical novels such as those produced in India in the last few decades have invigorated these debates as they have invested fresh perspectives into received historiographies.

Role of Memory and 'Cultural Memory'

Memory plays a crucial role in the narrativization as well as in the revisionary process of history. In a number of essays in his *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), Salman Rushdie underlines the point that, by nature, "reality" or "truth" is provisional, arbitrary, and has its own different and often competing versions. An extended thesis of this premise, his novel *The Midnight's Children* (1981) highlights the fact that reality is something which textually created through the practice of memory, history and fiction. Since History or "what really happened" is a construct, it is crucial that we must be alert to who is saying what and to what purpose. An artist's version of reality may differ from a politician's. Rushdie says that "we remake the past to suit our present purposes, using memory as our tool" (Rushdie 24). Rushdie, in *Midnight's Children*, produces a "chutnified" version of Indian history where the multiple plurality of individual memory merges with recorded facts to disrupt the idea of conventional history. This individualized version approaches and interprets Indian history in a way that reveals the gaps and silences in the authorized, official versions.

Following Rushdie, a number of postcolonial Indian English writers have depicted alternative histories of India—histories constructed by means of individual experiences

and through personal and community memory. In constructing historical reality through individual and, therefore, varied personal experiences, they highlight the textual reality of history, nation and identity. These novels contest the hegemony of traditional objective histories by producing historical versions based on individual experiences and memories of the protagonists, thereby pitting "*historical truth*" against "*memory's truth*".

Contrary to the individual frame of memory as employed by Salman Rushdie in *Midnight's Children* and Amitav Ghosh in *The Shadow Lines* (1988), I. Allan Sealy's novel *The Trotter-Nama* (1988) utilizes the form of memory called "cultural memory". Memorializing history is a radical way of recovering those strands of history which have been lost or suppressed under the invented traditions and imagined communities erected by the colonial or postcolonial elites. This is the case with the history of the Anglo-Indian community in India—a community whose history has been marginalized and ignored. Sealy's narrator in the novel is a radical historian who, in his attempt to retrieve the glorious past and the dwindling present history of his community, comes makes up new narratives of history that not only addresses the gaps and distortions of traditional histories but also effectively charts the cultural and historical life-scapes of the Anglo-Indian community. He creates a fabulous, legendary account of his people that incorporates unknown facts, neglected sources, stories, myths, and anecdotes, culinary, artistic and behavioural patterns which are embedded in the cultural memory of the community.

History proper is usually a window to the past, and it is always a matter of debate how much or to what extent we can know about the past. Cultural memory is what we remember/forget and why. Sealy turns to the resources of cultural memory in the retrieval of the historical past, and displays how and to what the extent the past has been remembered/forgotten/ or silenced. At the same time, we see the process whereby the past is re-described, reabsorbed in the present moment as it anticipates the future. According to Paul Connerton, cultural memory foregrounds "those acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible" and by doing so, it paves the way for an analysis of the artifacts and cultural processes through which shared memories are shaped and disseminated in the modern age (Connerton 39). Mieke Bal explains the significance of that cultural memorization in the following words:

> Cultural memory signifies that memory can be understood as a cultural phenomenon as well as an individual or social one...We invoke the discourse of cultural memory to mediate or modify difficult or tabooed moments of the past—moments that nonetheless impinge, sometimes fatally, on the present. (Bal 7)

In recent times, the works of such theorists and philosophers such as Jan Assman, Aleida Assman, Maurice Halbwachs, and Wulf Kansteiner have popularized the concept of "Cultural Memory" which is a shift "away from the idea of 'memory' as the spontaneous recall of past experiences as these have been passed on unsullied and intact from one generation to the next" (Rigney 366). These works argue that the workings of cultural memory enable transfers of memories of earlier generations or events to later generations, thereby making available "other people's experiences in other ages or in other places" (Rigney 366). This transference may occur through various means, and literature and literary texts are very important medium of it. Cultural memory, in the words of Ann Rigney, "involves memories of other people's lives that have been mediated by texts and images: inherited" (367). While discussing

Sealy's novel as a product of cultural memory, it becomes evident that Sealy is actually engaged in an active communication of cultural memories which he had inherited as a member of the Anglo-Indian community. Sealy's *The Trotter-Nama*, deals with important upheavals in a people's *remembered* history, and yet, that reflected through the *forgotten* lives of individuals and communities.

Memorializing Dispossession and Marginalization

It was Warren Hastings who had first used the term Anglo-Indian very early to denote Europeans living in India. The period between the early 18th century and the early decades of the 19th century witnessed a huge influx of Europeans to India, and most of them came in search of military adventures, power and riches. Justin Aloysius Trotter in Sealy's novel is one such European who came to India during this period of high military adventurism. These Europeans first co-habited with and later intermarried Indian women, often imprisoned or widowed in war, sometimes well born. Their descendants could be found at every level of society, distinguishing themselves in war, trade and culture. Early generations of Anglo-Indians were powerful people who enjoyed status and privileges. Even though many of them took to Indian ways of life, they still retained their power and positions in the colonial regime. They helped the British in their military campaigns, and like Justin Trotter in the novel, played crucial roles in colonial power-games.

Unlike the later Anglo-Indians who did not enjoy political power, Justin, the Great suffered no such anxiety and even though he went native to a great extent, he was revered by the colonials. The first Trotter never had to confront the disturbing question of belonging in this new land, far away from Europe. He made his vast fortune and fell in love with India, and decided to spend his life here, despite retaining the colonialist's characteristic of exploitation and cruel financial exaction. As time passed and he had earned fortune and power, Justin Trotter tried to acquire Indian ways of life. Trying hard to become a native, he took to wearing Indian clothes and smoking the hookah. But, though he was never ridiculed as being a half-caste, he himself knew all too well that he would never be able to become one of the natives, and all his efforts in this regard would go in vain:

> Justin (who) had just decided that he could never, no matter how hard he tried, turn Indian (any more than he could revert to a European), and it was best if he were reconciled to the fact and became a third thing… (195).

Throughout the novel, Sealy emphasizes the hyphenated condition of these in-between people. Despite his growing hyphenated condition, Justin Trotter was perfectly at ease in his adopted country.

The process of neglect and dispossession that started with the Next Trotter branch had to do with the fact that they were country-born, had different skin complexion, and so they were not quite Europeans as to enjoy the privileges accorded to pure-blooded colonialists. Sealy shows how the contributions and achievements of the Anglo-Indians were ignored and relegated to the dustbins of history. The fortunes of these people began to change after the opening of the Suez Canal which made possible a free flow of brides and this stopped British males in India to no longer look for Indian brides. Macaulay's Minute on Education created an indigenous population capable of manning essential services in the language of the ruling race, and this

phenomenon threatened the power, prestige and livelihood of these country-born Europeans under the British Crown.

The representative figure of the next generation of Trotters, Mik, is a country born, has dark skin, and he completely takes to the native ways. He has many grotesque adventures with native women and Sealy elaborately describes his sexual exploits. Mik's father, Justin, a colonial master himself, was not happy about his son looking increasingly like a native. He beat up the boy and restrained him from playing in the pools, but with no result. Justin was afraid that "If he grows any darker he will be invisible" (154). Later Mik became a surveyor and travels to far places like Isphahan and Turin: "The blueness of his skin which had returned briefly in the snows had long since left him, so that the soles of his feet were yellow once more and the rest of his person (the monumental member apart) a dark khaki" (198).

He later joins the British Army and goes to England for training. Just before Mik was to leave for India after his training in the Military Academy in England, the Court of Directors of the East India Company issued a resolution that "*no person the son of a Native Indian shall henceforth be appointed by this Court in employment in the Civil, Military or Marine services of the Company*" (201). This was, in sum, the content of the actual Minute of the Resolution taken on April 19, 1791. This was the beginning of Mik's further ordeal to come as a result of his being a country-born.

Mik would have lost his job there and then; but the British officer who was struck by Mik's potential as spy and soldier, intervened and convinced the authority by highlighting not only "the irrefrangible necessity of a khaki skin for British military espionage in India", but also the financial expense incurred on Mik's training (201). Finally, the financial consideration moved the Directors to relent, and Mik was allowed to proceed to India on sufferance. Mik had been taunted and jeered by fellow British officers all the way back to India.

Mik (and countless other dark-skinned Anglo-Indians) became invisible to the British, because in spite of his loyal service to the British, he was never allowed to forget that he was a country born and dark-skinned, and so he would never be allowed to enjoy the privilege and power of a European. His stint under the British flag was ended by another order from the Governor-general in Council, Calcutta, Fort William, on the 21st of April, 1795. It was an order that rendered many Anglo-Indian officers jobless, and turned them bitter against the British, under whom they had been serving until then. Mik started serving a Maratha prince and had evidently a satisfying time. After a crucial battle against the East India Company (where Mik and his father the Great Trotter ranged on the opposite sides as enemies and Mik lost one of his hands from a wound by his father's cannon ball, described by Sealy in the manner of Firdausi's *Sohrab and Rustam*). Mik had to pay another big price for being a so called "half-caste" when a further warning The Governor-General in Council, Calcutta at Fort William ended his military under the Indian princes.

Through the story of Mik, Sealy takes us back to the unrecounted history of betrayal and abandonment that the Anglo-Indians had to go through during the colonial times. The fact that the body is often a site or a visual marker of identity is explored in Sealy's novel *The Trotter-Nama*. The predicament of the Anglo-Indian community had much to do with the way they looked. E. M. Collingham's book *The Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj* (2001) examines the complex trajectories of history that produced the distinctive bodies of the Anglo-Indians, and how these bodies had

to suffer injustice and marginality under the British Raj. He argues that the British experience of the Raj was intensely physical. The fact of their physical appearance—not quite native, and not British—rendered the Anglo-Indians unwanted by the colonials despite their pretensions to a metropolitan "Britishness". According to Collingham, the Anglo-Indian bodies so constituted articulated the changes in the expression, manifestations, and strategies of British power in India from the nineteenth century to the end of British rule. All through his military career, Mik had to contend with and suffer for this perception on the part of the British. The fact that he was a country-born haunted him for the rest of his life. This pattern continued throughout history as we see the later generations of Trotters continuing to suffer for this. The theme of invisibility is further employed by Sealy with regard to Thomas Henry Trotter who takes active part and ultimately wins the Victoria Cross for his courageous service during the long, bloody siege of Lucknow in 1857. In a painting commemorating this siege of the Residency, the figure of Thomas Henry Trotter remains in the sideline as a grey blur which symbolizes how the British refused to acknowledge the service of the Anglo-Indians during the Mutiny.

Re-Inscribing Anglo-Indian Subjectivity

Sealy intends to not only speak out but correct the abuse and wrongs done to the Anglo-Indian community by the pure-blooded, white skinned British. He writes them into almost all the major events of Indian history. This gives the Anglo-Indians a chance to see them in new historical perspective and regain the subjectivity denied to them by the British. His other strategy is to co-opt and appropriate, and thereby subvert a great variety of historical texts and personalities. Sealy uses the major events and personages in Anglo-Indian history to structure his work. According to Michael Wilding Sealy's novel "plays its part in the movement of Anglo-Indians for cultural recognition. Merle Oberon, Englebert Humperdinck and Cliff Richard are a part of its iconography, and it attempts to augment the roll-call of names with its own gallery of eccentrics" (Wilding 10). These characters find their ways into the pages of the novel in some guise or other. Members of the Trotter clan are either conflated or somehow connected to these figures and other more historically significant personages such as Major General Claude Martin, Colonel James Skinner, Henry Louis Vivien Derozio, Sir Henry Gidney, Frank Anthony etc.

Justin Trotter's life resembles a lot with the French mercenary Claude Martin who made great fortunes in India and built several stately mansions. Though Martin was himself not an Anglo-Indian, he is a figure of respect in the annals of the community. In his will Martin left his most famous mansion Constantia (the model for Sans Souci in the novel) to be a school which later became the La Martiniere, an institution of Anglo-Indian education and culture. As for Mik, though he is shown to be serving a Maratha prince *under* the legendary military officer Colonel James Skinner, many of Mik's military feats bear close resemblance to the life-events of Colonel Skinner himself. Like Mik, Skinner, the son of a British officer and a Rajput mother, suffered due to the discriminatory policies of the British, and served under the Marathas after he was denied entry into British military service. Mik's fictional memoir in the novel contains a direct quote from Skinner's actual military journal. Mik's love life likens him to another famous Anglo-Indian, Lt. Col. Sir Henry Gidney.

In one of the most memorable portions of the novel Sealy offers a fresh new look at the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 where he imaginatively writes the Trotters into the thick

of the bloody events of the Mutiny where Anglo-Indians helped the British in crushing it. Placing the Anglo-Indians in this crucial event of history displaces the British imperial myth of the 'Indian Mutiny'. Requested by the British officer, Mik goes to crush the rebellion, which he does but himself dies later from a bullet wound. The rest of the bloody siege of the Residency, the bloodshed and mayhem in Nakhlau, and the ultimate crushing of the rebellion are seen from the point of view of the Trotter family. The La Martiniere School was occupied by the rebels and it suffered extensive damage due to heavy shelling by the advancing British troops. Sealy records the valour of the Anglo-Indians and also the bravery of the sixty-eight boys and eight staff of the La Martiniere School whose extraordinary efforts helped to defend the Lucknow Residency.

Jacob Kahn, the son of the widow of Justine Trotter and Yakub Khan, becomes an activist for the rights of his community. He goes to Westminster and presents "The Petition of the Anglo-Indians" at the British Parliament. This petition of the fictional Kahn resembles the "East Indians' Petition" which was presented to the Parliament in 1830 by John Ricketts. The petition (both the historical and fictional) was discussed and passed in Parliament but no action is taken for several more decades. Sealy inserts a quote from the actual Parliamentary debate on the physical inferiority of the "crannies" (307)—a derogatory term used to describe Eurasians. Derozio becomes Henry Luis Vivian Fonseca-Trotter, and historian Cedric Dover (whose 1929 book *Cimmerii? Or Eurasians and their Future* is alluded to by Sealy) becomes Cedric Khan-Trotter in the novel. Present day activism for of Anglo-Indian constitutional rights are depicted by the characters of Young Paul Trotter and Alex Kahn-Trotter (both the characters are modeled on Henry Gidney), and also Marris Trotter who (like the actual Frank Anthony) advocated for job quotas for the Anglo-Indian Trotters.

The Ilbert Bill which was introduced by the British Parliament after the Indian Mutiny of 1857 evoked mixed reactions among the Anglo-Indians and we see the heated debate among the Trotters regarding the Bill. We see the rise of Indian National Congress and the growing tide of nationalistic fervour in Indian politics through the ups and downs in the lives of the Trotters and their activities. The Trotters open branches of Congress in Nakhlau and organizes protest marches, meetings and writes memorandum. But their efforts are ignored not only by the British but also by many Congress leaders. Sealy duly records the service of the Anglo-Indian people to the War effort, albeit with exaggeration and satire:

> A Trotter accounted for the first zeppelin brought down in England while another brought down the first zeppelin over France; fatal balloons, one way or the other, seemed to run in the Trotter blood…Eight out of ten Anglo-Indian men of fighting age left their wives and sweethearts and marched with jerky steps… (431).

Through this sustained and brilliantly intelligent co-option and subversion of texts, events and personalities, Sealy's narrator revives the cultural memory of both the pain of historical amnesia and also the achievement and contributions of the community. These literary re-writings of historical events and personalities with various literary modes of representation involves both a re-visioning of the original events and a comment on the tradition of remembrance itself. The cultural memory of the community is further evoked by Sealy through his elaborate descriptions of cuisine, dress, speech and religious iconography etc. He presents a colorful cultural life of the people through the minutiae of the everyday life of Sans Souci. This gives us a

fascinating glimpse into the Anglo-Indian domesticity and larger socio-cultural life-scapes during the colonial times.

Towards the end of the novel Sealy charts the gradual decline and present diasporic condition of the Anglo-Indian people after the Independence of India in 1947. They started facing new crisis of identity as Indians still regarded them as loyal to the British. They found themselves confined to clerical jobs, running the railways, the posts and the telegraphs and also the lower orders of the police force. Prime Minister Nehru ensured two seats in the Parliament and a seat in the Legislatures of seven states for adequate representation of the community in the political sphere. Large number of Anglo-Indians left India and migrated to the UK, Australia, New Zealand and other Commonwealth Nations for a better future and opportunities. But in the UK, these people continued to experience racial bias that blighted their lives in India. Sealy poignantly depicts this sad saga for search of *home* and the complex social and psychological dilemmas arising out of their love-hate relationship with Britain and the intense bond with India. The character Marris Blabber in Sealy's novel voices this conflict:

> As head of a dwindling community Marris was harsh on Packers—and Leavers. "Go and become bus-conductor in London if you want" he warned "But don't come crying back to me" Or he might scoff "Melbourne is all very well, but can you get mangoes there?" He favored the Nakhlau dasheri personally. For those who stayed he had words of comfort and advice: 'This is your home; serve it and it will serve you.' And just in case the Home forget to serve Trotters, he lobbied for a new lease on the special concessions that the Brutish had allowed: job quotas… (16)

Re-writing Canonical Texts

In his attempt to recover the history of the Anglo-Indians, and to re-inscribe the Anglo-Indian subjectivity, Sealy reverts to history by way of re-visiting or re-writing canonical texts. Literature is an important medium of propagating cultural memory. According to Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, "'remembering the past' is also a matter of recollecting earlier texts and rewriting earlier stories" (Erll and Rigney 112). Cultural memory is very often mediated through texts and images. They point out the ways in which "cultural memory" and literature interact with each other. They say that "literature establishes a 'memory of its own' in the form of intertextual relations that give new cultural life to old texts. A significant part of literary production consists of the rewriting of canonical texts and, more generally, of earlier cultural narratives such as folk tales and myths" (113). In Sealy's novel we see exactly such a mode of remembrance in his critical contestation with canonical/imperial texts and writers like Kipling and his novel *Kim*, and other colonial narratives which showed an utter contempt for this hybrid community called the Anglo-Indians. Resistance to colonial insult is achieved by Sealy in his huge subversion of Kipling's Raj novel *Kim*. Kipling contemptuously dismisses the half-Europeans as low-caste and says that one should not waste time and energy in following their pedigree. On the contrary, Sealy, with a dazzlingly subversive and subalternist move sets out to recuperate the maligned and forgotten history of the community by following through on their pedigree:

> "A strange monadic people," Peter Jonquil went on.
> "Nomadic?"

> "Monadic. They live in a kind of bubble—or many bubbles. They speak a kind of English….. They fantasize about the past. They improvise grand pedigrees. It's like a Raj novel gone wrong… (560).

The Raj novel referred to by Sealy is *Kim* by Rudyard Kipling. Kim, the protagonist of Kipling's novel becomes Mik (short for Michael, General Mik Trotter) in Sealy's hands. Kim has a strong aversion for military life, drilling and routine of regimentation; he states with determination that he would never be a soldier. But in *The Trotter-Nama,* his alter-ego Mik is not only turned into a soldier by Sealy, but one who is passionate about war, and achieves the status of a legendary soldier. Sealy maintains a regular and particular conversation with Kipling throughout *The Trotter-Nama*. Rukmini Bhaiya Nair argues that Sealy "will not allow *Kim* its blissful innocence; it rips up the colonizer's history as if it were the paper it is written on, interleaving Mik's story with 'other' historical records that reveal the Raj's shabby treatment of Anglo-Indians" (Nair 180)

The intertextual relation between Mik and Kim is accentuated by the presence of a locket, a Tibetan guru, and elements of war and romance in Mik's life. In a section of *The Trotter-Nama* entitled *"Another Kahani"* (170-73) Sealy offers an alternative to the picaresque travels of Kim and his Lama in which Mik embarks on a "Little Game' (unlike Kipling's "Great Game") (172) in the company of an old Tibetan monk. Whereas Kim and the lama had travelled along the Grand Trunk Road, Mik and the monk travel along the coastal route from Calcutta to Madras, lighting fires as they go. In this section, Sealy highlights the British denial of the hyphenated Anglo-Indians, their continued refusal to accept their mixed-blooded progeny as their own, while in Kipling's novel the "white" Kim is embraced by his father's old regiment.

More importantly, the Indianized body of Mik has been used by Sealy as a site of resistance to both the colonial racial pride and abuse, and the power of politics and history that tends to see bodies in a narrow stereotype gaze. Elizabeth Grosz has observed that despite being a site of knowledge-power and a target of control and constraint, the human body also exerts an unpredictable and powerful threat to codification and control. She calls such dynamic, resistant bodies "volatile bodies"—bodies who are not simply passive objects upon which regimes of power are played out, but display capacity for protest and self-representation in alternate ways (Grosz 1994). Mik is a grotesque product of history who poses challenge to the racial pride and exclusivist construction of identity of white Europeans. By foregrounding and highlighting the corporeal differences of Mik and other Anglo-Indians from the colonial British, Sealy provides them a counter-canonical status in the novel. The novel, thus, recuperates marginalized, invisible colonised subject's body transforms its signification and its subjectivity. The Anglo-Indians, much maligned by imperialist Kipling and the British in general, body forth in the novel as a community of people whose very is a strong reminder that an oppositional embodiment are always at work which resists and problematizes hegemonic, imperialist construction of a unified authentic identity. Elleke Boehmer says: "In the process of postcolonial rewriting the trope of the dumb, oppressed body undergoes significant translations" ("Transfiguring" 268). In Sealy's re-writing of the canonical text *Kim* and its concept of identity, we see such a subversive manoeuvre.

Unseating Historiography

Sealy, in the context of the betrayal of the Anglo-Indian community by both historians and the people in power, displays a strong suspicion of history and historians alike. It

is Sealy's suspicion of history that makes him debunk the character of Mr Montagu, the historian in the novel. He portrays him in a negative light by suggesting him to be a "reprobate" and calling him a "Posturing Satan (369), a "Carpet bagging rogue" and a "devil" (374). He is denounced both as a political and a moral corrupt. He is also castigated from the Trotter family (Trotter symbolically refers to all Anglo-Indians) by being called, the "Anti-Trotter" (376). Sealy exposes the folly of historians proper by implying that writers of traditional histories are always influenced by their ideological and political affiliations which compel them to take account of those facts and figures only that suit their purpose and exclude diversity of perspectives. Therefore, Eugene in the novel calls the historian Montagu's narrative as "the best an historian could do", because he, like a typical historian, is so caught up in facts and figures that he disregards the fantastic events, the legends, and minutiae of everyday life which can only portray the distinctive life-scapes of the Anglo-Indian community in the proper light: "The bequest of a school occupied him for an entire chapter, while of breakfasts and recipes he made no mention" (377).

In contrast to Montagu and his method of historiography, Sealy's narrator in the novel, Eugene, the Seventh Trotter, adopts a method of historicizing his community which veers away from a Western tradition identified in terms of an Aristotelian desire for straight lines and defining essences. Eugene adopts the form of the traditional Persian *Namas* or epics produced by Moghul court historians. Sealy seems to suggests that it is only through such a highly embellished, picaresque, fabulative, intertextual, constantly digressive form of history as opposed to official rigid historiography that the "invisible" body of the Anglo-Indians can be made visible and re-written into the national imaginary. The appropriation of the traditional '*Nama*' form is definitely part of Sealy's attempt to unseat historiography and to displace the genres of the colonized with those of the colonized.

Sealy's unreliable narrator Eugene "does not speak the privileged language of truth. What he says is continually interrogated, interrupted and undermined in ways that could be thought of as an attempt to write a kind of newly postcolonial history" (Mee 133) The inclusive narrative method of the "*nama*" or the chronicle form unravels the irony and distortions and political complicity of Montagu's historiographic agenda. This form liberates the narrator from the constraints and colonizing tendencies of grand teleologies and official historigraphies, and allows him to bring in diversity of perspectives. Eugene uses fragmentary evidence, suppressed voices, and silences, and an archaeological manner of looking into family history and relationships in re(dis)covering a lost history.

Conclusion

Sealy in *The Trotter-Nama* works with a huge amount of historical materials, and to his credit, he has brilliantly and successfully turned this history into a memorable and highly entertaining literary experience, yet never losing his focus and the serious intent of historical recovery and representation of a marginalized and unrepresented community. In the words of Linda Conrad, Sealy gives the Anglo-Indian community "an etiological myth and a fictional voice" (Conrad 386). Eugene, the narrator, is the voice of the community, and if anything, the community itself is the true protagonist of the novel. Sealy evokes cultural memory of the long history of the people in that his narrative not only re-narrates the past but also absorbs the past into the present, and memorializes it for the present and future generation.

As a novel that utilizes the mode of cultural memory, *The Trotter-Nama* depicts how the present condition of the Anglo-Indians is haunted by the past. Sealy deals with the past not in its factuality but as it is remembered by his people. Sealy believes that events tend to be forgotten unless they are remembered collectively by a people. The novel does its part to undo the negative stereotyping of the Anglo-Indians so that the future generations can look more confidently into their own historical legacies.

Gursheek Kaur mentions in this regard that "In the end, Eugene symbolizes 'New Promise' because 'History' has been left far behind with hope of a better future and enlightenment about the process of history making" (Kaur 51). Sealy seems to suggest that despite the inevitabilities of history and all the injustice and plights of the historical past, the community must move on and go ahead with their lives as best they can and not remain stagnant by always blaming the historical process. The following statement of Sealy's narrator Eugene's foreground the essential pluralities of an inclusive history, and the lessons that historical memory provide to the shaping of the future:

> I wish to show how History is made. Understand first, good adept, that there are no sides to it. Front and back there be, certainly, which the vulgar call past and future (the one with buttons and the other not), and also top and bottom, which some call class (the one with epaulettes, the other not). But sides, no. No circumventing it, sharp adept: the fabric extends endlessly, defying the lateral cut. In this present sorry business, for example, neither side (so called) will budge, foreign or native. Show them, good adept, the middle path lit by the lamp of self-interest. After all you have no concern with either: the one would kill you and yours if he could, the other would chain you to a desk, an uncovenanted one at that. Consider your predicament well. Go to the Naubat Khana and pace there, turning it over in your mind, your new found hatred thickening like water held in the mouth. Remember also that the siege will soon be over and opportunities for glory will be thin on the ground (or under it for that matter). One cannot be ever mining. (343)

It is, thus, suggested that in the changed social-political and cultural scenarios, the preoccupation with historical memory is crucial and it remains essentially ongoing and unresolved.

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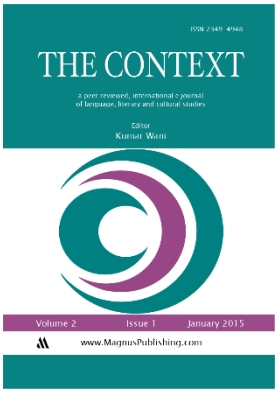

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Translation of Minority Texts: Critical Analysis of Issues Involved with Special Reference to Mona Patrawala's Fiction in Gujarati

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Abstract

Translation is indubitably a form of intercultural communication. However, it is not an innocent activity that takes place in ideological vacuum. Especially translation of postcolonial literature into English is a highly political in the sense that it undertakes a bold decentering of the colonial discourse as well as language by consciously indulging into the politics of abrogation and appropriation. While such a radical approach to interlingual translation sounds very promising in principle, the activity is fraught with issues and challenges that go beyond the confines of the source text. In this paper, an attempt is made to identify and understand the complexities involved in English translation of Gujarati fiction produced by a brilliant woman novelist called Mona Patrawala. The tag 'minority' befits both the novelist and her fiction in as much as she belongs to an ethnic minority called Parsi community and writes about the strange love-hate relationship between Parsis and tribals residing in the ranches and jungles spread across Valsad and Vansada districts in Gujarat in a language which is remote dialect of South Gujarat belt. The paper will also touch upon the issues of knowledge, motivation and skills required of a translator approaching such a text.

Keywords: *translation, Identity, hegemony, minority literature, patronage, readership*

Translation of Minority Texts: Critical Analysis of Issues Involved with Special Reference to Mona Patrawala's Fiction in Gujarati

Dr. Hemang Desai

The recent stirring of tempers as well as heated discursive exchange in intellectual circles in the country following the mass conversion, or say "translation", of minority communities like Muslims and Christians to Hinduism has offered an apposite context and a critical reference point to explicate the political dynamics of the act of translation. Literary translation too essentially tries to convert the linguistic as well as cultural properties of a unique text to a disparate literary system and cultural climate. However, for an overlong period, the questions with which the translation scholars busied themselves were rather clichéd, unproductive, essentialist, source-oriented and oversimplified in nature: Is translation possible? How is translation to be defined? What is a good translation? Should translation be literal or free? Should the translator be faithful to content or form? This approach towards translation sounds overly naïve in as much as it fails to address the inherent politics which generates the process of intercultural transfer or 'conversion'. Be it religious or textual, the act of translation always presupposes an asymmetrical, hegemonic and hierarchical relationship between texts, authors or systems involved. This is so because one culture gets represented in translation for another. To recall the colonial history here, it is well-known that the imperial project of colonial expansion was primarily dependent upon the politics of 'representation', by which the Europe, with its logo centric underpinnings, assumed the status of the Original regulating the identities of its inferior colonies which were obliged to be 'translated' in tandem with Eurocentric discourse. In fact, translation was one of the tools extensively employed by the colonizers to represent their colonial 'other' within a typical frame of inferiority and legitimize the peremptory assignment of imperial givens to the allegedly uncultured, uncivilized and uncouth colonies and subjects. The disparaging comments on the culture and literary virtuosity of Arabs and Persian poets made by Edward Lane in his famous translation of *The Thousand and One Nights* (1859) and by Fitzgerald in *The Rubaiyat of Oman Khayyam* respectively serve to underscore that politics of representation. (Bassnett *et al*, 1999: 6) Such an aspect of the act of translation problematizes the notion of 'transparency' of all languages underlying the translation theories based on the notion of equivalence. It, in fact, foregrounds the asymmetry amongst languages and the essential imbalance between the source language and the target language engendered unmistakably by power. Tharu and Lalita rightly remark, "Formulations that set up the problem of translation as one of judging how faithful a translation has been to the original or how well it reads in the target language, divert attention from the fact that translation takes place where two, invariably unequal, worlds collide, and that there are always relationships of power involved when one world is represented for another in translation." (1993: xx) When the power relation between the source and target language is that of the colonized and the colonizer, as in the case of languages like

Gujarati and English, the strategy adopted by translators becomes increasingly lopsided in its orientation towards playing down the artistic virtuosity of indigenous, subaltern writers-works and thus trumpeting the preeminence and dominance of European master narratives.

With the onset of polysystem theory on the horizon of Translation Studies mid-1970s, the discipline experienced a much-needed paradigm shift. Polysystems theorists like Itamar Evan- Zohar, Andre Lefevere and Gideon Toury viewed literature as a complex and dynamic system and further advocated an approach to literary translation which is descriptive, target-oriented, functional and systematic. They drew the problematic of translation away from the obsessive idea of finding equivalents to a systematic concern with the critical examination of "the norms and constraints that govern the production and reception of translations…in the place and role of translations both within a given literature and in the interaction between literatures." (Hermans, 1985) They were interested more in describing the status, function and reception of a translated text in the target culture as well as the power of culture on the decisions that a translator makes than in explicating the process of translation. In a radical formulation, Andre Lefevere posits that the quest for *the* meaning of / in a text is overambitious at best and futile at worst because meaning(s) is derived under a set of strict controls and definite regulations which, more often than not, seek to adapt a work of art to a specific ideology or to a certain poetics or to both. He extends this problematization of the process of arriving at meaning in a literary work to all those activities which are directly or indirectly involved in generating or imparting meanings like criticism, translation, anthologization, literary historiography etc. and covers them under an umbrella term 'refractions'. Refractions, to Lefevere, "are made to influence the way in which readers read a text; as such they are powerful instruments in ensuring the 'right' reading of works of literature and in perpetuating 'right readings'" (Lefevere, 1984) In other words, refractions rewrite a text to validate, valorize or redefine the value structures of a canon. These important discursive notions of essential referentiality of literary texts or "interliterariness" and the political motivations behind even random acts of refractions provide interlocking grounds for the investigation of the translation of a minority text from a Gujarati into a globally hegemonic language like English. The qualification 'minority' here primarily designates a text grounded in marginalized subculture as distinct from mainstream culture though in case of Mona Patrawala, whose short fiction I'll discuss in this paper, the epithet refers to the non-canonical and thwarted status of the writer and her work as well. My primary contention is that the back-of-the-beyond and extremely indigenous culture as well as subtly unfamiliar poetics that these texts intertextually and metonymically evoke make them fall out of favor with publishers and even editors who are too scared to transgress the line of Western literary canon even at the risk of self-gagging their subalterneity.

Mona Patrawala's short fiction, though critically acclaimed at national level has remained at the threshold of mega-publishing houses probably because their not-so-manifest credo is to print for Anglo-American readership. English translations of her work have been rejected by a variety of refractors including editors of journals and anthologies on the grounds of their unreadability and stiffness caused specifically by her insistence on preserving the quintessential cultural superstructure underpinning her original fiction even in translation. Mona's collection of short stories titled *Rani Bilado* (2002) and her voluminous novel *Ghorkhodia* (2013) stand as seminal milestones in the hoary tradition of Gujarati Literature because they bring to light the

typical dialect, myths, life-styles and socio-political dimensions of a hitherto-neglected, vibrant sub-culture. Laid against a typical rustic locale, around straggly villages around the dense eerie jungles, her fiction gives an unprecedented insight into the primitivistic and dark life lived by Parsi and tribal communities in Valsad and Vansada districts of south Gujarat. Away from the hustle-bustle of dehumanized urban life, Mona's plots unfold in back-of-the-beyond, riverside, gigantic ranches where elements of nature, both meek and ferocious, co-exist. Eerie ranches sprawling in hundreds of acres, chock-a-block with palms and indigenous fruit-trees become a theatre of ceaseless struggle for survival amidst cocks and hens, ferocious horses, birds of prey like sea hawks and kites, tom-cats, human beings and "the nature red in tooth and claw".

The book has unearthed a brave new world before Gujarati readership; a densely-packed primal world where Parsi landowners and their tribal serfs slave untiringly in ranches, gorge away a lot of food, down vast quantities of liquor, develop emotional and physical relations and suffer pangs of separation. Largely untouched by the winds of alleged development, this neolithic world seems to celebrate primal instincts over sophistication, id over superego and primordiality over civilization. Simultaneously, this world throbs with black magic, talismans, magical threads, sorcerers, witches, ghosts, possessed women, witch-doctors and above all an unpredictable sinister fate. This society has its exclusive cultural superstructure underpinned by largely uninstitutionalized systems of worship, rituals, medicine, lifestyle, beliefs, and behavior; it projects standards of love, sex, marriage and family constitution that are far too liberal and progressive as compared to those of the ossified, 'civilized' society. Her characters celebrate quintessential love that transcends the constraints of caste, creed and pseudo-propriety. This world of the subaltern might fly in the face of logic, rationality and prudery, but it is transparent, pure and unhypocritical.

Expounding upon the problematic of the translation of such a "rooted" text Maria Tymoczko has said that not only the issues related to the interpretation of material and social culture (including law, economics, and so forth), history, values, and world view but the transference of literary features such as genre, characters, plotting, symbols and literary allusions as well as the inevitable questions of linguistic interface cause difficulties for the translator. (Tymoczko, 1995). In general, translators have to grapple with the metonymic aspects of a literary text which unfold in terms of content, generic features, intertextuality and culture at large. These metonymies collectively constitute a literary system in which a text like that of Mona Patrawala is ensconced. If the source and target language systems are related to each other, as for example English and French, the target readership and literary canon will have little problem in comprehending the source text's metonymies in the translation and accommodating the translation into its literary hall of fame respectively. But Mona's fiction in English translation becomes opaque because the unusual abundance of culture-specific signifiers makes the "information load" of her stories too heavy to execute even a fairly smooth reading, let alone comprehending the intricate web of motifs and symbols running through the narrative. In such a situation, a translator makes a conscious decision as to choosing the definite norms that would govern his translation strategy. Depending upon the selection of strategic norms, in Gideon Toury's (1980) words, a translator ends up making either an "adequate translation", i.e. one that transmigrates the metonymies of original text as much as possible, or an "acceptable translation" i.e. one that either readily compromises / erases the

metonymic specificities of the original in the interest of readability and comprehension or radically supplants them with the metonymies of target culture and literary system to ensure that the translation becomes popular and widely accepted in target readership and literary canon. Needless to say, adequate translations come with a package deal of introductions, glossaries, footnotes, appendices, commentaries and other paratextual devices which serve to decode the metonymies of source text to a considerable extent.

Since not all the information serving metonymic functions in a text from a foreign literary system can be realized in translation, a translator has to be extremely selective in his choice of the aspects of the source text i.e. linguistic, generic, cultural, historical or ideological that he wishes to valorize or downplay in the target text with a vengeance. However, interestingly enough, a translator is not his own master when it comes to the selection and omissions that would govern his translation. Andre Lefevere has rightly pointed out that a "control factor" which operates from within and outside the literary system of the target language impinges upon the decision making process in translation. According to him, the dominant poetics of target literary system constitutes the inside factor "which can be said to consist of two components: one is an inventory of literary devices, genres, motifs, prototypical characters and situations, symbols; the other a concept of what the role of literature is, or should be, in the society at large." (Lefevere, 1988) As stringent as the inside regulatory mechanism is the outside control factor of patronage represented by royal court, political/religious institutions and the publishers with or without monopoly over the book/magazine publishing trade. These apparently innocuous factors exert enormous political influence over the refractors to undertake refractions in such a manner that they fit perfectly into poetological and ideological frames of the receptor language and society respectively.

The insidious power of these inner-outer control factors upon the strategy of translation adopted by a translator is nowhere felt so perceptibly and significantly as in the Third World. Philip Altabach (1975) contextualizes the problematic surrounding the publication of Third World literature by examining the uneven relationship between Third world nations and industrialized countries who dominate the international intellectual system through their control of the means of knowledge production. He draws on the bleak socio-economics of book publishing in developing countries to aver that issues of economic viability, required technology, low literacy rates, low per capita purchasing power, distribution bottlenecks and market size make it incumbent upon the Third world nations to depend hopelessly upon the developed nations for knowledge production and consumption. Though much of what Altabach says holds true even today, in the period of more than three decades following Altabach's analysis, things have changed substantially, if not radically. With globalization, India has accomplished considerable feats in the domains of infrastructure, literacy rates, technology and even market size. However, in spite of these improved material conditions, the production of books reflecting the needs and concerns of the indigenous authors and readership has not automatically come about primarily because the unaltered and reactionary psychological conditions. Not only do the subsidiaries of British and French publishers dictate terms about who and how to publish/translate, a whole new breed of metropolitan, neocolonial centers of power pose a considerable psychological barrier to valorization of native cultures and literary tradition through translation. In the post-global marketplace, publishing budgets of

the even neoliberal native publishers are governed by authors, famous and canonical, by Western standards, as well as by the power of the absent 'center'. This center is largely constituted by critics, reviewers, teachers of literature, translators and other rewriters who adapt literary texts to the poetics and the ideology of their time.

The reason behind the rejection of the translations of a Third World minority text, like that of Mona Patrawala, by publishers and academia is twofold in nature. First, Mona doesn't feed, even remotely, the allegorical fantasies of the Anglo-American academia-literati. In fact, the primitive society and bizarre subculture that unfold in her work are unlikely to find analogues in surrounding communities and locality of Gujarat, let alone their national counterparts. Paradoxically, as the writer scratches beneath the primitive skin of her characters, the reader confronts a masterful delineation of concerns and topos which are typically modernist and even post-modernist in essence. The theme of love and its corollaries like sex, loneliness, anxiety, pining and death become a vital connecting link between 'the vulture' and 'the culture' in Mona's stories. Almost all the stories in *Rani Bilado* are built around the human hunger for intense love and the overwhelming need for emotional anchor in life, the absence of which results in searing pangs of alienation, emptiness and inner void. Secondly, Mona's adamancy about preserving the essentially (sub) cultural texture of her work and rooted metonymies even in translation flies sharply in the face of the post-war "cultural cringe" of the west. No doubt, in the absence of metatranslation, Mona's world would surely tickle the exotic fantasies of the western readership, but that's not usually the way a committed artist would have his work transmitted. Mona gives immense importance to literary-stylistic aspects like imagery, symbolism and the overall structure of her fictional narratives. As a part of her narrative technique, she often gives vivid and, at times longish, descriptions of the natural surroundings which, far from being aesthetic for its scenic elegance, evoke a distinct sense of the uncanny and the sinister throughout the story. The mystery, thus enlivened in atmosphere, becomes instrumental in reflecting the mystery surrounding the fate, intentions, motivations and emotions of her characters. Rich and significant employment of dialect and noteworthy use of myths and archetypes, a complex semantic network of symbols and motifs and dense, lively descriptions, novel lexis and syntax emanating from this strange subculture weave together an intricate network of meanings and significations which often sound alien and bizarre even to mainstream Gujarati literati, let alone Anglo-American readership.

It is to be noted that the agency of the translator of a minority text is seriously undermined by the sociological, psychological and political dimensions of post-colonial textual studies. The capitalistic, consumerist factors, both local and global, compel the translator to toe the baseline expectations of the target readership by homogenizing the poetological, ideological and cultural differences that the source text so prominently manifests. In her seminal book *Siting Translation* (1995), Tejaswini Niranjana draws on Benjamin, Derrida, and de Man to identify the contexts of representation and power in intercultural transfer. She upholds, "In a post-colonial context the problematic of translation *becomes* a significant site for raising questions of representation, power, and historicity. The context is one of contesting and contested stories attempting to account for, to recount, the asymmetry and inequality of relations between peoples, races, languages." Niranjana's claim that the postcolonial theory and translation can "reinvent oppositional cultures in non-essentializing ways" is compatible with the poststructuralist call for the celebration of heterogeneity. Thus,

the postcolonial translator should conscientiously tune his translatorial efforts to paradigmatic rather than syntagmatic level so that political tendencies of homogenizing and continuity can be resisted and a discursive space for the assertion of socio-cultural identities can be constructed. Critical of the communicative model of translation, Niranjana emphasizes that just as one can't aspire for accuracy in translation, a complete denial of historicity and referentiality is impossible. The challenge of post-colonial translation lies not so much in doing a balancing act between the heavy demands made by the source and the target cultures as in promoting the political model over poetical or epistemological one. The political agenda of postcolonial translation is to articulate a discourse wherein differences are not only rewritten and recognized but valorized. Thus, a post-colonial translator negotiating a minority text such as that of Mona Patrawala has to be alert to the fact that witting or unwitting subscription to aesthetic or consumerist assumptions as to the production of the meaning of a minority literary text not only seriously undermines the socio-cultural identity and values of a given community depicted in it but also becomes instrumental in erasing the already endangered heterogeneity of literary traditions that are indispensable for the survival of human civilization.

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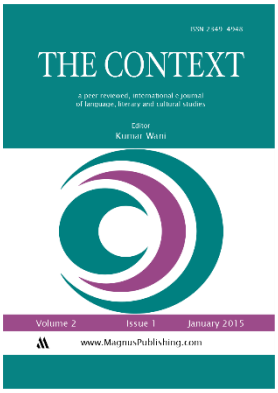

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Women's Inner Self and Their Agonies in *Manhattan Music*

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Abstract

The unresolved dilemma of modern woman is a recurrent theme of the novels of Meena Alexander, a widely acclaimed author and winner of the 2002 PEN Open Book Award for her *Illiterate Heart*. She considers her work, a celebration of her own emotions. Alexander's first well-known novel, *Manhattan Music* is an autobiographical story about an East Indian immigrant who is absolutely unable to adjust to North American culture, but who at the same time is painfully aware that she will never return to the culture which she had left behind. Alexander in her novel, delineates the current status of women and gender in India and the South Asian diaspora. It seems a kind of link between First and Third World Studies, concerning gender, women's bodies, reproduction, and sexuality with the lightly entwined themes of citizenship, community, and individual agency in the discourses of nationalism, post colonialism, subaltern studies, and of course, feminism. In the USA, Alexander experiences racial discrimination where she has to explain her origin, her occupation all the time. In America she was encountered with the subtlest form of racism and violence. She realizes that her ethnicity as an Indian American or Asian American requires her to hold resisting and fracturing past.

Keywords: *cultural decolonization, image of infirmity, sterility, interracial affairs and marriage*

Women's Inner Self and Their Agonies in *Manhattan Music*

Ms. Shiva Sharma

Dr. A B Pandey

Alexander's *Manhattan Music (1997)* is infused with the power of myth, and this novel revolves around the theme of establishing one's self. This novel's introjections are of new identity and transforming a racial body. As a writer, she is particularly interested in "Fault Lines" the areas of fracture between one cultural traditions to other. The image of violence has a peculiar restraint and are had in a taut balance by Alexander's unswerving commitment to peace and love. The inspiration for Alexander for a fragile peace comes from her involvement with the tradition of medieval Bhakti and Sufi poetry. Her works are interspersed with a multitude of references to Rumi-Kabir, Mirabi and Akkamahadevi. Although deeply condemnatory of the excesses of religious extremism in India, she draws on this alternative tradition of mysticism, which is pluralistic and defiant, any one orthodox religion. Alexander identifies a connection between the bodily transgressions of these medieval Indian female mystics and the female poets of today. A variety of methodologies ranging from the close reading of individual poems, to feminist, Marxist, Phenomenological, and Cultural studies, perspectives are adopted by the group of contributions. Their defiance of social standards and love for their lord stand in contrast to the violent imposition of religious norms on societies. Alexander's essay and poetry limn a variety of approaches to Fault Lines, which is perhaps her best known work. The incorporation of various different forms into the traditional genre of autobiography shakes epistemological and disciplinary boundaries and parallels the uneasy accommodation of race and ethnicity in mainstream American society. She says:

> In Manhattan I'm a fissured thing, a body crossed by Fault Lines. Where is my past? What is my past to me, here, now at the edge of Broadway? Is America a place without memory? (Alexander 112)

During the writing of *Manhattan Music,* she explores the crossing of borders from India to Manhattan, the Indian Diaspora, fanaticism, ethnic intolerance, interracial affairs and marriage, and what is mean to be an American. Critic Arun Aguiar says, "Alexander's writing is imbued with a poetic grace shot through with an inner violence which has gift of heightened sensibility, she can take a tragic, violent situation and juxtapose it with a description of terrible beauty" (78).

She encouraged to bear the topic as often tenuous seeming links between 'literature' and "life" (58). Here she explore race as a central fact of American life and its literary expression. Meena says, "I work in Manhattan, the subway corrupts me with the robed Muslims sell, with white magazines, with spittle and gum. I get lost underground by Yankee stadium. I stumble out hands loaded down fists clenched into balls" (112).

Although, *Manhattan Music* is a story of Sandhya, who is badly disturbed by the violence and cruelty around her. It deals with the problems of human existence, the conflict of life denying and life affirming impulses and the instinctual inability of an individual to conform or adopt to the social conventions. Sandhya, the central

character, was heavily burdened with domestic responsibilities who is neither baffled by her past nor is she crazy for any aspect of life. She has cherished and sustained the feelings and thoughts that lead her to a life of social obligations. Sandhya is a sensitive women, who hankered for love and affection in life, detested sharply the violence and cruelty anywhere, expected a close communion with her husband, Rashid, but all in vain. The way ladies behaved in the house of Rashid, the violence she witnessed there, male are utterly helpless, desperate and disappointed in life. Where there is no love and sympathy but combat and attack only where people lived for nothing but 'appetite for sex'(91). Meena Alexander has tried to suggest a middle path by this novel, but her characters fail in this because of their eccentricities, albeit she has given more attention to the character portrayal than to writing a grappling story. Her characters are individual rather than types. They behave in an uncommon extraordinary way. The problems and unhappiness in the life of Sandhya spring from her constitutional inability to accept the values and the attitudes of society. The society at large, as it is represented by the ayahs, the cook, the nameless and faceless multitudes, threatens the very existence of the heroine.

In *Manhattan Music*, after the coruscating affair that Sandhya has with Rashid, she is left with a sense of bodily shame which brings close to the verge of self-destruction. In the present novel, she explores the scripting of dominant notions of home and nationalism and simultaneously expose the violence inherit in these normative scripts. She makes an explicit connection between her own cultural inheritances of colonialism but comparable experience of the loss of Native American culture and the survival of that culture, in spite of the genocide has repeatedly encountered. Alexander writes "colonialism has dispossessed her, people rendered them, and exile in their own land and Harjo is a grit of this forced exile, one who signs the body and soul that must survive (33)." Unlike other female protagonists of Meena Alexander, Sandhya, who is free from all the danger of a shattered childhood or an incompatible marriage, is symbolic of forces that have sustained the foundation of all family life. She has gone beyond the existential problems that torment her other fictional counterparts. Sandhya's life acquires a heroic dimension in her character. Unlike many other Indian girls, Sandhya opts for her own way of life. She admired and adored by other male characters and despite a sure offer of marriage, she refused to play the conventional role of a sex object and a submissive wife and becomes a truly liberated woman. Thus through this novel Alexander offers a positive solution to the temperamental maladjustment and alienation in the present day situations, although after a long period of acute suffering and desperation.

As a collection, *Passage to Manhattan Music* Meena Alexander focuses on a single postcolonial poet and locally bound traditions and infusing the field of contemporary poetics with a productive engagement. These include questions of cultural decolonization, the aesthetics of hybridity and the task of expanding the genre to give voice to public concerns, even while rooted in deeply personal experiences. Alexander's creative work constantly grapples with the continuing burden of the colonial legacy. This is explored dramatically in her fraught relationship with the various languages she grew up with. Particularly English the language of her creative work, is also marked by a profound sense of racial and cultural alienation. However, though she feels an uneasy tension between the languages and cultural traditions, colonial and postcolonial realities. As well as the difficulties of expressing herself in a language which was not her own, she had been brought up in a very traditional way and had not been encouraged to talk or write about the deepest female experiences.

The proposed novel is about an immigrant Indian woman in New York. Her image juxtaposed with images of infirmity, sterility, underscoring the writer's need to integrate the fragmented components of her life as an expatriate woman. Her novel "begins as a disturbance, a jostling in the soul (41)" which prompts her to writing, seeking "that fortuitous, fleeting meaning so precious so scantly (58)." However, her literary output does not just record the lingering burden of colonial epistemic violence, it charts a creative transformation of the experiences of alienation and fragmentation of languages and cultural legacies into a unique hybrid identity. Her hybrid literary lineage, juxtaposes words from two of her most intimate languages.

Alexander has numerous facts i.e. creating an identity despite a patch worked past, fighting against definitions demanded by greater society and also fighting against traditions enforced within the community. The collection is implicitly engaged with the larger question of expanding the field of contemporary poetry beyond restrictive national and locally bound traditions and infused the field of contemporary poetics with a productive engagement with questions raised by post-colonial studies. These include questions of cultural decolonization, the aesthetics of heredity and the task of expanding the genre to give voice to public concerns, rooted deeply in personal experiences. This sense of dislocation, alienation, and fracture is intensified further during the course.

In this novel Alexander suggests a path of recovery and healing through female solidarity and friendship. Her work originates in the very specific location of her Kerala childhood and is shaped by the context of postcolonial Indian history. This vision possibly stems from the influence of various Indian women's movements that she witnessed in her formative years. The painful and jolting reminder of her gendered and racialized body negotiating her ethnic identity in the US. In America, she has to explain herself all the time, her origin, her occupation and so on. She feels that everything to her was hyphenated and incomplete. In this reference she says, that "she is woman poet of color, a South Indian Woman poet who makes up lines in English a postcolonial language as she waits for the red lights to change a Broadway" (Alexander FL 43).

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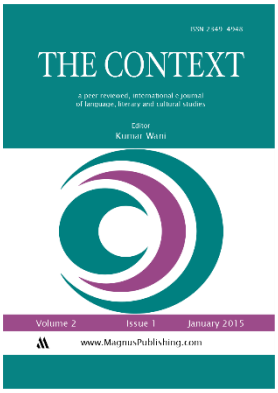

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The Indeterminacy of Truth in Shashi Tharoor's *Riot: A Novel*

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Abstract

Indeterminacy is an axiom of poststructuralist discourse and it derives from Derrida's concept of différance that meaning is not only constructed in language through difference but such meaning is perpetually deferred. In such a context where meaning is deferred, the representation of truth (in a text) is also subject to semantic volatility. Singular and absolute truth is thus an anomaly in such a *Weltanschauung*. In this paper the present scholar argues that Shashi Tharoor's *Riot* (2001) shows awareness of a postmodern / poststructuralist ethos and therefore in the novel, the truth of events like the murder of Priscilla Hart, the origin of the *Riot*, and the protagonists 'love' for Priscilla Hart or (in) fidelity to his wife is rendered moot and complex. In fact, its truth is indeterminable. It has been argued that the novel achieves this effect by using a multiplicity of narrators, a variety of (intra)texts that are conflictive and contradictory and through the avoidance of an authorial voice to make for indeterminate truth.

Keywords: *indeterminacy, plurality, truth, intra-textuality*

The Indeterminacy of Truth in Shashi Tharoor's *Riot: A Novel*

Dr. Samuel Missal

Poststructuralist and postmodernism as theoretical discourses that emerge from the works of Barthes, Derrida, Lyotard, Rorty, Hayden White et al is complex and moot in its poetics as it engages in a radical epistemological and ontological doubt that in one way or other is related to deconstructionism's concept of a decentred world. The recognition of this decentring, as Hans Bertens has pointed out, leads to two main tendencies, in the postmodern world- "indeterminacy" and "immanence". Indeterminacy signifies decentring- the "total disappearance of ontology" while immanence is the " tendency of the human mind to appropriate all of reality to itself"(28) These tendencies lead to total pluralism which Hassan qualifies as, "… deformation, decreation, disintegration, deconstruction, decentrement, displacement, difference and discontinuity (27-28). Carroll too reiterates this when he says that textuality and indeterminacy are the fundamental doctrines of post structuralism wherein textuality refers to the construction of a text according to its own internal principle and indeterminacy is the identification of " all meaning as ultimately self-contradictory"(204). He further states that "Together, textuality and indeterminacy eliminate the two criteria of truth: the correspondence of propositions to their objects and the internal coherence of propositions" (ibid).

It is this epistemological and ontological doubt which delegitimizes traditional discourses that encompasses Jean Francios Lyotard's incredulity towards metanarratives as described in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on the State of Knowledge* (1979) and Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulacra and simulation as detailed in his book with the eponymous title, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994). Both these theorists describe the loss of faith in two fundamental categories of thought and experience: the true and the real. While Lyotard characterises postmodern thinking as that which questions the validity of "grand narratives", stories like those of ancient books or sweeping scientific theories which explain why things are the way they are. In other words, we can no longer know whether we can trust what we think we know. Baudrillard carries this further to its logical ontological conclusion by suggesting that if we cannot trust what we think we know, then how do we know what exists? Thus in the first chapter of his book Baudrillard decries the 'loss of all metaphysics' (8) and also proposes that "simulation threatens the difference between the 'true' and the 'false', the 'real' and the 'imaginary' (3). Stanley Grenz puts this stance of postmodernism very succinctly when he writes, " [Postmodernism] affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent on the community in which we participate . . . There is no absolute truth: rather truth is relative to the community in which we participate" (8) Similarly the stoutest philosophical defender of postmodernism, Richard Rorty, in his book*, Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* argues that there is no "skyhook" which takes us out of our subjective conditions to reveal a reality existing independently of our own minds or of other human minds (13). Instead, according to him truth is an intersubjective

agreement among the members of a community. That intersubjective agreement permits the members of the community to speak a common language and establish a commonly accepted reality (21).

The search for truth is one of the major concerns of *Riot*. This is succinctly expressed by the protagonist of the novel, who by appointment, is an authority who ought to be looked up to and believed- Lakshman, the District Magistrate of Zalilgarh. Portrayed as the alter ego of Tharoor, Lakshman pontificates thus: "The truth! The singular thing about truth, my dear, is that you can only speak of it in plural. Doesn't your understanding of truth depend on how you approach it? Or how much you know? …Truth is elusive, subtle, and many-sided" (137). This statement of the protagonist serves to mark Tharoor's postmodern stand about the knowability of truth. It is argued in this paper that the elusive, subtle and many-sided nature of truth is brought to the fore in the novel through the multiplicity of perspectives that is voiced by the characters about the major events that span the story of *Riot*, whether it concerns the murder of Priscilla Hart, the causal factors responsible for the Partition, the historical veracity of the existence of the Ram temple at Ayodhya or the concept of love and fidelity to Priscilla/Geetha. This paper, which focuses on the centrality of the theme of the murder of Priscilla Hart, is thus an outworking of the plurality of truth(s) that the novel conveys to the reader, thereby endorsing the poststructuralist / postmodern contention that absolute truth exists but independently of our capacity to know it, except in a plurality of constructs that are hypothesised about it.

The murder of Priscilla Hart remains an unsolved mystery. *Riot* does not belong to the genre of the 'whodunit' detective story that holds suspense till the end and then reveals the murderer. In spite of it, the novel offers several contesting clues to the murder, all of which hint at the truth but fall short of pointing to the absolute truth. As Rudyard and Katherine try to make sense of the murder, they only end up in a cul-de-sac, never coming to the knowledge of the absolute truth. As in a detective story the motive for the murder is attributed to Ali and Makhan, a Muslim and Hindu respectively whose lives get entangled unwittingly and indirectly with that of Priscilla and Lakshman. The immediate motive attributed to Ali is the fact that Priscilla had initiated and facilitated the abortion of the former's wife as a volunteer of the NGO HELP-US, which introduced population control programs among rural women in India. This view is reinforced because Ali had threatened Priscilla with dire consequences at the Zalilgarh office of the HELP-US organisation (233-234). The immediate provocation may, however, have been the fact that Ali had discovered her in the Kotli where they had been making crude bombs and fearing that she might report them to the police, had killed her. Gurinder the police superintendent puts it thus:

> You didn't know where to hide in the middle of a fucking riot, so you buggered off back to the Kotli… And what did you find there? A bloody American woman, that's who. And not just a bloody American woman, right Ali? Somebody you had a fucking strong reason to dislike. …There she is, you're fucking scared, your adrenaline is pumping like crazy, she recognises you, you know you're done for, so you go at her, don't you, Ali? (261).

This is a policeman's reconstruction of the truth of the murder as he sees it, but it is never proved. Ali does not confess in spite of sustained interrogation by the police and thereby leaves the truth unknown.

Another person who could be responsible for the murder is Makhan. But the police have no idea that he could be a murder suspect or what motive he could have for killing Miss Hart. This is revealed only through the account of the Hindu leader of Zalilgarh, Ram Charan Gupta who instigates Makhan to take vengeance on Lakshman for the attack on his son, Arup. Having learnt from Kadambari, Priscilla's co-worker that she and Lakshman meet at the Kotli on the sly every Tuesday and Saturday, Ram Charan advises Makhan to surprise them at the Kotli on the day of the riot. And then after the news of the murder of Priscilla on Saturday, Ram Charan refuses to listen to what Makhan has to say:

> I don't want to know. Don't tell me anything Makhan. Perhaps you went there… looking for the DM…. But he was in Zalilgarh…. Instead you found his woman, sitting there, waiting for him… and you used your knife… perhaps you didn't go at all…. Or perhaps you went there and found the Muslim criminals already there, and you found discretion the better part of valor and turned back. So many possibilities…. But I really don't want to know, Makhan (262).

Whether Makhan has a role in the murder of Priscilla therefore remains unknown because Ram Charan does not allow the former to voice his opinion. His voice is stifled by the monologue of Ram Charan who deliberately doesn't want the truth to be discovered. Thus an alternative dimension to the discovery of the truth of Miss Hart's murder is added.

Yet another aspect of the murder is brought to light towards the end of the novel by Gurinder and Lakshman. While Katherine can only suspect why her daughter had kept birth control pills with her, it is only Gurinder and Lakshman who are privy to the secret that Priscilla was with child from Lakshman. After the riot ends, Lakshman ruminates over the murder of Priscilla and believes that she must have fought her assailants because she had a strong reason to live: "She would have fought furiously. She had one more reason to want to live" and then adds the reason by remarking that, "One more detail Gurinder had to suppress in the post-mortem. She was carrying my child" (263). While there is no textual evidence to suggest that Priscilla could have committed suicide, the reader is left with a lingering question in the recesses of the mind as to whether this could be the case of a woman driven by guilt to take her life, even though this may be a farfetched idea. However, considering that she knew marriage to him to be a remote possibility and also the fact that it would be construed as unprofessional of her, in the view of her advocacy of population control, this angle of the case cannot be ruled out.

Besides, the story even points a finger at Geetha, Lakshman's wife. A traditional woman who is betrayed by her husband as she goes to the temple every Saturday, Geetha has a strong motive for murdering Priscilla who breaks the marital harmony of her home. After having told of her husband's affair by Gurinder, she visits the Swamiji and asks him to offer special puja for her to keep her husband and then adds, " Use tantra, do the tandava, use anyone and anything you want , Swamiji, but please don't let this foreign devil run away with my husband" (emphasis added) (227). And later, a week after the riot, on the 7th of October she goes back to the Shiva Mandir and makes an offering for a special puja for the health and happiness of her husband since her prayers had been answered (264). Of course, it goes without saying that her prayers are answered with the death of Priscilla. While this might seem to be a mere

coincidence, one may pretty well wonder, if Ali and Makhan were not responsible for the murder of Miss Hart, was it carried out by the Swamiji or his cohorts given the fact that Geetha had given them a free hand to use anyone or anything to keep her husband from the foreign devil. At the same time could it be Gurinder? Did he not dislike Lakshman's involvement with Miss Hart and knew about her whereabouts every Saturday? Didn't he have the wherewithal to have her murdered even through Ali or Makhan or some other goons and keep it under wraps by camouflaging it as the consequence of the riot? Isn't this a plausible possibility from the reader's point of view?

One aspect of the truth that is indirectly responsible for Priscilla's murder is not brought to the knowledge of Katherine even though she comes very much near it. The discovery of a half used strip of birth control pills among Priscilla's personal effects, perturbs Katherine (100). She tries to find if Priscilla had left anything of a personal nature in her office (118) and later when she meets Lakshman, she lets him know that Priscilla had written to her about being attracted to someone in authority and asks him point blank if it has been him (253). Katherine intended to hear a candid confession because she meets him all alone. Her keen mind has sensed that Priscilla could not have been in that 'out-of-the-way-place' and that it had something to do with " some aspect of her life we don't know about"(254) But Lakshman lies plainly and then engages in abstractions to dodge the issue. He says: "… But I'm overworked, overweight, and married. It couldn't have been me" and then adds," If you permit me to say this, sometimes it is best not to assume we can know everything" (253).He further remarks, "Any attraction she may have felt to anyone did not kill her. Communal passions that she had nothing to do with, did" (254). This deliberate obfuscation of singular truth that they were in love with each other and were seeing each other every Tuesday and Saturday is kept secret by both Gurinder and Lakshman so that the latter is not implicated in the murder case. In the final analysis, the truth of Priscilla's murder is summed up as an abstraction by the news report in *The New York Journal* of 2nd October 1989 which quotes an embassy official, 'Ms Hart "may simply have been in the wrong place at the wrong time" and too add to it, the Oct 16th edition of the same paper writes that Lakshman questions the statement that there is anything such as a wrong place and wrong time and instead posits, "We are where we are at the only time we have …Perhaps it's where we are meant to be". The irony of this is that a newspaper which is expected to be the vehicle of truth-telling is used to sum up a murder in terms of an abstraction that has no meaning whatsoever, a feeble grasping at the truth in the terms of language which is used to express and construct that truth. In the end, the unknowability of the truth is aptly expressed in the statement from The *New York Journal* of 16th Oct, 1969: "No one in Zalilgarh could explain why anyone would want to kill Priscilla Hart" (266).

This postmodern viewpoint of truth as a plurality is accentuated by the narrative structure of *Riot*. Eschewing both linear narration and the omniscient narrator, Tharoor adopts a novel mode of narration that encompasses several genres that include newspaper clippings, diary entries, interviews, transcripts, journals, scrapbooks, academic essays and poems written by the fictional characters and a greeting card. Besides, the usage of these forms is attributed to different narrators who hold on to their individual and unique perspectives on the story. The story of Priscilla's murder thus appears to the reader as a synoptic of the sum total of narrations that are voiced by the different characters of the novel. Rather than offering closure, the narrative

structure contains within itself conflicting and contradictory elements which undermine the centrality of the truth of Priscilla's and thereby keep the discovery of the murderer, open-ended.

It is obvious then that Tharoor's use of multiple narrators serves to intensify his concern with the knowability of truth especially the impossibility of finding the causative factor leading to Priscilla Hart's brutal murder. The different narrators succeed in evading the knowability of truth. Hence Lakshman observes, "The truth! The singular thing about truth, my dear, is that you can only speak of it in plural" (137). The engendering of multiple truth is further helped by the doing away of the omniscient narrator as a deliberate ploy. In fact, in the mode of meta-fiction, Lakshman the protagonist makes a succinct statement on the death of the omniscient narrator that would beg the approval of Roland Barthes. He says:

> I'd like to write a novel, I tell her, that doesn't read like a novel. Novels are too easy - they tell a story, in a linear narrative, from start to finish ... why can't I write a novel that reads like an encyclopaedia …_something in which you can turn to any page and read […] they're all interconnected, but you see the interconnections differently depending on the order in which you read them. It's like each bit of reading adds to the sum total of the reader's knowledge, just like and encyclopaedia…. Down with the omniscient narrator! It's time for the omniscient reader. (135-136)

Tharoor's division of the novel thus into seventy-eight sections of varying length parallels the chaos of the thematic riot with form. Through his protagonist Lakshman, he defines his novel as an encyclopaedia and *Riot* holds typical encyclopaedic characteristics – each section being independent and yet dependent units in their multidimensional perspectives of the socio-political atmosphere of an India that holds multiple answers to Priscilla Hart's life and death. In addition, by adopting a multiple figural narrative technique, *Riot* subverts the omniscient narrator. Since it is the point of view that decides the reader's response to the fictional character, Tharoor's multiple focalization of communalism in a pluralistic, secular Nation from the perspectives of civic and police authorities including that of a foreign correspondent not only serve to intensify the opacity of secularism, the multi-voiced perspectives also justify the unresolved murder, "No one in Zalilgarh could explain why anyone would want to kill Priscilla Hart" (266).

In the lieu of a conclusion it may be pointed out that the desire among postcolonial/postmodern to escape the singular, absolute truth is a *sine qua non*. Hence as Dirk Wiemann remarks, Berger's axiomatic dictum, ""Never again shall a single story be told as if it were the only one", is used both by Micheal Ondaatje and Arundhati Roy as epigraphs in their novels *In the Skin of a Lion* (1986) and *The God of Small Things* (1995) respectively. He further remarks that the use of Berger's dictum "asserts a poetics of the porous text that Roy's and Ondaatje's novels seem to practice: a decentring programmatics of breaking narrative unilaterality and closure that repress the presence of all the other stories that any text has to take on board" (1). It is obvious that Tharoor who is a postcolonial as well as postmodernist writer has not been able to avert such a paradigm in his novel, *Riot*.

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Academic Freedom and Censorship in Githa Hariharan's *In Times of Siege*

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Abstract

This paper examines Githa Hariharan's novel *In Times of Siege* (2003) as a multilayered interrogation of academic freedom and scholarly censorship in present-day India. Proceeding through textual close reading, the argument positions the work in ongoing disciplinary conversations among literary study, political ideology, and the institutionalisation of power. Allied with critical commentary, the paper reconstructs how Hariharan intertwines temporality, narrative form, and political contestation, thereby illuminating simultaneous erosions of plural discourse and dissent within Indian universities. The study shows the novel as a means to gauge the present imperilments of academic freedom and to delineate a strategy of scholarly resistance against authoritarian thought control. Analysing the interdependence of literary representation and political actuality, the investigation underscores the work's urgency amid the growing polarisation of India's educational arenas.

Keywords: *Academic Freedom, Intellectual Censorship, Political Ideology, Literary Studies, Institutional Power, Contemporary India*

Academic Freedom and Censorship in Githa Hariharan's *In Times of Siege*

Mamta K. Jonipelliwar

Academic freedom in India has come under increasing strain over the past few decades, as politicised surveillance and censorship encroach upon institutional autonomy and pluralist discourse (Jayal 139). The depreciation of intellectual independence is evident in a range of practices: tampering with the curriculum, harassment of faculty, monitoring of students, and the gradual supersession of secular pedagogical structures by overtly ideological directives. These developments have fostered what commentators describe as a "crisis of conscience" within the Indian academy, whereby the time-honoured mission of universities as laboratories of critical inquiry is increasingly subverted by external partisanship and internal capitulation.

Githa Hariharan's *In Times of Siege* (2003) stands out as an early literary response to this deteriorating field, staging the encirclement of academic life by political and doctrinal interests and intensifying the broader anxieties of Indian civil society about dissent and the consolidation of institutional power. Set in the 1990s against the rise of Hindu nationalism and the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the novel provides a historical vantage point for tracing the present-day decline of academic freedom. Through the figure of Professor Shiva Murthy, the text discloses the fraught interdependencies of state authority, intellectual vocation, and historical consciousness, while illuminating the personal and institutional toll exacted upon those who seek to uphold scholarly rectitude in a climate of intensifying hostility.

Hariharan's novel thus proves to be more than a tightly woven story about university life; it is a probing inquiry into literature's power to map authoritarian landscapes while simultaneously subverting their designs. The narrative oscillates among registers: it reconstructs the day-to-day calcification of academic inquiry, it performs an allegorical exposition of the siege on secularism across the subcontinent, and it inserts reflexive moments that chastise both historian and reader for mistaking narrative for unresisted fact. Together, these registers forge a repeatedly reshuffled conscience that confronts, rather than reconciles, the lived microphysics of pedagogic caution with the grand-scale dramas of state control.

This paper undertakes a critical analysis of those confrontations by tracking the novel's unflinching dissection of academic sovereignty and covert surveillance. It foregrounds the composite lattice in which literary studies, partisan dogma, and bureaucratic surveillance coil around the figure of the scholar. By concentrating on the interactions involving canonical rewriting, administrative abandonment, and furtive solidarity, the investigation gauges the novel's claim that fiction can actively intervene in public debate about the academic commons. The reading also positions Hariharan's text within larger considerations of opening knowledge to the polity, of contesting selective memory while acknowledging its recall, and of calibrating the scholar's ethical stance in a polity that weaponises knowledge-production itself.

Literature Review

Scholarly engagement with *In Times of Siege* concentrates on its incisive portrayal of academic exposure to violence and the contestation surrounding memory politics. Critics have situated the text within both the allegorical limits of a besieged secularism and the visible skirmish between evidentiary history and compulsory ideology (Mirza 889). These analytic angles demonstrate the novel's dual aptitude as aesthetic object and polemical intervention, illustrating the capacity of fiction to interrogate socially and politically charged questions that may elude the norms of disciplinary or journalistic inquiry.

Coined to describe the deliberate penetration of Hindu nationalist dogma into pedagogical, archival, and administrative channels, the label 'saffronisation' characterises a campaign that endorses selective historiographical master narratives while systematically occluding dissenting accounts, especially those that destabilise communal hegemonies over the Indian past. The novel's confrontation with this process acquires weight by situating its narrative of marginalised scholars, archival witnesses, and pedagogical skirmishes within the very laboratories, lecture halls, and curricular blueprints that saffronisation seeks to discipline as zones of ideological reinforcement.

Ongoing scholarship further situates Hariharan's work within conversations about the contested character of power and the systematic effacement of counter-hegemonic voices (Jayal 139; Viswanathan 23). Such readings demonstrate that the text interrogates both overt mechanisms of censorship and the more insidious strategies through which dissent is managed and rendered marginal. The protagonist's trajectory of professional isolation, procedural exile, and psychological coercion—delineated through the tropes of the dislocated scholar—illustrates how the sovereignty of academic inquiry erodes, not only through codified restrictions but through the engineering of environments that systematically inhibit interrogation and confound independent reason.

Debates likewise point to the shifting epistemic valence of literary studies as a crucible for identity formation and resistance (Viswanathan 30; Mirza 892). The disciplinary frame—once hailed as the guardian of humanistic values and pluralistic critique—emerges as a contested ground. By centring a literature professor, the narrative commands the symbolic weight of the humanities in the larger discursive struggle over academic liberty, while simultaneously laying bare the circumscribed position of fields that interrogate the very constitution of meaning, interpretation, and cultural valuation.

Scholarly investigations consistently underscore how institutional power mediates the contours of academic freedom, focusing on the roles of state regulation, budgetary leverage, and managerial oversight in both scholarship and teaching. Such work documents that the erosion of autonomy seldom takes the form of explicit prohibition; rather, it manifests in the subtler modalities of targeted funding conditionality, the sustained exertion of managerial expectations, and the calculated recruitment of docile leaders. The novel's representation of deans and trustees as tacit partners in the curtailment of free inquiry redoubles these empirical findings, illustrating how the capture of academic space by extra-academic interests renders the university an arena in which political domination may be both enacted and legitimated.

Current theoretical approaches—postcolonial critique, Foucauldian power analysis, and Gramscian hypotheses of hegemony—further our comprehension of the text's negotiation with the politics of knowledge and representation (Viswanathan 28). Each paradigm furnishes vital conceptual instruments for discerning the locus of power within educational institutions and for tracing how wider political and ideological formations intersect knowledge production. The postcolonial paradigm proves especially pertinent in light of India's legacy of colonial schooling and the persistent efforts to decolonise syllabi and pedagogical conduct. Foucauldian scrutiny casts light upon the disciplinary apparatuses by which academic subjects are rendered manageable, whilst Gramscian formulations illuminate how ruling ideologies are at once reproduced and challenged within educational milieus.

Recent scholarship has moreover begun to situate the novel within rising debates over academic freedom in the digital era, investigating how emergent technologies and the architecture of social media have generated both novel venues for intellectual articulation and refined instruments of surveillance and control (Gupta 98). These inquiries indicate that, despite the novel's 1990s provenance, its motifs and preoccupations continue to resonate within present deliberations concerning the future of academic freedom in a global environment characterised by pervasive connectivity and monitoring.

Methodology

The present analysis employs an integrative methodological framework that intertwines a rigorous close reading of the primary narrative with the rote triangulation of secondary scholarly contributions drawn from literary studies, political science, and educational policy. This triangulation mirrors the novel's own contested disciplinary reference frames, thereby facilitating a multidimensional interrogation of its thematic and argumentative load. Close reading zeroes in on pivotal excerpts, character trajectories, narrative architectures, and metallic symbols. At the same time, the secondary synthesis procures the contextual and theoretical scaffolding requisite for articulating the novel's larger cultural and political import.

The inquiry further admits historical and sociological vectors, mobilising scholarship on Indian electoral politics, educational reform, and mobilised social movements in order to substantiate the novel's account of intellectual life constituted under convergent forms of institutional pressure. This historical-sociological layer is neither incidental nor supplementary; rather, it operationalises the novel's fable-like structure to enact a critical dialogue with ongoing configurations of Indian higher education and a polity in perpetual stratification.

Academic Freedom and Its Infringement

Hariharan's *In Times of Siege* compellingly dramatises the fragility of academic freedom within a landscape marked by organised ideological surveillance. Murthy's choice to centre his research on Basava is consequential, for the twelfth-century reformer embodies a pluralistic, river-crossing strain of Hindu thought that directly contests the present-day nationalist insistence on rigid orthodoxy and the purification of culture. The campaign mounted against Murthy illustrates the ease with which vested factions can eclipse the entitlements to research, instruction, and dissemination that a constitutional republic ostensibly safeguards. Assaults on his standing aggregate into a cache of tactics: orchestrated protest, concerted media denunciations, veiled threats of bodily harm, and—most insidiously—interventions

that compel university leaders to initiate disciplinary proceedings. The text makes manifest that academic freedom is corroded not only by the blunt blade of formal proscription, but by a subtler, cumulative dismantling of the scholar's habitat: hostile convocations, orchestrated intimidation, and the shrinking solitude in which independent thought once could endure. Murthy's mounting persecution conforms to a well-documented sequence long familiar in Indian cases of scholarly persecution. After ideologically calibrated news organs register contempt for his research, the sequence progresses to choreographed street mobilisations, issuance of bodily injury threats, and an ultimatum mandating his termination. The narrative's meticulous tracing of the sequence substantiates the argument that academic autonomy is corroded through a tripartite amalgam of orchestrated notoriety, bureaucratic coercion, and spectres of violence.

Hariharan's choice of the campus as the narrative's crucible casts a miniature of the nation's obsessions with identity, historiography, and the sanctity of culture. She locates the drama inside the academy with explicit intent to expose the surrender of scholarly inquiry to the parochial imperatives of a partial constituency. At the same time, she probes the logic of political encroachment, demonstrating that such meddling does not merely disrupt; it razes institutional autonomy. Within the enclave, the contest is revealed as a theatre in which external political storms and insularised campus factions collide, compelling academics and students alike to negotiate a labyrinth of contradictory obligations and anxieties. These representations correspond closely with empirical studies of Indian universities, which indicate that state and ideological interventions have progressively narrowed institutional autonomy and intellectual pluralism (Jayal 140). By dramatising the tacit collusion of bureaucracy and the maintenance of self-censorship among faculty, the narrative exposes mechanisms of institutional capture. It reveals how external coercive conditions are inscribed within the academic habitus. The consequence extends beyond the censorship of isolated research initiatives; it encompasses the inculcation of an enduring environment of trepidation and orthodox conformity that stifles the entire spectrum of critical inquiry.

The narrative's chronological anchoring in the period immediately following the demolition of the Babri Masjid affords an essential lens for discerning how acute political rupture can pivot the trajectory of academic freedom. The charged environment of the 1990s—infused with communal polarisation and the ascendancy of Hindu nationalist rhetoric—fostered a landscape in which inquiry into sensitive historical and cultural phenomena became not merely contentious but perilous. In such a context, the line between scholarly objectivity and political jeopardy became progressively blurred, leading many researchers to self-impose limits upon their work.

Intellectual Censorship and Historical Revisionism

The narrative interrogates the turbulent politics that surround the writing of history by meticulously tracing the processes through which competing memories are forged, challenged, and erased. Murthy's declaration that "history, like the human mind, is a complex body with many strands" (Hariharan 97) commits him to a vision of the past that, like consciousness, resists reduction to a single, official line. The assertion thereby reveals the novel's animus against political efforts to purify or unify collective memories, and it foregrounds the perpetual friction between the richness of pluralism and the coercive allure of narrative uniformity, a friction whose stakes are irreducibly political.

Censorship is dramatised as a stratified apparatus in which overt redaction of archives coexists with covert admonitions that steer researchers away from provocative questions. By dispersing its instruments across bureaucracies, publishing houses, and scholarly fora, the apparatus creates a nested lattice of deterrence that pre-empts both overt defiance and the quieter, generative hesitations that pluralism requires. The layered quality of this enforcement not only complicates individual acts of resistance but also underlines the danger of underestimating the epistemic violence that can issue from silence as well as from shouted prohibitions. The emphasis on revisionist historiography is especially pertinent against the ongoing, fractious negotiations over Indian historiography and collective identity. The narrative interrogates how efforts to fashion uniform, totalising accounts of the past are, at root, deployments of power that dissolve historiographical heterogeneity and contextual particularity into narratives that, though temporally appealing, strategically underwrite particular ideologies. Murthy's biographical reconstruction of Basava counters such legislative compression by animating the dense, multiple textures of the past that nationalist schemas invariably oversimplify or discard.

The text further interrogates the place of archive-bound historians within the revisionist conjuncture, suggesting that the laboratory of the archive is itself an arena of tactical negotiation. Murthy's fidelity to intellectual probity and the microscopic rigour of philological verification draws him into a multipronged crisis, pitting him not merely against external political engines but against fellow scholars who trade the epistemic for the instrumental in pursuit of placement, patronage, or personal recognition. This intra-academic fractal exposure reveals the often-unexamined reciprocity between supranational sanction and intra-institutional surveillance, exposing the subtle mechanisms through which collegial cultures autonomously reproduce their disciplinary cauterisation.

Such narrative features resonate with recurrent findings in Indian constitutional and sociological literatures on the architecture of censorship. The fiction animates the mechanics of that conflation: Murthy's archival investigations are manoeuvred, in public discourse, into the framing of an assault upon the composite sociality of Hindu civilisation and the sovereign framework of Indian nationalism, yet the archive itself repeatedly contests the simplicities that ideology both requires and polices. The novel illustrates that academic censorship reverberates beyond the university gates, compromising public discourse and weakening the democratic structures that rely on a well-informed citizenry. When researchers are barred from pursuing independent inquiry or communicating their results, the communal reservoir of knowledge is diluted, and public dialogue is consequently diminished.

The Role of Institutional Power

In *In Times of Siege*, the portrayal of university leaders swings between administrative calculation and a strategy of disengagement, thereby exposing the fraught interplay of institutional authority and ethical obligation during emergencies. The depiction of the university administration is marked by sophistication, underscoring the predicament that leaders encounter when loyalty is divided among donor expectations, political pressures, and the imperative of scholarly integrity.

The Vice-Chancellor personifies this institutional indecision, striving to shield academic freedom while simultaneously craving the assurance that comes from social and political quiescence. His eventual abandonment of Murthy illustrates the fragility of procedural safeguards when finite internal sociocultural resources match

external threats. The text implies that such fragility arises not merely from the deficiencies of individual actors but from embedded vulnerabilities within the graduate and research-dependent landscape of contemporary higher education.

The narrative vividly depicts the daily consequences of such vulnerability: administrators, fearing the loss of grants or the erosion of political goodwill, hesitate to champion contentious scholarship or to stand with unpopular colleagues. Faculty governance, the supposed bulwark for intellectual autonomy, is similarly tested, revealing whether collegial structures propel protective collective action or become channels of fragmentation. When Murthy's case erupted, mentors and peers responded along a spectrum: a minority rallied by conviction, many retreated by calculation, and others seized the opening for careerist distance. This heterogeneity, rather than producing a protective net, exposes professors to asymmetric risk, eroding the collective immunity that a united faculty once promised.

Jayal's fieldwork verifies that academic freedom is most imperilled in systems where governance is highly centralised, bureaucratic, and infused with partisan scrutiny. When institutional autonomy ebbs, faculty become vulnerable not only in tenure and promotion, but also in curricular design, in peer review, and even in the atmospherics of campus safety (140). The novel illustrates how such structural fragility infects routine scholarship: curricular choices become fraught exercises in tactical avoidance, the mentorship of students morphs into calculation, and the peer-reviewed monograph is silently calibrated to match the prevailing political wind. The text foresees a series of phenomena that continue to emerge, illustrating how governmental meddling in hiring and promotion processes can recalibrate institutional ethos and silence dissent. By inserting pliant decision-makers at strategic nodes and isolating faculty who refuse doctrinal conformity, the institution cultivates an environment in which autonomy of inquiry retreats to a fragile margin.

The Intersection with Literary Studies and Political Ideology

Literary studies, once a sanctuary for pluralist critique, have thus become the front line for wider ideological confrontations. Its methodologies of close reading, cultural criticism, and historicized contextualization place it squarely at the intersection of meaning and power. Hariharan dramatises the refiguration of the discipline: disciplines once regarded as laboratories of dissent shift under law into apparatuses of ideological calibrating. In this registration of cultural capitulation, the humanities are redefined as instruments of selective affirmation rather than as cushions against monologic rule (Viswanathan 32).

The novel frames literary studies as a concentrated arena in which larger disputes about culture, identity, and national belonging unfold. Murthy's scholarship on medieval texts invites opposition less for its precise historical arguments and more for what these arguments insinuate about current debates on religious identity, the purity of cultural inheritance, and the essence of national character. When literary studies become the focus of factional contestation, they disclose how culture is repeatedly enlisted in the service of political agendas, with each group seeking to appropriate certain narratives, canons, and readings to validate its worldview.

The novel underlines that nationalism is built upon the operations of literary and historical discourse—the capacity to forget, to sanction, and to draw curriculum lines—and that these operations have been theorised with equal force in the Gramscian archive and postcolonial studies (Viswanathan 28). The narrative shows

that lists of canonical texts and the hermeneutic grids through which they are apprehended emerge as battlegrounds on which cultural authority and the legitimacy of the polity are contested. Efforts to sanction, marginalise, or redirect Murthy's findings on medieval manuscripts are thus revealed as attempts to regulate the parameters of scholarly exchange while simultaneously dictating the popular conception of cultural continuity and historical identity.

Mirza's analysis illuminates how Hariharan delineates a spectrum of academic personae: "shrewd, some diplomatically and politically aggressive, and some devoted to their vocation" (892). Such portrayals render the fissures within the scholarly milieu all the more visible when confronted by outside coercion. The text underscores the heterogeneous responses to political coercion: a subset counsels tactical capitulation, another group clings to unyielding principlism. At the same time, a third negotiates daily between these poles using tactical retreat and ambiguity.

The narrative depicts coercive forces that exceed the overt threat of repression and extend to more insidious modes: professional ostracism, circumscribed advancement, and the disintegration of collegial ties. Together, these pressures construct a climate where the suppression of dissenting thought is rationalised as prudence, culminating in a slow, nearly imperceptible decline of intellectual autonomy and the corrosion of the critical enterprise. The text further interrogates the porous boundary separating literary scholarship from public discourse, surveying how the novel's protagonist negotiates the competing demands of disciplinary specialisation and civic accountability. The initial skirmish among professors escalates into a media firestorm, demonstrating the way a close reading of a single poem acquires political valence and travels into the broader cultural arena. Such a trajectory reveals not only the possible political purchase of the humanities but also their susceptibility to instrumentalisation by opposing factions. By dramatising this passage from archive to public arena, the author provocatively invites readers to interrogate the terms by which scholarly knowledge is translated into social action—or, conversely, social conflict.

Literature, Resistance, and Counter-Hegemony

Hariharan's narrative thus transcends a mere portrayal of diagnosis; it ventures into a prescriptive engagement, delineating a sustained intellectual resistance able to withstand the severest pressures of intimidation. The protagonist's final decision to confront power with unwavering candour, in the face of explicit threats, elevates the narrative to an overt act of dissent within a gravely besieged public sphere (Mirza 893). This moment signifies more than a solitary act of fortitude; it embodies a resolute adherence to the broader imperatives of intellectual integrity and the practices of democratic interchange, imperatives that persistently exceed individual interests.

Gupta delineates the intertwining of "passive and active forms of resistance" through which faculty and students confront the encroachments of authoritarianism in both lived and fictional academic sites (96). The novel renders a spectrum of resistive movements, extending from Murthy's vigorous defence of a compromised research agenda to more subdued, yet equally crucial, gestures of collegial and student solidarity. These divergent practices underscore the strategic complexity confronted by actors within repressive contexts, revealing the fraught calculus of reaffirming ethical commitment while simultaneously weighing the risks to personal security and professional continuity. The text also interrogates how student mobilisation and solidarity sustain the principle of academic freedom. Throughout the narrative,

Murthy's students are depicted as tireless defenders, coordinating protests and circulating petitions to protect his right to pursue research unhindered. Their activism is thus situated within the more extended history of democratic engagement and political resistance that has periodically sustained the autonomy of the Indian university and analogous institutions elsewhere.

Investigating the case through the notion of counter-hegemony illuminates how sustained challenge to prevailing ideologies demands both solitary acts of courage and concerted, collective labour to construct rival discourses and institutional arrangements. Literary criticism, read through this lens, stops being merely a mirror of political transformation and is recast as a driver of that transformation, putting forward the claim that the preservation of dissent and the cultivation of open inquiry are inseparable from the vitality of Indian democracy (Viswanathan 34). The novel intimates that both literature and the discipline of literary studies are summoned to this project, since they afford porous sites for imaginative inquiry and critical self-reflection that can unsettle dominant narratives and gestate alternative futures. The novel itself stands as a deliberate act of literary defiance, illustrating how art can bear critique of power and nurture public conscience. In narrating conflicts over academic speech, Hariharan archives their futility while animating civic interest and debate. The text thus enacts literature as conscience and torch, ever reflecting the usual order yet flashing the latitude for rupture and repair.

Conclusion

Githa Hariharan's *In Times of Siege* projects a finely calibrated map articulating literary vocation, ideological state, and institutional authority in postliberal India. By subjecting academic autonomy and intellectual censorship to dramatic inquiry, the novel interrogates the shallowness of dissent, the absorption of pedagogic milieux, and the ethics of testimony when the state polices memory. Its abiding efficacy resides in the courage to diagnose the seizure without courting pessimism, while tracing how fearless conduct and enforced fellowship can frustrate restraint without retreat. The subsequent analysis indicates that Hariharan's literary project functions simultaneously on several registers: it vividly depicts academic life subjected to political coercion, it operates as an allegorical commentary on the broader erosion of democratic institutions, and it engages in metafictional reflection on the intricate ties linking narration and truth. This capacious design permits the work to confront both the particular predicaments currently besetting Indian higher education and the more general interrogation of how intellectuals can sustain democratic practices and principles.

By weaving together critical frameworks, the present study argues that Hariharan's writing not only mirrors contemporary anxieties surrounding pluralism, dissent, and the duty of the university but also insists on a reformulation of the terms of that discourse. The text's relevance thus surpasses the boundaries of its plot and character, probing instead the larger dynamics linking literary production and political contestation, the place of the university within the democratic polis, and the ethical obligations incumbent on scholars in periods of acute political jeopardy. The novel's prescient dissection of diminishing academic liberty has acquired additional traction in the years following its publication, as recent surveys record worsening academic freedom indices in India alongside the intensifying politicisation of universities. These developments invite a more profound reflection upon how literature may operate not only as a diagnostic of its context but as a preparatory blueprint for forthcoming crises.

In Times of Siege insists, with characteristic narrative rigour, that critics of fiction and public intellectuals alike must re-evaluate the university's function—not as a repository of dogma but as a laboratory for democratic deliberation and intellectual audacity. Its conception of academic arenas as laboratories of critique, plural argumentation, and civic involvement poses a compelling counter to approaches that reduce pedagogy to a mere vehicle for economic yield or political subjugation.

The present study underlines the necessity of crossing disciplinary boundaries in the analysis of present-day assaults upon academic freedom, for such assaults elude resolution when examined through a single lens of literature, politics, or pedagogy. By mapping the points of convergence among these paradigms, one arrives at a fuller picture of how academic liberty is imperilled and the multiple, coordinated responses through which its viability may be secured. The novel by Hariharan intimates that defending academic freedom demands, beyond formal institutional and legal protections, a communal and cultural affirmation of intellectual honesty, rigorous inquiry, and democratic discourse. Its depiction of both solitary and collective acts of resistance illustrates that such commitments can survive only when they are continuously reasserted by individuals and communities intimately tied to, and inextricably dependent upon, the enterprise of education. Thus, *in Times of Siege* transcends its texture of literary art, emerging as a proactive summons to anyone who regards intellectual liberty and democratic conversation as irreplaceable goods.

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