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DAV Institute of Engineering & Technology
Kabir Nagar, Jalandhar - 144008

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A Peer Reviewed Journal Devoted to English Language and Literature

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The Literati is the scholarly journal of English literature and English language with a wide range of interests. Emphasis is on interpretative evaluation and fresh readings of authors and texts to be offered in light of newly discovered sources or new interpretation of known material. The journal is a promising player in the promotion of research in English Literature and Language. The journal has been conceptualized to pander to the needs of standard research in the field of English language & literature while providing a competitive platform to the young scholars for exhibiting their latent research aptitude and contribute towards the existing dimensions in the research sphere. The journal shall prove to be a touchstone of academic excellence in various literary denominations and dimensions cutting across all the literary circles.

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Literary Criticism and Theory

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My People are Rising: Through a Critical Lens

Srishti & Narinder K. Sharma

Literature is a forum that intellectuals over ages have utilized for the expression of their emotions and experiences. Autobiography is a genre which found popularity comparatively recently. It is a prose narrative which is a narration of an individual's life experiences and development through a passage of time. It is the biography of the self. As Onley suggests: "Autobiography is a metaphor of the self as it is becoming" (Onley 35). Every individual possesses a selfhood and each selfhood is the expression of universal human nature. This genre is significant for providing literary legitimacy and desired subjectivity to the writer. The Black Panther Party which was the most controversial revolutionary movement of the 1960s in America found it apt to utilize this contestatory narrative of the autobiographies. The Black Panthers found their inception in 1966 in Oakland, California and within two years of their existence, they were labelled as the greatest threat to the internal security of the country by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The work in question is the autobiography of a young Black Panther, Aaron Dixon, who joined this party as the captain of Seattle Chapter in 1968 with the aspirations of challenging the state order which was marred with racism and discrimination. In this book, he chronicles the days he spent in the most effective Black revolutionary organization of the twentieth century. Dixon is the representative of many young men like him who sacrificed the secure confines of their homes, put their lives on risk and devoted themselves to the struggle for black liberation. The fact that this book is grounded in the ordinary lends it an extraordinary appeal.

Dixon wrote this book asan inspiration for many young people facing challenging circumstances in their societies like the kind that Panthers were fighting against. It is a worth reading cautionary tale of a revolutionary and his struggle with the system, the oppressors and sometimes himself. This work does not confine itself to the history of the Black Panther Party, but connects the emergence of the party to the history of black people in America. Aaron Dixon's *My People are Rising* presents an

honest and clear narrative of the chaos of the high sixties in America. Dixon was merely 19 in 1968 when he became the Captain of the first chapter of the Black Panther Party outside California. Like most of the blacks in America, Dixon also grew up in an environment where he saw his elders suffering from frequent incidents of racism. He found himself to be a subject to the most subtle racism in school where he was taught that he belonged to inferior strata of the society. The teachers in his school bluntly told him: "Aaron, you are not going to college. You are just not college material" (Dixon 54). He accepts that such words by his mentors stuck in his mind like lead and this was how racism penetrated the minds of many young black men who were being conditioned by the system to be subordinates. The life narratives of many young men like Dixon were to undergo a change with the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s which ushered in the beginning of the end of racial segregation and outright discrimination. The fight for civil rights informed the young minds of America about the visions for a better future.

But the 1960s began with unsettling events in the US history like the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in November, 1963. For many black people, Kennedy was the embodiment of hope and possibility of a break from the ugly past but his death marked the beginning of the most violent decade in the America. His death was followed by the assassinations of many influential black power leaders like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. The disillusionment brought about by the assassination of King Jr. diverted a lot of African-Americans of the latter half of the 1960s towards the radical revolutionist stance of the Black Panthers. He elaborately describes the wave of anger that the assassination brought about and also labels it as the beginning of the war between the black youth and the repressive state structure. He admits that despite becoming impatient with the non-violent and non-threatening approach of Martin Luther King Jr., he was their modern day saviour. He expresses intensely how this one incident laid the seeds of the revolution:

Anger filled me that night. There would be no more tears and no more dialogue. The war began that night all across America. I vowed to myself that Martin's death would not go unavenged. If a man of peace could be killed through violence, then violence it would be. For me, the picket sign would be replaced, and in its place would be gun. It was now an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. There would be no more unanswered murders (Dixon 74). After the awakening brought about by the failure of non-violence to hold ground for the youth, Dixon, like many other youth turned towards the revolutionary ideals of the Panthers. He successfully paints a picture of the circumstances which created the type of young men and women who were ready to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the Black Panthers. The Panthers consciously advocated revolutionary praxis as the most desirable approach to racial oppression. They recruited young men as Marxist vanguard revolutionary force which would pose an antithesis to capitalism and racism. To explicate this further, the book

also focuses on the rank and file members of the party and all the programs it initiated to raise the political consciousness of the African-American masses. The contrast in ideologies of Civil Rights and Black Power is highlighted through the two chapters: 'The Death of Martin Luther King Jr.' and 'The Panther Emerges'. He describes King sentimentally as: "...heaven sent, a modern-day saint, our Mahatma Gandhi, confronting America and its injustices as no other man had ever done, and doing all this with no malice, no anger, no hatred, just pure love and pure faith that some day we could all live in peace and harmony"(73). On the other hand, Huey is described vigorously as:

> Brother Huey was a bad motherfucker when he ran the streets with his running buddies. He was known as a fierce street fighter. But he also read a lot of books. He always studies a lot of shit. He understood what was going on with the masses of oppressed people. He realized that we have to organize people against the racist pig power structure. We have to raise the consciousness of the people and educate them about the fact that they have a right to defend themselves, just as they say in the second amendment of the constitution (83).

Thus, a political change came about in the ideology of young Black America with the death of Martin Luther King Jr.. Revolutionary thought was replacing the Civil Rights approach by manifestingintensity and a seriousness which was lacking in the latter.

This great shift also came at a heavy price. The path of revolution is never without hurdles and Dixon also went through various turbulent phases in his political career. He revealed his inhibitions when Bobby Seale announced him the captain of the Seattle chapter saying, "I felt deeply about the movement which was rapidly gaining steam, coming over the horizon, but I was not yet a true, committed revolutionary"(45). Such statements provide a sense of authenticity to the book because nowhere does Dixon present himself in larger-than-life proportions, but accepts his fears and failures like a common man. His candour in revealing the mistakes committed by the Panthers makes this book extremely valuable for the people who are challenging the stagnation in societies all over the world.

The Panthers empowered the youth with the knowledge of their legal and civil rights. The Panthers took up the task of monitoring the police and ensuring the safety of their communities. Dixon led the Seattle chapter of the party for 10 years and operated multiple community welfare programs like free breakfast for children and community health clinics. The Panthers tried to provide the people with the basic services which the government had denied them. The Panthers were a fine example of minorities penetrating the margins created by the power structure to maintain its superiority. The alienation that the African-Americans experienced due to the hyphenated nature of their identities was subverted

through the counter-cultural ethics of the Panthers. Dixon shares the emancipation as such:

Putting on the Black Panther uniform and committing our lives to the liberation struggle changed the purpose and meaning of our entire identities. It was a liberating experience. Societal restrictions and conformities dropped by the wayside, leaving a fearless, defiant, powerful human being. We no longer looked at ourselves in the same way, nor did we look at the system and its representatives in the same manner. We were the freest of the free (114). Aaron Dixon also had confrontations with the police due to which he appeared on the radar of the Federal Bureau of Investigation which had launched a counter intelligence program in order to eliminate all traces of Panther activity from the state and dismantle their movement. He narrates the incident of his first confrontation with the police in 1963 when riots broke out in Seattle. He says: They did not have to come down on us the way they did. But through their actions, they brought us together, uniting us and politicizing us, all in one night. I remember the cop taking my picture, which could have meant only one thing; just as we were preparing ourselves for the inevitable, the authorities were doing the same thing- preparing , by identifying future enemies of the state (70).

Thus, the movement that the Panthers were to tread on, prepared the young men for the inevitable risks involved and at the same time, forewarned the state of the danger that this counter-cultural movement was to pose. The Panthers became the embodiment of resistance to racism and a capitalistic state order which maintained vast injustices and inequalities. A strong desire for justice motivated many young men like Aaron Dixon to set things right on their own instead of waiting for the draconian state apparatus to undergo a change of heart. In Fanonian sense, this violence was a natural response for the resurrection of Black identity. Although violence was a characteristic feature of the Black Panthers, yet it became its nadir too. The emphasis of the Panthers was on picking up the gun for self-defence, but many radicals failed to understand this sensitive yet crucial ideology and resorted to uninhibited and reckless violence. Dixon admits this in the chapter 'The end of the Line':

> We knew we were the last of the warriors, the last of a dying breed. We had become a strong force, feeling invincible at times. We had considered ourselves as eternal soldiers, always thinking we would fight the enemy to victory or to death. What we failed to realize was that the enemy, at times was us (285).

After 12 years of maintaining the party and its principles, it began to crumble due to most of the comrades being either imprisoned, on the run,

dead or disillusioned. The party had also begun to divide into two factions in a few years, one of which wanted to break with the community based approach of the party and divert to guerrilla warfare. The split in ideologies, police enmity, forced incarcerations, intra-party strife and multiple assassinations of the Panthers led to the final demise of the party in 1982.

This book is an honest account of the successes and failures of the party and without any diplomatic manipulations. It is a lesson for the future generations to have a sense of purpose and zeal to work for the greater good of the society. His account is an epic tale of how the Panthers became such a formidable force in the American politics in the 1960s. The stories that Dixon shares define the courage, integrity and commitment that constitutes a revolutionary. He paints a very detailed portrait of the Black Panther Party which consisted of more than police patrols and breakfast for children programs. He presents a very accurate and balanced depiction of the party by discussing the Panther's broad array of survival programs which focussed on the community. This book is a pioneering work which is a striking blend of memoir, political analysis and social history. The radical history of the twentieth century and the Black liberation struggle find their representation through the experiences of Aaron Dixon. Hewrote about the enduring legacy of black power in the capacity of a soldier on the front lines of the Black Panther Party, the most maligned organization of the twentieth century. Instead of resorting to sensationalism or glorification, the writer provides a valuable account of the high price that a revolutionary has to pay in order to bring about real change.

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Living in the World of Sacrifices of Human and Non-Human Beings: A Study in the Faith-Healing System of the Santals in Select Santal Folktales

Arpita Raj

Faith healing system refers to the practice where a diseased person can be cured with the help of rituals or prayers. Generally, faith healing system is a way of healing the patient through supernatural power. Believers in faith healing system often sustain a strong belief in supernatural power. Those who practice the faith healing system believe more in the power of rituals or prayers than on the help of medicine or medical practitioners.

Many indigenous communities are still in the practice of offering sacrifices, a part of faith healing system. Santals are one of them. Santals practicefaith healing system from the dawn of their existence.This indigenous treatment is very popular among them. The Santals very fondly pass on this belief-system from generation to generation. At present, when medical science is at the peak of its improvement, Santals are not fully ready to accept it. They still believe a lot in the power of *ojha*[1]or *janguru*[2]who often plays an important role to perform sacrifice or the faith healing system.

To the Santals, nature is an integral part of their life. The tradition and culture of the Santals move round nature. Santals are the true worshipper of nature. They love to lead an eco-friendly life. With the change of seasons festivals of the Santals are shifted. Festival, we can say, regulate Santal life. Festivals are not only a way to enjoy mirth and amusement but through them Santals show respect to nature. Besides, festivals are an expression of Santal belief-system. To satisfy the evil forces or *bonga*[3]in life Santals sacrifice animals through the festivals.The festivals are as follows:

In the month of *Asar* (mid June to mid July) during the time of sowing and scattering seeds every Santal family sacrifices a fowl to the *bonga*.

This is called the sowing fowl, the first sacrifice of the year. After completing the plantation of rice the Santals offer 'Green fowl' to the village *bongas*in the month of *San* (mid July to mid August). This sacrifice is called green fowl because it is observed with the prayers that the paddy may grow green. In the month of *Bhador* (mid August to mid September) Santals offer the first fruit of *iri* and *gundli*.At first, the village priest goes to the highland field where the crop has ripened first and collects them. The priest takes the fruits to the sacred grove and offers them to the *bongas Jaher era, Moreko, Marang Hor, Gosae era* and then to *Pargana* in succeeding way. The *Janthar* or the first fruit of the low-land paddy is offered in the month of *Aghar* (mid November to mid December). The Santals collect pig or *ram* as sacrificial animal for *Janthar.* The priest offers this as sacrifice to *Pargana bonga* in sacred grove.

Santals celebrate *Sohorae* festival during the month of *Pus* (mid December to mid January) when they reap paddy and thrash them. As new crop is brought home to satisfy the *bongas,* Santals sacrifice a pig or fowl uttering an invocation: *Sakrat* is the last date in the month of *Pus*. On the day of *Sakrat*, Santals rise early in the morning. They sacrifice rice cake and hen in the name of their ancestors and start celebrating *Sakrat* festival.

In the month of *Magh* (Mid January to mid February), Santals sacrifice fowl to the *bongas* for the reaping of thatching grasses. Therefore, this sacrifice is called *Magh fowl. Baha* is the festival of flowers for the Santals. In the month of *Fagun* (mid February to mid March) when the whole atmosphere is vibrant with the colour of flowers, Santal cannot resist them from celebrating *Baha* festival. The priest sacrifices fowl to the *bongas* in sacred grove. Every Santal family also sacrifices pig and fowl.

Therefore, the above discussion makes it clear that the belief system of the Santals in sacrifice is immense. Throughout the year Santals remain ready to celebrate the festivals. Through these festivals Santals try to appease the *bongas* who always have an evil eye on human affairs. The only way to satisfy the *bongas* is to offer a sacrifice to them. In some select Santal folktales too we have the reference to the sacrifice of human and non-human beings to satisfy the *bongas*. We will make a detailed study of these select Santal folktales that deal with the description of the faith healing practice i.e. the practice of the sacrifice of the Santals.

II

While discussing the practice of sacrifice, the native treatment of the Santals, it becomes necessary to say a few words on the attitude of the Santals towards disease or illness in society. Santals believe that human being have a natural right to be in good health. Only evil forces are

responsible for the disease. The words of N. Patnaik are very much important in this context. They are:

> The first and foremost condition which brings happiness is that of well-being and freedom from disease and sickness. They believe that disease and sickness are unnatural and say that human beings have a natural right to health and life and that they ought to live to old age. There are hundreds of *bongas* or evil spirits, as they are called, around them and they harass people and cause disease, illness and death. (138)

In many Santal folktales we have the references that if the choice is open to the Santals they will surely turn around to the power of *ojha* or *janguru* than medicine or doctors. They believe that the only way to avoid disease or sickness is to appease the *bonga* or evil forces.

In the Santal folktale under discussion, *The Bonga's Victim* from C.H. Bompas's *Folklore of the Santal Parganas*, we have the reference to the belief of the Santals in offering sacrifice of human being. In the abovementioned folktale we are told that there lived seven brothers, their wives and one sister together in a village. Everyday the brothers went for hunting. On a very hot day they were hunting since morning and felt very thirsty. Inspite of a long search they did not find anything to quench their thirst. One of them climbed the top of the tree and found a pool of water nearby. When he came down and went towards the pool there was nothing. Then another brother climbed up a tree and found a pool of water. But as soon as he came down and directed his way towards the pool there was nothing. These things happened time and again. The brothers had to suffer a lot from thirst.

But soon they realized that the *bonga* is the cause of their suffering. It is deceiving them. To pacify the *bonga* they must sacrifice something. But nobody was willing to sacrifice their wives. So they decided to sacrifice their sister. They prayed to the *bonga* in this way, "Ye who are keeping the water from us, listen; we dedicate to your only sister; show us where the water is". As soon as they vowed they found a pool of water and quenched their thirst (254).

They started planning how to sacrifice their sister. But two of the youngest brothers loved their sister very much. They requested to postpone the sacrifice for a little. Out of sympathy all of them agreed. In the meantime one of the brothers fell ill. He was going to die. When all kinds of medicine failed the family members called in an *ojha*. The *ojha* came and detected the cause of the disease. He told that as they did not fulfill the vow to sacrifice their sister, they made to the *bonga* during hunting, he had caused the illness. No sooner the brothers performed the

rituals and swore that they will keep their promise as per the instructions of the *ojha* the sick brother was restored to health. Here are few lines that indicate how the Santals ignored the modern medical treatment and accepted the ancient indigenous treatment of faith healing system through the sacrifice of their sister:

> Medicines were tried but had no effect; then they called in an *ojha* and he told them that the *bonga* to whom they had made the vow while out hunting had caused the illness and that if they did not fulfill the vow their brother would die. Then they all went to the sick man's bedside and poured out water on the ground and swore that they would fulfill their vow; no sooner had they done so than the sick man was restored to health. (255)

The next day when the sister came with breakfast for her brothers they sent her to bring water from the pond. As the brothers instructed she preceded more to fill the water pot and gradually the water closed over her head and she drowned.

In a Santal folktale entitled, *The Boundary Bonga* we find the sacrifice of a non-human being to satisfy the boundary *bonga*. The story is like this:

There was a man the owner of rich swampy rice field. Every year before starting harvest he used to sacrifice a pig to the boundary *bonga*. In spite of that the *bonga* cut a large portion of crop each year. When the rice was growing to ripen he used to visit his rice field. One evening when the man was sitting beside his paddy field in darkness he overheard the conversation of the *bonga* and his wife. He heard that the *bonga* was willing to visit his friend's house. But his wife requested him not to go because the rice was completely ripe then and the farmer would cut the entire crop immediately. But the *bonga* did not agree with his wife and set off his journey. After hearing it the farmer felt an immediate need to cut his crop. Without wasting any time the man sacrificed a pig to the *bongas* and cut the total crop. In evening when the job is done the man tries to listen whether the *bonga* had come back or not. The next day when the paddy was thrashed the man discovered the amount of paddy was sixty bushels, more than usual, instead of twenty. That evening the farmer again visited his paddy field. This time the *bonga* had returned home and his wife is scolding him for letting the farmer reap the entire crop. The wife rebuked the *bonga* in this way:

> That is all you have got; this is all because you would go away when I told you not to do it; how could I reap the crop with the children to look after? If you had stayed we might have got five *bandis* of rice from that field.

III

The discussion of these two stories indicates that Santals are strong advocate of their native way of treatment. They believe that the evil forces like *bonga* or witch must be responsible for unhappiness, disease or illness in the family. Otherwise they have a natural right to live happily in society. Therefore, these evil forces must be appeased or punished and that is the only way to recover the patient or restore happiness in family. If any serious sickness happens or misfortune appears in family, they must call in an *ojha* or *janguru*with the consultation of village headman. Therefore, we may draw the conclusion that the inclination of the Santals to sustain the indigenous treatment of sacrifice of human and non-human beings helps the Santals to sustain their indigenous identity in the gradually changing modern world. In the modern age when people depend on medical science wholly, the preference of the Santals to the native practice discriminate them from the mainstream culture and lead them to uphold their core identity.

Notes

1. *Ojha* in Santal society is often regarded as the professional medical practitioner who has the responsibility to pacify the evil spirits. His role in santal society is equivalent to a doctor. Santals believe tha*t ojha* has a deep communion with th*e bongas* or other evil spirit. With the supernatural or magical powe*r ojha* tries to satisfy or appease the evil spirits who often interfere in human activities.
2. *Janguru* is very often called a witch-finder in Santal society. When anybody falls ill the family members consult a *janguru.* If *janguru* detects a *bonga* as the cause of illness the family has to sacrifice for the patient's recovery and if he detects a witch responsible for sickness the woman in Santal society is oppressed in the worst possible way.
3. *Bonga* comprises the supernatural world of the Santals to a large extent. Whenever a man dies other household members of the family say that he or she has become a *bonga*. *Bonga* always take a lot of interest in the affairs of the surviving families. Santals think that *Bongas* always have an evil eye on human affairs.

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Feminine Sensibility in the Novels of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala

Shashi Kant Mishra

The emergence of women writers particularly in the second half of the 20th century in almost all the countries is a remarkable phenomenon. Feminism which basically means the assertion of female identity arises when a woman refuses to be a doormat or a prostitute, and, in fact, it did arise as a protest against patriarchy, sexual colonialism, sexism, consistent subject-deprivation of women, male hypocrisy, marginalization, denial of identity, the woman as property, marital rape, denial of sexualand double code of conduct, etc. These factors have at length been analyzed with reference to life and letters in feminist creative literature and few other critical feminist texts—Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of The Rights ofWoman*(1792), Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*(1929),Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*(1949), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*(1963), Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*(1970) and Helen Cixous's*The Laugh of Medusa*(1975).Maggie Humm presents the basic tenets of feminism succinctly in this way

> Feminism incorporates diverse ideas which share three major perceptions; that gender is a social construct which oppresses women more than men; that patriarchy shapes this construction and the women's experimental knowledge is a basis for a future non-sexist society. These assumptions inform feminism's double agenda the task of critique (attacking gender stereotypes) and the task of construction. Without this second task (sometimes called feminist praxis) feminism has no goal... (1986:194).

Social environment has radically changed in Europe since then and the women writers enjoy a greater measure of freedom now. Feminine talent found a full-throated expression and no area of life remains the exclusive male purview any more. Women writers have endeavored to demolish the idol-image of woman as mere sex object and they have attempted a new definition of womanhood and woman's role in wider frame of human society. This was initiated by Virginia Woolf in 1928 by

giving a clear and confessional exposure to the feelings, sentiments, and aspirations passing through woman‘s consciousness.

In contemporary world of writers in English fiction there are numerous women novelists portraying the feminine soul and psyche through stream of consciousness technique in bold and defiant ways. In French feminists Simon de Beauvoir and others are very much concerned about the physical suppression of women. Therefore, according to the French model of feminism, it would imply the greater sexual expression. If we consider the American models, they are vociferous and most outspoken about the most inner feelings, emotions, desire and aspirations of womankind. As regard India, a brief note will reveal how well feminism has been presented and how replaced models are possible within the Indian context. The first generations of Indian writing in English have dealt with many problems of Indian but unfortunately have not touched the inner self of women folk (Nahal 19).

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, as a writer, occupies a conspicuous position as a fictionist of well-defined feminine sensibility in the contemporary literary scenario and may be compared with the best of women writers of the day. It would be no exaggeration to state that in point of popularity as an explorer of feminine feelings, passions, hopes and fears she is second to none of her sex. Her European sensibility, transplanted in India and after experiencing Indian essence of feminine life her final exposition in America has given a triangular mode to her perception and her articulation of feminine soul and psyche. An epoch making study of British women novelists since the Brontes from the point of view of women’s experience, titled *A Literature ofTheir Own* (1977) Elaine Showalter divides the tradition into three phases-theFeminine, the Feminist and the Female representing the three different shreds of feminism. Evaluating Jhabvala’s achievement in his equally historic work, Indian Writing in English, K.R. SrinivasIyengar observes that Here is a feminine contemporary urban sensibility in contrast to that of the masculine Victorian novelists of the sea and lands beyond the sea’ (450).The exploration of these thematic phenomenon of the feminine sensibility widening along with artistic vision of Jhabvala‘s literary world and craftsmanship as a fictionist of excellence. Obviously, Jhabvala explicates the issues that the feminists have been engrossed with her literary vision and perception of the complex feminine phenomenon during her passage through three main continents; India, England and America of this planet have earned a conspicuous position for her among the women fictionists of the present age. The articulation of the whole gamut of the feminine feelings and passions, hopes and aspirations, frustrations and agonies along with the female quest for self-actualization and individual identity is quintessentiallyJhabvala‘s own distinct voice. No doubt, the enrichment of this woman writer‘s literary

sensibility through a wider exposure along with her peculiar experiences, have given a triangular mode to her artistic vision and thematic perspectives.

This study of Jhabvala's novels makes clear that her literary endeavour began with an ironic portrayal of womenfolk in the traditional conservative and patriarchal societies of India; then she focused on the predicament of the enigmatic romance and unscrupulous submission of the European women who happen to come to this obsessively enchanting sub-continent- a phenomenon much closer to the exiled author's own heart; and lastly on her move to New York, she scans soul and psyche of the American women who are suffering from the agony of boredom, psychic disintegration, abnormal sexuality and self-hatred. With these progressive thematic dimensions Jhabvala's craftsmanship has also got enrichment and maturity which makes stand apart in the gallery of women fictionists of modern times. The studyanalyses of the predicament of feminine sensibility from a woman's point of view in the novels of this writer who has dealt with womanhood and feminine quest for self-actualization in various setting encompassing three prominent continents.

However, a religious study of her fictional and non-fictional works has made it quite clear that this expatriate of European consciousness felt the Indian Milieu on her pulse through personal experiences here. Being a daughter-in-law of India she was at an advantageous position of being in India and out of India and to her observation of urban India life she brings both a European's irony that can come only with a certain detachment and an insider's knowledge of details and nuances that few non-Indians could claim to command. Obviously, her passage to India has been drastically different from that of Kipling or Forster. Her Indian fiction is spun by an initiated outsider with an unusual insight and this perspective in Indian context could not be available to any other great Anglo-Indian writers who have addressed themselves to the cross-cultural issues.In spite of all these advantageous claims for Jhabvala, it will be unwise to call her a genuine Indian novelist since her authorial voice is in the mainstream of the European writers. Truly speaking, she remained in the status of a European transplanted in the urban middle-class society of India for a substantial period of twenty-five years but could not get rooted here. So her eyes could not look beneath the surface as the inward realities of the Indian life are not touched by her and her range of her knowledge remained confined only to the predicament of the pseudo-modern women in middle class section of Delhi and to the experiences of expatriate women in the same background. One more fact should also be considered here that the family into which Ruth Prawer married in Parsi and that the Persians themselves are of an outsider group in India. Very much like the Jews in their diaspora the Parsis value education, pursue

their professional status and equally maintain their distinct and separate identity as a community. Perhaps, this aloofness from common Indians is also a curse of Jhabvala's limited range of feminine world in Indian context.

Novels of the Early phase of the literary career of Jhabvala spreads over her first four novels, *To Whom She Will* (1955), *The Nature of Passion* (1956), *Esmond in India* (1958) and *The Householder* (1960) in which she has portrayed the oddities, eccentricities of the middle classof India and its traditional verdict for confinement, suppression and subservience of woman and fascist dominance of man. It has been traced that these novels expose the tyranny of the age-old patriarchal hegemony and the subservient and slavish position of woman in Indian social system. The atmosphere is sunny in the early novels where protagonists are young, educated and modern women who aspire for their emancipation and self-realization as individual human beings. With the exception of*Esmond in India* there is no involvement of any westerner in these novels whichpicturise the conflict between the traditional social decorum and the romantic quest ofyoung protagonists for their individual identity and freedom of choice. It has been found that the attempts of woman protagonists to re–define the role and identity of woman are labeled as rebellion against the established code of behaviour and the hard-handed control of males on females. With an ironic vision of a social realist Jhabvala lashes at the selfishness, hypocrisy and insincerity of males through the romantic extravagance of the naïve lovers who surrender to the very first pressures of their families.Though Amrita, heroine of To Whom She Will and Nimmi, The Nature of Passion eventually accept the decisions of their lovers- Hari and Pheroze-due to their courage and resistance against social pressures respectively. It is quite clear that daughter is still treated as a personal possession of parents especially of father and there is no scope for any individual identity of her. In spite of the high romantic idealism of the love of the protagonists, the authoritative male force crushes every possibilities of self-realization and freedom of choice in selecting a husband. Fascistic males of the household thwart the attempts of the modern educated protagonists to redefine their identity and achieve freedom. Other women of the house are instrumental in this suppression and so are indirectly spokespersons of the rigid patriarchal dominance in Indian society even in post-independence era.

Jhabvala extracts much comedy from the romantic excesses and insufficient defiance of these immature lovers who rate their love very high but readily renounce it on the very first pressure of society. In this comic exposition, it is ironical that in renouncing their love the young men are more prompt and selfish than the defiant girls. In the defiance and feminine upsurge of the protagonists of the early two novels Jhabvala seems to suggest that the stirrings for the Indian womenfolk along with

the process of the refinement of their sense and sensibilities. Here Jhabvala's irony is double-edged authorial instrument to expose the predicament of women in thepatriarchal social setup as well as pseudo-modernism of young protagonists who love just to satiate their curiosity and do not strike hard when it is snatched from them.

The protagonists of *Esmond in India* goes a step ahead of her predecessors as this modern butterfly an exciting love and happiness in the being daring enough to have an affairs with a European who has already married an Indian girl after a short romance with her. Shakuntala searches for her self-actualization in an idea of daring marriage with Esmond after his divorce. The mutual repulsion and bickering in the wedlock of Esmond and Gulab become a hope for this protagonist who makes a triangle by her involvement with her lover. Esmond, like other male characters in Jhabvala's novel, is not sincere in his commitments to his beloved who is seduced by this womanizer just for a relief from his obtuse wife.

It is quite humorous and ironical that in spite of all modernity of Shakuntala's parents she is still not free from the over-possessive cocoon of fatherhood and her marriage is arranged with a man chosen by her parents. It is again proved that woman is still shunned as an inferior and subservient sex in this society.The stoic subjugation of woman to the incompetent but highly authoritarian husband is the primary issues highlighted in the novel *The Householder*. Here the novelist presents the predicament of an Indian woman in a household where the husband has failed on all fronts of life but his ego is so high that he resorts to his father-brand authoritarianism over possessive intrusion of his mother leads to bickering in the household and separation of the couple. But Indu is an Indian woman having no option except returning to her husband who is unable to prove his manliness and, therefore, suffers from an inferiority complex.

Novels of the Middle Phase cover four novels *Get Ready for Battle* (1962), *A Backward Place* (1965), *A New Dominion* (1973) and *Heat and Dust* (1975) of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and here shearticulates the predicament of the sensibilities of the western women in Indian background. In it an analysis has been made of the responses and reactions of the expatriate European women who come to India as lovers, wives, travelers and seekers of the spiritual enlightenment. In dealing with these protagonists of the European origin in interaction with India and Indians this novelist has given a subtle and ironical twist to the hackneyed and everlastingly interesting theme of East-West malaise and its traumatic effects on the sensibilities of the western women.

Get Ready for Battle symbolizes the feminine call to womenfolk of India forreadiness to fight their battle for their full emancipation from the

time honoured patriarchal dominance over them. With the change of time the Indian women have taken many defiant and progressive steps as the novelist has portrayed three bold women-Sarla, Kusum and Mala- fighting their own battles for self-actualization and identity as men individual in their own ways. With the progress of time the women portrayed in *Get Ready for Battle* have got a symptomatic change and now they are not content with their traditional role of obedience to husband or household chores. Now divorce, re-marriage, separation and movement in social circles have become the well-accepted realities of society but women are still not emancipated from the bondage and dependence on their men. The novelist is a social realist in presenting the insufficiency of the feminine fights for freedom and women's efforts are ironically thwarted by their male counterparts. No doubt, the intensity of the feminine defiance and upsurge is getting stronger in novel after novel but woman is still in a miserable predicament of victimization at the hands of male and her voice for individual identity is suppressed quite boldly.

In *A Backward Place* the trio of the European protagonists-Judy, Etta and Clarrisa-represents in varying degrees their romantic idealism and the metamorphic impact ofthis monstrously obsessive subcontinent of the primitive socio-cultural heritage. The study makes it clear that these protagonists are various versions of the feminine sensibility of Europe at their different stages of romantic idealism and weird self-destructive process of Indianisation. The novel also exposes the chauvinistic glorification of marriage as a permanent fusion of two souls and the place of husband as God in the life of a woman. Here the authoritarian attitude of Indian husbands and its adverse effects on the sensibilities of western women, the falsity and hypocrisy of the primitive code of morality have all been vehement attacked with the ironic vision of a European rationalist.

The predicament of the western spiritual seekers in this land of old renowned spiritualism is most pathetically portrayed in *A New Dominion* where three expatriate girls are on their spiritual adventure to lose themselves in order to find their selves. It is quite ironical that religiosity has now deteriorated and sexual rapacity is the only religion that these naïve girls are rewarded by the hypocrite Swamiji who brutally exploits them. The traumatic undoing of Lee, Margaret and Evie exposes the moral degradation, brutality and corruption prevalent in the so-called religious centers and spiritual god-men of India. This submission of the expatriate women to the male rapacity of the Indians disguised as spiritual healers has again falsified the feminine cause of self –realization, spiritual rejuvenation and integrated identity as a being.

Heat and Dust is again a sordid tale of misadventures of the European women,who, after coming under the metamorphic effects of Indian become

the victims of tragic obsessions. The two heroines – Olivia, a romantic idealist in imperial India and the narrator an anti-romantic modern observer – portray the drama of East-West malaise with a gap of half century. The feelings of personal entrapment fear of growing old and a frustration of being a loser in the game of passions draws insensitiveNawab and she sacrifices her all for love. There is a double irony in this novel for the rational and cautious Narrator, on a mission to solve the enigma ofOlivia's scandalous destruction, she becomes a victim of almost same scandal and finally moves towards hills to seek remedy in isolation. The most strange and intractable mystery of the feminine sensibility becomes not what happened to self-deluded Olivia, but rather how to account for this sensible modern rational woman's wily submission to illusionary Indian demands which, as she already knows, are fatal in consequences. The inevitable fall of these European women to the sinister masculinity of Indians, in spite of all the warnings of Christianity and rationalism, may be ascribed to the mutual erotic calls of flesh and arousal of the sexual hunger in this tropical land. However, the feminine quest for self-actualization has again ended in self –pity and self-immolation in this land of rapacious masculinity.

With the Novels of the Recent Phase, Jhabvala's career entered in its cosmopolitan phase with her move to the third prominent continent and this shifting has also finally leiteralized her outsider hood and ever-exiled status as a writer. In this new western set up she portrays the multicultural saga of human relationships. Jhabvala articulate the phenomena of multi-racial confluence with a wide and enriched vision and on a vast canvas. The novelist has also reached a considerable maturity as in this phase she scans the deep recesses of the soul and psyche of women protagonists mostly belonging to the émigré community of America. The unbridled freedom of life, undisciplined exercise of passions and unqualified and undefinable sexual involvement has made the women sick leading towards abnormal psychic manifestation. Moreover, due to the collapse of socio-cultural institutions like home', marriage 'and family 'these protagonists are in a hellish predicament of morbid anxiety, loss of faith and agony of death-in-life.The women protagonists of these four novels, *In Search of Love and Beauty* (1983), *Three Continents* (1987), *Poet and Dancer* (1993) and *Shards of Memory* (1995) suffer from obsessive and paradoxical compulsions of love, abnormal sexual hunger. With the help of screenplay, novelist plunges the reader into the crucial moments of three or even four generations of the émigré community. The whole gallery of the American protagonists and other women characters-Lousie, Marietta, Harriet, Angel, Lara, Elsa, Baby, Renata and others-portrays their life of economic abundance and luxury. But it is ironical that almost all of them are in their hellish predicament of boredom, emotional aridity,

alienation and abnormal sexuality which has caused disastrous psychological disorders to their sensibilities. To get rid of these throes of death-in-life, these miserable women hand over themselves to those males who possess extra-ordinarily charismatic personalities and propagate to bring spiritual succor to women. These mysteriously enchanting males with self-avowed religiosity are motivated by expediency, class-revenge or simply the narcissistic pleasure of collecting female admirers. The illusionary women and homosexual men having femininity in their temperament are victimized by the fascistic male absolutism. They reduced to the dilemma of self-destructive sexuality which leads them nowhere. It is noted that at this stage Jhabvala probes into the subconscious and unconscious of the feminine sensibility and projects their inner recesses from a woman‘s point of view. To be true, these protagonists are inflicted with undefiable disease of internal fragmentation, abnormal sexuality, and self-hatred to be possessed by some strong male power. So they are exploited sexually and economically by pseudo-religious gurus through their charismatic mechanism to satiate their rapacity.Taken as a whole this study has reached certain comprehensive and acknowledgeable conclusion regarding the portrayal of feminine sensibilities andfeminine quest for self-actualization and independent identity in the novels of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. A rigorous survey of her fiction makes it clear that the exploitation of the womenfolk has always been the persistent motif of male powers through their mechanism. The male dominance and an idiosyncratic submission of female is an all pervading phenomenon in Jhabvala‘s fictions whether they deal with the feminine sensibilities in the confined and tabooed society of India or probe deep into the psychic complexities of the women of the self-reliant and all-free society of the west.

Jhabvala has got success in a satirical articulation of the feminine challenge to male dominance and though the protagonists have failed in giving a shattering jilt to the age-old male chauvinism. But still these women have succeeded in creating ripples of freedom in the bounded and subjugated life of Indian women. Novels of the early phase clarify that the patriarchal hegemony and old taboos have started eroding but sadly no feminine ideology for an independent and self-actualizing identity of women has taken shape even in the era of post-independent India.It is also an evident that the young protagonists are in a miserable condition of helplessness, alienation and self-pity because their community of women is most vindictive in attitude as well as instrumental in executing the wishes of the males on females of their families. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s vision is realistic and her tone sarcastic in exposing the pseudo-satisfaction gained by the old generation of women by crushing the quests of their youngsters and thus feeling a pride to be head of the household affairs.

Jhabvala's novels of the middle-class Indian life present an incongruous but inescapable similarity to those of Jane Austen in many ways-the large families, the strict code of behavior, the husband hunting, the constant presence of relations –the setting has more in common with the eighteenth century England than it has with the modern west. However, it is a matter of serious concern for the Indian feminists that unlike the heroines of Jane Austen, the protagonists of Jhabvala's novels they do not grow in virtues and even at the end of the novels they are less refined, spoiled, self-centered and insensible. They do not get any refinement of sensibilities and succumb to the social and economic realities of the life and thus do not hesitate in accepting a husband of their parents' choice. In this way these modern women are pseudo-idealists and the true modernity with a re-definition of feminine roles and rules is still a far cry for Indian womenfolk at large.The phenomena of the western women engaged in a weird and complicated criss-crossing to the enigmatic India and seductive Indians presents more or less the unsatisfactory solution to their romantic illusions and dangerous quests to become Indian without having to surrender their own Europeanness. The tragedy of the novels of the middle phase rises from the intimate interaction of the expatriate women with the Indians in post-independence era. The maltreatment of Judy, the brutal rape of the Lee, the seduction of Olivia and her step-granddaughter are some symbolic portrayal of the disparity between the romantic illusion of the western women about India and Indians. In portraying the subjugation of the European women by Indian lovers, husbands or the spiritual gurus, Jhabvala hints at the moral and spiritual degradation in modern India. The search for expatriate women for love, beauty or spirituality ends their victimization at the hands of male rapacity and they are in the predicament of self –destructive commitments or fight for survival.

It is observed that even the spiritual heritage of India has lost its glory in Jhabvala's world of fictional India because the spiritual and aesthetic seekers of also face traumatic experiences. No doubt the, since antiquity the Indian spiritualism has been shinning far above the philosophic deliberation of the world However Jhabvala lashes at the fraudulent guru-cult of modern growth where, in maximum cases, spirituality is only a mechanism for the gratification of sexual and materialistic hunger of man.

The victimization of the naïve expatriate women in India suggests that morality and religious degradation has touched its lowest ebb in modern times. But one of the most puzzling facts in the sensibilities and behaviour of these protagonists are that their obsession with their male exploiters reaches at a point of no return and they sacrifice their all for love. They are doomed for miserable predicament of internal fragmentations

sometimes leading to death. It is more than clear that the characterslike Swamiji and Nawab have no qualms either moral or religious in abusing the credulous expatriate women but what makes these women drag themselves again to these violators is a mystery that Jhabvala has left unexplained. It has been researched that all the warnings of Christianity and European rationalism fail to rescue these otherwise rational women from falling again and again in the clutches of their demon-lovers who betray them in every way.

The phenomenon of the feminine sensibility has reached its full exposition inJhabvala‘s novels of the cosmopolitan phase where socio-cultural ethics and morality have lost their relevance and women flit from continent to continent with a confessional independence and individuality. But even in this world of absolute freedom of life women are in a predicament of wily submission to mysteriously alluring compulsions of flesh and it again leads to their exploitation at the hand of over-possessive males who have power to control these miserable women. Easy divorce and loss of ethics have caused of complexities which are most gruesome and disastrous in their repercussions.

The study clarifies that Jhabvala‘s novels from beginning to the last constitute an exploration of the feminine sensibility and feminine quest for identity and self-actualization as individual human being free from any dependence syndrome. But in all the phases of her literary career it is observed that this quest for love .beauty, bliss and identity has been thwarted because woman is unable to come out of the shadow of man in spite of all equality in materialistic sense. Jhabvala‘s novels have another trait in common: they are completely alienated from other women and in their pursuit of self-actualization and identity they are miserable alone. Whether it is conservative India or America of all freedom of life there is no moral support, love or friendship of other women to the protagonists. Contrary to this there is an antagonism or rivalry amidst the women and this increases the miseries of the women concerned. The women of Indian society find the pleasure in thwarting the quest of the young protagonists and thus becoming instrumental in maintaining the dominance of male power on women. It is equally strange that the expatriate European women in India are deprived of all support and friendship of the women of their nativity as soon as they violate the European code of behaviour and cross over to Indian socio-cultural heritage. Even the women of the modern western society are unable to nurture any valid relationships amongst them, perhaps, because of their rivalry for charismatic males.

Another quite distinct feature that one discovers in Jhabvala‘s recent phase is the manifestation of homosexual men and heterosexual women and even vice-versa that places woman at a new kind of distance by assigning an inferior status to her in the labyrinth of complex and

indefinable relationships. Though the homosexuals are also present in the novels of middle phase, yet in the final phase the disastrous and distorting effect of male power on feminine sensibilities are visualized in the trianglesof homosexual men in contrast to the heterosexual women who are close to them in either capacity of mother, grandmother, sister or beloved.

The new emergence of gay-rights-activism in the crippled and disintegrated society of America is another great agony for women to make them feel inferior and inadequate for homosexual males treats them women only for their rapacious purposes. One may logically acknowledge the female homosexuality as an option since there are lesbian entanglements of protagonists– Lousie-Regi, Elsa-Dorothy, Angel-Lara– but this is pathological and comic and not any satisfactory cementing substitute for masculinity. Moreover, an equation suggests here that the more passionate, wily, and moneyed the women, the more they have a chill of morbid sexuality in their characters and nexus between females is only a hidden enmity in their pursuit of being closer and intimate to their male violators.

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Interpreting Malady in Jhumpa Lahiri's short story 'Interpreter of Maladies'

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Creative authors, while writing a novel or short story, usually do not have a set agenda in their mind. However, as readers we come across various angles to mull over a work of art depending upon our own perspective. This provides new insights and fresh analysis even to old works of creative writers. Jumpha Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* which brought her numerous accolades has in it various stories which too are not devoid of fresh perspectives. The title story of the seminal book may offer us to look at it from a feminist perspective. The story 'Interpreter of Maladies' was probably not written with some Feminist or Diasporic agenda. It is for the sake of analysis that we use these literary tools (theories) to understand and appreciate the literary piece in a better and wider way, and that is what has beenattempted in the current research paper.

The Feminist perspective mentioned here takes into account two major postulates of the Feminist ideology, which are 'Equality of Genders' and 'Happy American Housewife Myth'. The first point is probably the foundation stone of feminism and the second one, which was the corner stone of the second wave of feminism, was proposed by Betty Freidan in her magnum opus *The Feminine Mystique*. The story 'Interpreter of Maladies' is unique in the short story collection by the same name in a way as the background in the story is that of India and the characters are mostly Indian Americans. What happens when they come to the land of their ancestors? What do they seek? What do they find? These questions seem interesting and call for a minor investigation. As the story deals with different aspects of the social institution of matrimony, it seemed fair to attempt an analysis from the other side's point of view.

The story 'Interpreter of Maladies' is a part of the Pulitzer Prize winning short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* written by Nilanjana Sudeshna Lahiri popularly known by her nickname Jhumpa Lahiri. The background of the story is set in Orissa. The plot unfolds during a journey of the major characters from Puri to Konark. The major characters in the

story are Raj and Mina Das, a young couple from Brunswick, New Jersey, USA, their two sons Ronny and Bobby and daughter Tina and the taxi driver Mr. Kapasi Raj and Minavisited their parents, living a retired life in Asansol, once every two years. They had come to Puri on vacation this time and had hired a taxi to go and see the Sun temple of Konark. The taxi driver Mr.Kapasi "was assigned to them...because he could speak English"(Lahiri.2012:43).

Mr. Kapasi, as revealed in the story, was forty six years old. He was an observant person and saw that the Das couple was very young, not even thirty. The husband's voice was a little shrill " ...as thoughit had not yet settled into maturity" (44). When they began their journey after purchasing puffed rice snack, Mrs Das neither stopped her daughter playing with the door lock of the running car, nor offered the snack to anyone else. When she started applying nail polish, her daughter asked her to paint her nail as well to which she retorted "Leave me alone...You're making me mess up"(47).

The main character of the story is Mr. Kapasi an interpreter between local doctor and his Gujarati patients.Mr. Kapasi right from the beginning of the journey felt that the couple was behaving more like the elder siblings of their children rather than their parents. It was quite natural as they (Raj and Mina) were born and brought up in USA and their way of parenting was quite different from the traditional Indian way. On the way they started a conversation with the driver. Mr. Kapasi reveals that driving taxi was his part time job while his main job was of an interpreter. He narrates to them some medical cases he had seen at his job. This makes the couple interested in him, especially Mina shows her interest with her kind words which makes Mr. Kapasi aware about his strange kind of attraction towards her.

When they agree to his suggestion of visiting Udayagiri and Khandagiri after their Konark excursion, Mr.Kapasi and Mrs. Das get some time to talk and she confides in him her secret about her younger son Bobby born not of her husband but one of his Punjabi friends. She narrates her plight and anguish during those days, suffered after this brief affair of hers. Here we come to crux of the problem. As described in the story, she was living as a housewife in her home, nursing her toddler son, when she started suffering the happy housewife syndrome which Betty Friedan talks about in detail in her magnum opus *The Feminine Mystique*. Let us look at the description of Mina's mental and physical state of that time when Bobby was conceived :

> Always tired, she declined invitation from her one or two college girlfriends, to have lunch or shop in Manhattan. Eventually the friends stopped calling her, so that she was left at home all day with the baby, surrounded by toys that made her trip when she walked or wince when she sat, always cross and tired. Only

> occasionally did they go out after Ronny was born, and even more rarely did they entertain. Raj didn't mind; he looked forward to coming home from teaching and watching television and bouncing Ronny on his knee. She had been outraged when Raj told her that a Punjabi friend, someone whom she had once met but did not remember, would be staying with them for a week for some job interviews in the New Brunswick area (Lahiri 2012 : 63).

Mina's suffering has a vestige of Betty Friedan's portrayal of majority of American women's plight her book. This Happy Housewife myth described in *The Feminine Mystique* is nothing short of the misery and insecurity of American women. Friedan says:

> Fulfillment as a woman had only one definition for American women after 1949 – the housewife-mother. As swiftly as in a dream, the image of the American woman as a changing, growing individual in a changing world was shattered. Her solo flight to find her own identity was forgotten in the rush for the security of togetherness. Her limitless world shrunk to the cozy walls of home (Friedan 2002 : 92).

We can quite clearly observe the similarity in the situation described in here by Ms Friedan and the condition of Mina. Both the cases have quite a lot in common. After Mina's sharing the secret with Mr. Kapasi, she expects him to provide a solution to her mental agony which she has been feeling silently. She says :

> About what I've just told you. About my secret, and about how terrible it makes me feel. I feel terrible looking at my children, and at Raj, always terrible. I have terrible urges, Mr.Kapasi, to throw things away. One day I had the urge to throw everything I own out the window, the television, the children, everything. Don't you think it's unhealthy (Lahiri. 64).

Mr. Kapasi becomes sympathetic and to placate her asks whether is it really pain or some kind of guilt she feels. She glares at him and stops the conversation with him then and there. She probably had thought that he, as an interpreter of the patients, will be sympathetic towards her and will try to understand her predicament and will try to articulate it in proper words. If possible, he will also suggest some sort of remedy. But his calling the root of the problem as 'guilt' makes her realize that he has not understood her problem and can never understand her situation.

The story ends with Bobby getting hurt by monkeys near Udayagiri caves and both Raj and Mina running for his rescue and first aid. The piece of paper on which Mr.Kapasi's address was written by Mina for sending the photograph later gets out of her handbag and starts flying in the air. This image of Das family gets stuck in the mind of Mr. Kapasi. The

denouement of the story comes with the continuance of the status quo in the life of Mina i.e. caring for her children. The story very poignantlyraises some important questions regarding the role of woman inside the intuition of marriage. The question of woman's choice, the "so called" guilt of woman in the eyes of traditional male's psyche.

The so called 'guilt' which Mr. Kapasi suggests may also be a reason, among other reasons, for the unease of Mrs Das. If that be the case, reason for the same has to be explored. The standard behaviour expected from a man and a woman is the establishment of mutual trust and respect for each other. The breach of trust becomes the root cause of disharmony and split.Here we find that Mrs. Das yielding toa physical union with the Punjabi friend of Mr. Das is not only irrational but also irreverent according to the decencies of a married person's life. While this union results in conceiving of a child, Mrs Das keeps it a secret.This secret which she maintained even afterwards, allowed her husband Raj to think that he was the father of the kid. Judged from the standards of a civilized society, Mina's act can be considered unethical and immoral. Yet it offers ample scope of understanding the reasons behind such an act. It also raises questions like free will, choice and the suppressed bodily desires that ricochet at times. One cannot rule out the possibility of a woman's helplessness to save her marriage, sense of security though based on illusion in Mina's case. Thus the question of propriety arises since she does not tell her husband that Bobby was not his legitimate son. Certainly, there would have been repercussions of this confession and she probably did practically the right thing to keep her second son's paternity issue a secret from her husband. But the question arises: did she do the right thing? Or to be more precise: according to the moral and ethical value system, in which she and her husband were raised, was it a justifiable thing to do? And if it was not than what could have been the solution afterwards?

Now coming to the 'Equality of Gender' point of view to examine the same case with a different angle, what if the husband had been involved in such an extramarital affair? What if he would have had a one night stand with some female friend of his wife? What if he had become father of a child outside his wedlock? What if he had not told his wife all about his affair? Could we have judged him with the same yardstick? Would his society and the law of the land have judged him with same standards? Although it is a personal speculation, but the probability is very low that he could have received the same sympathetic attitude by people in general.

Here we see the swing of the pendulum going from one extreme to the other. Earlier if a woman was caught cheating on her spouse, she was called names like 'a harlot', 'a whore' etc. and men were usually not held accountable for the extramarital affairs they indulged into. But the attitude

of the society changed and instead of coming to the centre, where ideally both men and woman should be held equally responsible for the 'breach of trust' with their respective spouse/consort, if they willingly enter into a pre or extra marital affair, the men are considered more guilty than woman. The basis of this assertion can be seen in the law of different countries. The lenient attitude towards women in cases of separation and divorce seems to be based on double standards. If the two genders 'are'equal, then why do we have different set of state rules and personal attitudes towards the two genders? Is it not an obstruction in the empowerment of women?

But of course we have to take into account the real situation on ground. The abstract discussion and debate regarding the gender equality should keep a track of the concrete realities of the time. We do not live in Utopia and neither should we try to make our world one like it forcefully. Equality is plausible but in what sense? Equality of opportunity or Equality of outcome - which should be preferred more? Should we ignore the natural and biological differences while talking about equality or should we take these factors into account? Should males be allowed to have an opinion and allowed to express them as far as Feminist topics are concerned or should they not be allowed to open their mouth? Are we really serious about the 'equality'or is it just a tool to get power for both the genders? And what exactly do we mean by power when we use the word? Are we clear and in agreement on that?

The story 'Interpreter of Maladies' ends leaving many questions behind in the mind of thoughtful readers. It does not provide easy answers. It does not prescribe anything to anyone, rather it describes a domestic situation, and it leaves Mr.Kapasi, the character, and us the readers, to try and be the interpreter of this supposed malady. The beauty of the title is that each interpreter has his or her own way of interpretation. So, we can have our own, different interpretations. Many of us might even feel that the malady is not a malaise at all. Some others might consider it as one. But should Mr.Kapasi have a prescription as well? He is not a physician nor are we. So to conclude, the writers of the present research paper are not proposing any solution but have tried to interpret the story in their own way and here they rest their case.

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Female sexuality as a Subversive Agency in Girish Karnad's *Nagamandala*

Santanu Basu

The women in Girish Karnad's plays remain strong individual beings, responsible in most cases for what happens in their lives. Especially in the plays based on myths and folklore like *Hayavadana*, *Nagamandala* and *The Fire and the Rain*, these independently willed characters are at the forefront of the subversive staging of patriarchy. Foregrounding female sexuality and passion by being largely sympathetic to their sexual capers, he has in these plays brought to our attention the subversive agency of female sexuality. As Karnad referring to what Satyadev Dubey said about him mentions: "Satyadev Dudey says that I'm the only playwright in the history of Indian theatre to have treated adultery as normal and treated adulterous women sympathetically" ("Performance" 358).

This sensitivity towards women,particularly towards the expression of their sexualityremains a hallmark of his art and has been shaped,according to Karnad himself, by the especial nature of his upbringing.

> I do come from a family full of women. Probably that is why I am much more comfortable thinking about a woman than a lot of playwrights. Otherwise, usually in Indian families, by the time a person is eight or ten years, he is segregated from the women in his family. Nothing like that for me. Perhaps that is why I do not look at women as great devourers or the great virginal flowers that most people tend to do. ("Between illusion" n.pag.)

We also need to remember in this context that all these strong willed women appear, as mentioned earlier, in folk theatre which by its very nature is subversive in character. As Karnad points out: "The energy of folk theatre comes from the fact that although it seems to uphold traditional values, it also has the means of questioning these values, of making them literally stand on their heads" (Karnad, Introduction 14).

Nagamandala, the play under consideration, we will find out in the detailed examination that follows is strongly feminist in orientation that

destabilizes the conventional structure of a family in our society where the man is the fountainhead of authority and the woman consigned to subservience. A strongly subversive text, it shows the woman undermining the edifice of patriarchy that resides in confining and domesticating female sexuality. In fact, by the end of the play we find the man at the mercy of the woman. However, the one criticism that is levelled at the play is that the humiliationas it is of the man at the hands of the woman is brought about by dubious means and using the same patriarchal codes of operation that the play has set out against. Moreover, the character of Rani has been deliberately kept ambiguous by Karnad, the ways of her mind are obfuscated from our view which surely has added to the dramatic density of the play in that it has defied reduction of the character of Rani to afeminist stereotype and opened up new interpretative angles but sadly has achieved all these at the cost of diluting the feminist angle of the play.

The play is,as Karnad says in his introduction to *Three Plays* (1995), based on two oral tales he heard from A. K. Ramanujan (16). While one of the tales is the framing story of the flames called "A Story and a Song," the other is the inset story of Rani based on "The Serpent Lover". A young woman, Rani, gets married to a person attached to a concubine. The husband maltreats Rani and keeps her under lock and key while he is away. In this state of desolation, Rani is visited by a cobra (Naga) living in the ant-hill outside in the guise of her husband. Soon she becomes pregnant and Rani's husband knowing very well he has nothing to do with her pregnancy enjoins the village community to persuade her to prove her chastity. Consequently, she undergoes the snake test, holding the cobra (Naga) in her hand she swears that no other male except her husband and the cobra has touched her. As the cobra (Naga) does not bite her, she is vindicated and comes to be recognized as a deity with the husband now forced to live with Rani severing all links with the concubine.

"The position of Rani," according to Karnad, after her marriage "can be seen as a metaphor for the situation of a young girl in the bosom of a joint family where she sees her husband only in two unconnected roles - as a stranger during the day and as lover at night" (Introduction 17). While at one level it points to the condition of women post-marriage bound as she is by the strict set up of the family she has married into, it also points at the same time to how the man is restricted by patriarchal codes that forbids expressions of love towards his newly married wife except in the darkness of night. For the better part of the day, the husband is no more than a stranger to his wife. As far as the framing story is concerned, it indicates that stories live only when they are passed on from the teller to the listener and that oral tales will be lost to the world if they are not communicated. There is a reference to a woman who was

punished as she kept the story all to herself - "the story and song created a feud in the family and were revenged on the old woman" (Karnad, *Three Plays* 25). What the framing story and these references to women and their stories do is that they provide us a glimpse into the alternate world of women uncontaminated by male presence as pointed out by Karnad in this longish quote: "These tales are narrated by women - normally the older women in the family - while children are being fed in the evenings in the kitchen or being put to bed. The other adults present on these occasions are also women. Therefore these tales, though directed at the children, often serve as a parallel system of communication among the women in the family" (Introduction 16-17).

The emphasis on the part of Karnad of telling a woman's tale has made him bring about changes in his enactment of the story privileging the feminist point of view. For example, in the source story there is a subplot where Rani socially humiliates the concubine with the help of Naga, thus completing her social rehabilitation. And the concubine finds herself reduced to a serf in Rani's household. But this part of the tale has not been included in the play. For including it would have sent out a wrong message. It would, in Anupama Mohan's words, "have projected a disunity in the ranks, as it were, that might perhaps have served to enfeeble the feminist thrust of Rani's story". Also "the omission allows the tale of Rani's triumph over men's unjust patriarchal injunctions to stand on its own" (Mohan).

The anti-patriarchal bias of the story also becomes clear as the adulteress "gets away with it". For the concept of chastity and the devising of tests to find such out is subverted in the play. By a clever tour-de-force, Karnad makes the test, a tool of patriarchy to find out if the woman has strayed, limit masculinity in the play. Appanna, Rani's husband knows he has not slept with Rani, so she must have been promiscuous to become pregnant. But before the overwhelming evidence of the successful snake test, he cannot even raise a murmur. Though his seeds of suspicion are not laid to rest, yet dictated by society he nevertheless has to live with Rani. The test that he thought would expose Rani has only succeeded in undermining his masculinized self. The difference with Ramayana is explicit, in Ramayana the test went on to control the woman's body finding out the truth, here the same patriarchal innovation is used to target masculinity anointing lies and deceit.

Karnad has, however, seen to it that there is a semblance of honesty in the whole test-procedure and that it is not reduced to a mere parade of lies and hypocrisy. In the original tale of *Nagamandala*, Karnad points out that when the woman feels threatened by public exposure, the lover reveals to her his true identity and says: "I am the King Cobra. You put your arm in my burrow tomorrow and swear that you have no lovers, that

you have been faithful to your husband. Whatever you say, I won't bite you." ("Performance" 358), thus making a deal together to dupe the village. What Karnad did was to tweak the oath to preserve a modicum of honesty in the whole process. Karnad made the oath like this: "I have only held my husband and this cobra by this hand" (Karnad, "Performance" 358) which going strictly by the letter of the oath is indeed true when Rani utters it. Moreover, what this new oath does is that it brings in a sense of ambiguity to the character of Rani. We are now not sure of whether Rani knows about the identity of Naga or not.

The feminist interpretation of the text also gets emphasized in the second ending that Karnad provided to the play. While the first edition of the play concludes with the cobra committing suicide in her hair, the second ending that Karnad says came from a Bengali friend of his, is a take-off from a Bengali version where the snake decides to live in Rani's hair. Karnad liked it, for to him, not only did it play upon the traditional Indian notion that all plays, all stories, must end happily but also as it exploits beautifully a ménage-a-trios situation (Karnad, "Performance" 358-359). And moreover, as Anupama Mohan explains, the subversive element is explicit in this version: "The lover is thus accommodated within the marriage, and although, the rubric of myth allows his transmogrification, symbolically, he lives with Rani, within the family. The danger to the male authority of husband and patriarch lives on constantly, at close quarters, within the woman's imagination".

If these are instances of overtly emphasizing the feminist aspect of the text, then there are also those facets of the plot that allegedly have compromised the woman's angle of the play. Commenting on the fact that Rani is caught between the two extremes of being alleged an adulteress by her husband and to that of being deified by the village on her successfully accomplishing the fidelity test, Sudhanva Deshpande points out that such tests only attest to the fact that there is no middle ground for the woman: "the woman can be either a whore or a devi, nothing in between". Moreover, referring to Ramayana, Deshpande points out, that only women have to parade their innocence. The men are exempt, Rani's husband may have a concubine for himself and brutalize his wife, but the village elders will not intervene.

Rani's depiction, as mentioned earlier,also raises a lot of problems. Thought to be a prototype of Bharatiya Nari who never rebels, accepts her lover's irrational demands unquestioningly and even consents to give the mandatory Agni-pareeksha to prove her purity (Karnad, "Between illusion" n.pag.), she is passive and yielding to a fault. For Karnad though, the supine acceptance of hers is an attempt to remain in the illusory world of make-believe and not confront the paradoxes of her life lest something unsavoury comes out of the closet.

That's probably because she wants to be a pati-vrata nari. Her image of her would be like that way because she has been told to live like that. That's the half-truth we all live by. Although one knows one is not pati-vrata, we like to believe we are. You don't push yourself and ask, "Am I not adulteress?" simply because the truth would shock you. So you continue with the illusion. ("Between illusion" n.pag.)

> This fact about Rani living in an illusion has been made by many other commentators of the play also. Kavita Nagpal remarks: "Thus Rani dwells in the frame of illusion and reality. She knows that her lover is not the husband but she does not actually know for she does not want to. . . . she lets the illusion live. It is only when the cobra kills himself in her long hair does she accept the truth, but only secretly". Neelam Mansingh Chowdhury feels: "We all need illusion to survive. Rani the protagonist manages to live through life merely due to the deceptions she herself creates" (Karnad, "Between illusion" n.pag.). Suresh Awasthi reviewing the play for *The Economic Times* comments: "The play deals with the problems of conflicts and contradictions, between truth and falsehood, between dreams and facts, between illusion and reality. But even these specifications get blurred and confused. They cannot be determined with any precision and finality".

This issue of how much Rani knows of the Appanna - Naga interchange has been deliberately kept obscure in the play. But as one of the Flames notes: "No two men make love alike. And that night of the Village Court, when her true husband climbed into bed with her, how could she fail to realize it was something new?" (Karnad, *Three Plays* 60). Sharmila Sreekumar and K.C. Bindu, for example, when they produced the play eschewed this "central ambiguity that Karnad's text seemed to play with - whether in fact Rani knew that she had entered an adulterous relationship or not" as they "read her as a woman who must necessarily know, yet could not consciously admit the same to herself, caught up as she is in the value system that projects chastity as the prime female virtue" (216–17). Rani in their version was performed as "the owner of the agential body" (220) and through an intricate use of mirrors and some creative stage direction, they were able to emphasize the question of Rani's agency in their production. That Karnad foregrounds the agency of the woman; sees them as arbitrator of their own destiny is clear from this critical intervention of his in the meaning of the play: "Incidentally, neither Padmini nor Rani accepts the interchange of bodies between the men passively. Padmini fights for what she wants. Rani is watchful and guarded, careful not to burst the bubble. They are both alert" ("Performance" 358).

Nagamandala has had successful stage runs and directors have improvised with the thematic content of the play. Women directors, especially, have shown keen interest in interrogating the concept of femininity. For example, Neelam Mansingh Chowdhury made interesting use of the naqqals (traditional female impersonators of Punjab) in the play. This turned out to be instructive as she saw how working with female impersonators made the actors not only realign their concept of femininity on stage but also the way masculinity was experienced and constructed on stage" (Singh). Vijaya Mehta put on a joint Indo-German production, a German version of *Nagamandala* which premiered in Leipzig. While in her production she used a young dancer for the man, Amal Allana, another of the play's noted directors cast an aged Manohar Singh in the man's role, as she thought the role will befit someone "who is as old as desire" (Dutt). Multiple ways of reading the text, they attest to the density of the play as also its capacity to interrogate received notions of sexuality and foreground the subversive aspect of female sexuality.

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Anti-Orient Equationin Gurdial Singh's *The Last Flicker*

Kiran deep Singh & Narinder K. Sharma

Analysis of the anti-orient equationhas come to the fore as one of the most importantissues in postcolonial studies, since such equationis pervasive in all societies. It differentiates among human beings on the basis of colour, class, caste or creed. It vitiatesthe lives of persons relegated to the lowest rung of this hierarchy.The present paper is an endeavour to expose the rationale and ramifications of exploitive socio-cultural equation and theensuing social, cultural and economic exploitation, the oppressive operation of power and the spectacle of violence through the critical examination of Gurdial Singh's *Marhi Da Deeva(The Last Flicker)*.

Penned down in 1964 by Gurdial Singh, translated by Ajmer S. Rode in 2010 and adapted into a film in 1989, the novel is often paralleled with Premchand's *magnum opus Godan*. It traces the trajectory of the havoc wrought in the lives of the low caste protagonist Jagseer and his mother Nandi owning to the anti-orient equation. It narratesthe story of Jagseer who is born to lower caste parents. His fatherThola and mother Nandi who is of a gypsy origin, are share croppers in the fields of Dharam Singh. Dharam Singh has given them some acres tofarm. He has four sisters who are married off to incompatible husbands since nobody iswilling to wed them because of their mixed parentage. Jagseer himself stays bachelor for this as well as for other reasons.

His father has an affable bond with Dharam Singh. However, Bhanta Singh, Dharam's son does not have a friendly relationship with Jagseer. So much so, the *sheesham* tree (Indian rosewood), about which Thola wishes Jagseer to plant in his memory, is maliciously sold by Bhanta to a trader without informing Jagseer. The tree is hacked downby the trader because of which Nandi dies untimely. Ill-timed death of Nandi wrought by the oppressive operation of power exercised by the feudal class wallowing in the privileges of upper class, to which Banta belongs, tells upon physical as well as psychological health of Jagseer and hastens his

ill-timed death. Tyrannical forces of the caste and the class kill, not only, Jagseer's mother – the only one interested in the marriage of her son, but also, the possibility of Jagseer'sposterity to light a lamp on his tomb.

Through the exposure of such anti-orient equation, the novel offers us the opportunity to delve deeper into the psychology of the both the colonizer and the colonized to expose widespread exploitation and discrimination. Also, the novel carves out a new narrative niche for the downtrodden experience, a study of which can prove to be a useful method for reclaiming the past and forging culturally sensitive paradigms for the future.

Methodology

Qualitative research methodology has been employed to expose the anti-orient equation. Gurdial Singh's *Marhi Da Deeva(The Last Flicker)*has been chosen as the primary text. Besides, the works brought out by a volley of books, newspapers, journals, and websites which have some bearing on this novelhave also beenconsulted.

Contour of Key Terms

Before expatiating upon the rationale and the ramifications of the anti-orient equation, a contourof the terms orient, colonizer, colonized and anti-orient equationneed to be chalked out.

Orient

The term orient comes from Edward Said's epoch-making work *Orientalism* which seeks to expose the biasing design of"dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 3)Orient is "a mirror image of what is supposedly inferior" (Sharma 299). It is the essentialized image of the orient as "one who was biologically inferior, culturally backward and unchanging, and one who not only deserved but even desired to be dominated by the colonizers in every way" (Sharma302). Orient is "discursively represented in literature and history as binary opposites" (Nayar 161).

Anti-orient equation

Anti-orientequationwhich brings out the marginalization of the orient and his resultant oppression is one of the burning issues in the postcolonial studies. Many scholars including Edward Said, GayatriSpivak, Homi K. Bhabha and others have brought to the fore plight of the orient. Edward Said, in *Orientalism*, analysed the binarizedhegemonic cultural as well as political apparatus afflicted with "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said 5) which engenders anti-orient equation.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, another important figure in postcolonial theory, also spotlighted the oppression of the orient by the dominant essentialist forces whichrelegate the orient to the secondary position and the inferior role. Homi K. Bhabhaalsoexpatiatedupon anti-orient equation as"a politics of struggle where the representation of social antagonisms and historical contradictions can take no other form than binarism" (Bhabha 28). By exposing the social hierarchies containing binarized "relation of oppressor and oppressed, centre and periphery, negative image and positive image" (Bhabha 28), he corroborates the occurrence of anti-orient equation.

Likewise, Frantz Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth (1967)*– the manifesto on decolonization – exposes an anti-orient compartmentalized society in which binaries are generated in such a way that the blacks are always the evil side against the humane whites. This division initiates brewing of a tension in the society which can be eliminated only if the devilish dichotomy is exterminated and the binary is overturned. That is what Fanon terms the true decolonization.

Thus, anti-orient equationis the complex trajectory of variable social, economic and political which embed violent social, economic and political hierarchies containing biasingbinary oppositions. Thesebinary oppositionsascertain a relation of dominance in which one term of the opposition is always dominant and the other always subservient.Such oppositional relation may be between centre and margin; colonizer and colonized; upper class and lower class, upper caste and lower caste and powerful and powerless.

In the present context, these factors constituting anti-orient equation include a long-standing and traditional feudalstructure, caste system, a pro-landlord agrarian system, a lop-sided social, economic and political classification and biased stratification of a society. Such biasing binary oppositionsmarginalizethe orient and makehim reel under the oppressive operation of violenceunleashed by the colonizer.

Such equation endows the colonizer with the authority of power over the orient/colonized. The colonizer exercises this power oppressively to exploit the orient. Such power operates through a slew of repressive apparatus (class/caste-based apparatus to name a few) to interpellatethe orient into structures which hinder his freedom of thought and action. The orient issubjected to repression and oppression that heendures mutely.

Colonizer and colonized

The term colonizer has been metaphorically employed to define a person who subjugates and oppresses the orient because of having

perched upon the pinnacle of hegemonic power. On the other hand, the term colonized has been metaphorically used to define a person who is subjugated and oppressed by the colonizer. In this sense, the terms colonized and orient are synonymously used.

Prevalence of Anti-Orient Equationin the Novel

Having scrutinized to the text of the novel under consideration for the pervasiveness ofthe hierarchies and the biased binaries, the linchpin of the concept of anti-orient equation, it has been found out thatvicious social, economic and political hierarchies – impregnated with the biased binaries – are innate in the text. Therefore, each of the hierarchieshas been analysed to unearththe biased binaries implicit in it.

On scanning the text for social hierarchies, it has beennoticed that a volley of biased binaries havebobbed out of thecaste-ridden social hierarchies.For instance, social hierarchies within Punjabi rural edifice have infested it with biasing binaries of upper and lower caste. Characters such asDharam Singh, Bhanta, Dhanohave been attached to the upper caste, i.e., dominant side of the binarized pair whilecharacters, for example,Thola, Nandi, Jagseer and Raunkihave been fixed to the lower caste, i.e., subservient side of the binarized pair. The following dialogue between Nikka and his cousin appeared in the chapter six exposes how the social hierarchies within Punjabi rural edifice have infested it with biasing binaries of upper and lower caste:

> Jagseer felt as if a line etched deep inside him… the line that divided people into 'high' & 'low' categories and castes. In his youth, Gaiba&Gheela were his close friends; he ate with them, drank with them, but they never shared the plate with Jagseer. (63)

> "Bai Nikka, this is very bad. An outcaste allowed to come to your house when you are away doesn't look good. It'd be alright if he were of our caste. (71)

These binaries are evidentlyexemplified in a sharp line drawn between the superior feudal landlords and the inferior farm labourers, the oppressor and the oppressed, seen generally in thesocio-cultural edifice of Punjab's rural society and specifically in the experiences of Jagseer, his mother, Nandi and his three sisters on the one hand &Dharam Singh, Bhanta, Dhano, on the other.

Similarly, on examining the text for economic hierarchies, it has beendiscoveredthata slew of binariesare cropped out of the class-ridden economic hierarchies. These economic binaries are visiblyshown in a contrast between the feudal landlords and the peasants, the upper class and the lower class, the rich and the poor, seen generally in theeconomic

edifice of Punjab's rural society. Jagseer, his father Thola, his mother Nandi and his three sisters are found to have been attached tothe lower position of the poor, low class peasantryi.e., subservient side of the binarized pair whereas Dharam Singh, Banta Singh and Dhano have been tagged to theupper position of the rich feudal upper class, i.e., dominant side of the binarized pair.

Likewise, on scrutinizing the text for political hierarchies, a number of binaries, for instance, colonizer-colonized, powerful and powerless, oppressor/oppressed are identified to have derived from class-ridden political hierarchies. Jagseer, Thola, Nandi, Raunki, three sisters of Jagseer and even &Dharam Singh (otherwise belonging to the upper class/caste) have been attached tothe lower position of the colonized, powerless and oppressed, i.e., subservient side of the binarized pair whereas Banta Singh and Dhanohave been affixed to theupper position of the colonizer, powerful and oppressor, i.e., dominant side of the binarized pair.

Rationale & Ramifications of Anti-Orient Equation

As regards the rationale of the anti-orient equation, it has been detected that dynamics of long-standing and traditional feudalstructure, caste system and pro-landlord agrarian system eggs on the perpetration and proliferation of the anti-orient equationwhich is consequent uponinjustice, exploitation, suffering and agony of those who are tagged to the subservient side of the biased binaries.

With regard to the ramifications of the anti-orient equation,scrutiny of the novel results in a slew of observations that underline an important point: the caste-inflicted social hierarchies blight the lives of persons downgraded to the lowest rung of this hierarchyand bestow boon onthe lives of the persons raised to the highest rung; the fact exemplified through Jagseer, His father, Thola and mother, Nandi, his three sisters belonging to the lower caste &Dharam Singh, Banta Singh&Dhano belonging to the upper caste. Being the upper class, life ofDharam Singh, Banta Singh&Dhano is trouble-free whereas life of Jagseer, his mother, Nandi and his four sisters is troublesome. For example, Jagseer dies unmarried and three sisters are married off to mismatched husbands because of

[1] There are a few systematic attempts to collate and categorise literary controversies in the west. For instance, *Banned Books Resource Guide by the American Library Association, and Ready Reference Censorship* has catalogued a number of literary controversies in the English and the European literatures. "Books Banned in the United States: A Public Service Report from Adler & Robin in Books" (Online. Adler Books.com/banned. 20th March, 2004) is another online journal which gives details about several literary controversies in the west. Unfortunately, to the best of my knowledge, there are no such systematic attempts to collate and catalogue literary controversies in India and they are discarded in the government archives without much attention.

their mixed parentage and lower caste. The following lines offer a peep into the troublesome life of Jagseer's family:

> Even if Nandi had somehow succeeded in tackling all other obstacles in Jagseer's marriage, one blot on her family which she could no way wash away was the uncertainty about her own ancestry. It was such a blot due to which many schemes almost finalized had gone awry. Whenever someone came with a proposal of a match for Jagseer, prompted by others, the first thing he would enquire about was Nandi's parentage. (4)
>
> …
>
> Owing to this unusual background of hers, her four daughters couldn't be married into good families. Three of them were given away to men already rejected many times over by other people. (5)

It has also been revealed that people from the upper class helping the downtrodden uplift have to bear the brunt for their blithe benevolence. To illustrate, Dharam Singh himself is cold-shouldered by his family because of his closeness with Jagseer. Even such persons are yanked to the subservient sidethe subservient side and, thus, subjected to the oppression. The following lines corroborate the above-said proposition:

> "For those low-caste mean people who sucked us dry all our lives, who didn't spare even a louse on our body, you throw away seven hundred rupees; and for your own children, you don't give a damn!... If that's how you are going to ruin the family, why not strangle both your sons and get me a begging bowl? I'll atleast be able to beg at every door and spread your 'good name' all around."
>
> Dhano's finding out the secret about the seven hundred rupees and her stinging sarcasm in uttering the word 'good name' wounded Dharam Singh deeply. His soul writhed like a fish thrown out of water. He wanted to shriek at the top of his voice, "Get lost you damned bitch. I'll shred you to pieces…" But words got stuck in his throat. A twinge of hurt rose inside him and pricked every pore of his body. (105-106)

It has also been discovered that binaries sprung from the class-ridden economic hierarchiesempowers those tagged to its dominant side of the binarized pair so much that can deteriorate the life of those appended to the subservient side by dint of the economic clout they enjoy.So much so,those appended to the subservient side do not even have the right to plant even a sapling in the memory of their kith and kin. For instance, Jagseerdoes not have any stake in the land he hastilled all his life. Being

a poor, lower class landless labourer, even a*sheesham* tree planted by Jagseer in memory of his dead father is got uprooted by a rich, upper class, landlord, Banta Singh which epitomizes the blatant abuse of high economic status.

Likewise, binaries popped out of the class-ridden political hierarchies tend to gag the voice of the colonized/powerless/oppressed/exploited on the one hand and aggrandize substantially and unaccountablythe power of the colonizer/powerful/oppressor/exploiter on the other hand that the latter can do or say anything to the former no matter how undignified, inhuman & disastrous that deed or utterance may be. Several allusions are made in the text to this paradigm in the following lines of the chapter fifteen of the novel:

> …Performed the last rites of that old hag, and earned the praise from the people but you have ruined our house… You call yourself a man?...
>
> Banta's wife went on speaking nonstop. Jagseer heard her stunned. During those few moments, numerous expressions fitted across his face. Some of the words she spoke shocked him and left him wondering wide-eyed. Some hit his head like stones and still others pierced him like daggers and made his whole body tremble. (122)

Referring to undignified, inhuman & disastrous deed, incidence of uprooting of a*sheesham* tree may be illustrated, as it reeks of oppression/ exploitation/abuse of power by Bhanta Singh who symbolizes the colonizer/powerful/oppressor/exploiter spectrum of the class-ridden political hierarchies. By uprooting of a*sheesham* tree planted by Jagseer in memory of his dead father without taking permission of Jaagseer, Bhanta Singh abuses his power to oppress the powerless share cropper Jagseer and his mother Nandi. So much so, Nandi succumbs to the oppression. The following lines reveal the plight of Jagseer at uprooting of a*sheesham* tree caused because of the oppression/exploitation/abuse of power by Bhanta Singh:

> And looking at 'his *sheesham*'withouttwigs and leaves, he felt all life drained out of him. The trunk lay alone like a dead body, all the big and small branches had been chopped off and carried away. Jagseer kept looking at the trunk, standing on a little sad dune on this side but then a gloom overcame him. (85)

The following lines reveal the plight of Nandi at uprooting of a*sheesham* tree:

> "Why did he do that, why?" Nandi said trembling with anger. "I'll burn myself at your door, Dharmia! What do you think of me…!Why did he do it?" (78)

Conclusion

Overall, analysis of the selected literary text unveils ubiquity of anti-orient equation in the agrarian Punjabi society due to which the orient issubjected to repression and oppression throughout his life. Such equation stereotypes the lop-sided social roles which smack of pro-elitist and anti-orient outlook. It sketchesabysmal scenario for the orient while the rosy one for itselitist counterpart.Thus, the elitist being at the privileged side of the binaries leads a magnificent life and the orient being at the unprivileged side of the binaries leads a marginalized life. Unless the orient himself asserts his agency against the occurrence of such oppressive anti-orient equation, he will continue to be victimized.

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Beyond the 'No Exit': Reconfiguring the Trajectory of (Hegemonic) Gendered Spaces and Strategies of Resistance in Shashi Deshpande's *In the Country of Deceit*

Niharika

In the novel *In the Country of Deceit*, Devayani is the main protagonist of the narrative. Having chosen the stance of questioning the imbalanced gendered inscriptions by exercising a counter-hegemonic position against the dominant socio-cultural order,she faces crisis in almost all of her relationships.Seen thus, Deshpande's portrayal of Devayani has created ripples in the Indian English Novel scenario as she is a middle-class family product but is open to transgressing the normative signification of socio-cultural order. This connotes her intent to go beyond definitions/ gendered inscriptionswhich is fuelled by her earnestness to make a counter response to the hegemonic masculinity. In this sense, she is also allowed to explore/decode her sexuality¯a domain denied to the second sex.However, her assertion is subtle and manifests a lot of complexity. In this larger context, such assertion is worth analyzing so as to lay barethe finer nuances of being a woman as a *genderedsubjectivity*.Accordingly, the critique attempts to interpretDevayani's crusade through the hegemonic structures/inscriptions before she achieves a psycho-social-existential negotiation.

Delving deeper, Devayani is a liberated woman and refracts her agency in multivalent proportions throughout the narrative. However at the outset of the novel, she represents an inscribed being. Accordingly, she may be perceived being a passive and submissive character. Apparently, she has the habit of compromising in everything and adjusting in every possible way by modeling her lifestyle as per the wishes of others and thus fits into their shoes *unquestioningly*. She appears to be unaware of her real worth and thus she continues playing a quarry to everyone. Women are entwined in this *make-belief world*

where "…the cult of obedience is so consistently thrust upon women and thus excluding them from any face to face confrontation with real life"(Jain and Singh43).Values, mannerisms, pressures and societal training impose indifference or a blind silence to her feelings. So, all the time and in all situations, Devayani allows herself to (inertly) accept the prescriptions.Such apparent conduct of Devayani makes an explicit reference to her tacit internalization of the hegemonic order and the requirements attached to it which she prefers to take on in the subsequent phases of the narrative. In this way, her journey signifies the clandestine contest-oriented dynamics of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic power structures whichsubsequently unsettle the apparent power paradigm(s) in the novel.

The narrative has been divided into four sections. The first part named "Ground Zero" talks of destruction and demolition in the very beginning. Speaking symbolically, the demolitionsignifies the demolition of a value system.Cross-connecting such demolition with Devayani, she opens up her being to be re-inscribed and thus prefers the code of transgression in order to unsettle the *'normative givens'* governing her existence.Subsequently, a process of change starts which gradually breaks the age-old programmed thinking of the protagonist.It was Savi-Devayani's sister¯who has designed the new house and dismantled the ancestral home. For Devayani, it comes as a surprise since it manifests a complete reversal of the old order. She realizes:

> Savi had deliberately worked towards something that was a complete reversal of the old house, a denial of everything our old home had been. The large rooms, the light and air that came in from the huge windows, the broad sills on which we could sit, the sense of openness¯all these were a total contrast to the dingy, dark small rooms we had lived in. The most startling change was in our bedrooms, Savi's and mine. Large, spacious and opening out on to the back where a walled garden was to be, they were Savi's belated defiant statement against the tiny dark room the two of us had shared as children (Deshpande 4).

Symbolically, this change indicates a fresh beginning which brings color to the life of the protagonist and she feels "…this was not an end, but a beginning. A fresh start.A clean slate" (Deshpande 3).Hence, the new house signifies the Ground Zero for Devayani.

Devayani's potential resistance gains impetus when she confronts Ashok Chinappa.Through her relationship with Ashok, weare able to decode how Devayani gradually matures and evolves from Devayani to Devi and finally to Divya¯a namegiven byAshok to her.When the narrative

begins, Devayani is in her 30's and lives alone in a small town of Rajnur after the death of her parents. The narrative delineates her state in the following way:

> All these years I had been the accompanist to other people's lives. First I had been a follower of my spirited, old sister, then in charge of my parents' lives, the observer of their tragedy. For a while I had acted as my cousin Kshama's helper and later I had been Sindhu's attendant after her surgery. Now, for the first time, I had to play solo. I had no one else to look after, no one to think about. I felt as if I was waiting for the curtain to go up, waiting for something to happen (Deshpande 8).

And that 'something' is the entry of a man (Ashok) in her life who causes a fundamental change her being. However, it is important to emphasize that her solo performance proves to be disastrous in the eyes of other people for whom she did so much all these years and her decisions are criticized by the representatives of the hegemonic order.

In order to assert her emphasized femininity and the hard-won independence, she chooses to violate/transgress the institution of marriage and thus she is not interested in getting married. It is in this perspective that Devayani willfully rejects the varied marriage proposals but prefers an 'illicit' relationship with a married man who is much older than her,and is a father of a ten year old daughter. Importantly,it is not a decision which is made in a hurry or in a fit of emotion. She ruminates seriously over the pros and cons associated with her relationship and she finally accepts Ashok as he is.It is also true that she gets attracted towards his enigmatic personality.Surely, there is a fond regard, adherence and telepathy between them which define their relationship. Ashok calls her up again and says "I rang up, but I only wanted to hear your voice. I made you speak in the morning just to hear you" (Deshpande 76). Like a stalking lover he tries to enamor her.Devayani is equally attracted towards him. She thinks about him and says "I could not sleep. I kept hearing his voice as if I'd taped the conversation and was replaying the tape in my mind. The exact words in the same order over and over again" (Deshpande 77).

Apart of being apprehensive of what is going on in her life, she is struggling hard with the social stigmas by probing her own mind and heart time and again. It is worth considering here that the hegemonic processes create identities and the psycho-social conditioning prohibits one's mind to work in the intuitive direction. This perhapsconfuses and scares her. A dynamiccontestgoes on in her mind and she ruminates: "And why did he keep ringing me up? Was he flirting with me? I used to

watch boys and girls indulge in it, amazed at the light-hearted banter, at the way they enjoyed the inane talk" (Deshpande 78).

However, the next meeting with Ashok proves to be a turning point in their relationship. While dropping her back from Rani's house, AshokproposesDevayani. Ashok's contention startles her being as she feels enchanted by his words.He says: "I'm a married man. I have a daughter, she's nine, no, she'll be ten this year…I can promise you nothing. Nothing"(Deshpande 91). He is perhaps physically attracted towards her and like a teenage lover; he showers delightful words to charm her.Infatuated by his words, Devayani feels touched despite the fact she is sensitive to the hegemonic eyes around that make her conscious of the fact that whatever is happening is unnatural. Therefore, she temporarily holds her emotions. However, she is prepared and somewhat ready to enter into the country of deceit by this time and she ruminates: "Now I cannot tell Savi about this new nightmare. I cannot tell that this time I am frightened, not of the man, but of myself, of my desire to *run*, not away from him, but into his arms"(Deshpande 94). She acknowledges her fears and accepts her desires. For this, she opts to fight with the world around and her own deep rooted socialization. Hence, this stance signifies her counter-hegemonic resistance/subversion towards the socio-cultural gendered inscriptions which permeate a woman's being.

At last comes the time of her final acceptance of her relationship with him. An anonymous letter by Ashok perplexes her and makes her conscious. She trembles and exclaims: "For a moment I was confused, it was like blacking out…my hands were shaking…I had a strange sensation of coldness on my face and putting my hand to my cheek found to my surprise that it was wet. I tried to wipe my tears, but they kept flowing. I gave up finally and let them flow unhindered"(Deshpande 127).Swinging between her desires and duties, she suddenly puts a stop to her thoughts. Through such psychodrama of Devayani, the novelist extrapolatesthe different ideological elements that shape her identity, the institutionalized dogmas that restrict her sexuality. Now, Devayani courageously takes the decision. She does not brood for long and soon jumps into action although this may result in her social censure.She goes to meet her lover and finally accepts her own decision/inner voice. This is thebeginning of her journey of love towards fulfillment. She stops conforming her femininity and so starts enjoying being an unburdened woman. By decolonizing the hegemonic order and thus appropriating her marginality, Devayani puts an end to her socialized self.Resultantly, she experiences a multi-dimensional gratification vis-à-vis her relationship with Ashok.The sense of freedom and self-assertion which was imprisoned somewhere deep inside her manifests a release on her part. In this sense, she blooms

and comes out to be a 'new woman'. She realizes that there is no point in deceiving herself. She speaks the truth to herself and admits that she wants to be with Ashok. The socio-cultural inscriptions do entrap her, confuse her, frighten her but ultimately the inner counter-hegemonic desire convinces her to assert her core being.

Not only this, Ashok's confirmation of promising her nothing and admitting that he is a married man with a daughter does not move her a bit. She contemplates: "What difference does it make to me that he has a wife and a daughter?" (Deshpande 94). Quite aware of the fact that her relationship with her lover would never be accepted and appreciated by her family; she favors to continue with it and accepts the situation bravely. A trail of norms and acculturations warns her to be open eyed and audible to the potential storm in her life but she choosesthe difficult path. In a sense, she prefersthe strategies of resistance in order to gratify herself of the long thirst of her being. This thirst along with her uncompromising desire leads her to physical gratification which she welcomes whole heartedly. The societal inhibitions try to curb her desires time and again, hold her back, checks her steps but all these tangles prove futile.

Significantly, the way Devayani inches towards Ashok is also symbolic of her moving out of the patriarchal space by adopting resistance to carve out her counter-hegemonic stance which brings a paradigm shift in her life. Interestingly, her movement contains fluidity and assertion whereby the over-arching hegemonic structures are ripped apart so as to endow her new vision towards life and its socio-cultural artifacts. In other words, the process of her rejuvenation is marked with re-inscribing her gendered being in order to see the clear light of the day. Her choicest relationship with Ashok is so intense that the social barriers become invisible to Devayani. She boldly explores her sexuality and maintains her stand with courage. She has the guts to accept the shortcomings of the relationship which shows her uncompromising wish to have her share of joy and ecstasy. Now, she is sure of herself. She is certain that: "I want a needlepoint of extreme happiness; I want a moment in my life which will make me feel I am touching the sky" (Deshpande 24). When she comes to know about Ashok's decision of taking up the promotion, she takes the things courageously and respects his decisions. She knows that there can be no future ahead.

Through the character of Devayani, the novelistpresents a woman's journey to a new realm of realization where she not only accepts what she originally feels but also exhibits a strong sense of revelation of the shams of society. A woman is forced to identify with the fraudulent and phoney traditions to save and sustain her existence. In this sense, Devayani is very powerful and suggestively opens new vistas for the contemporary

women. After realizing and relishing the relationship, she declares her love to the family too. It is an imaginary and illusionary union in the eyes of the family; a dirty quagmire. But she herself feels eternal happiness in the presence of Ashok. Before the family could know of her relations with Ashok, her happiness is visible to most of the characters in the novel. Sindhu exclaims, "You sound happy" (Deshpande 147). Yet again: "Naseem says it differently.'You look as if you've been Brassoed,'she said. 'As if someone has brought out the shine and polish in you'" (Deshpande 148).

Speaking retrospectively, Devayani's life had always been restrictive and limited. Her reins were in the hands of her parents first and then in the hands of her sister Savi. Under such context, this (love)affair acts as a catharsis. It elevates Devayani and thus liberates her of the societal obligations. So far she has been defining herself differently with respect to the other people. The acceptance of Ashok's proposal is the first decision she makes on her own. This may be the reason that she never regrets it. It would be ironical to mention here that in her relationship with Ashok too, Devayani never asks for anything. But there is a strong sense of fulfillment here. She has the strength of holding the connectedness and calling it off when it does not meet the desired requirements. She shows her fortitude and determination to harbor the relatedness, project it to the family and also to bear the brunt and criticism of other people around her. She comes out to be a powerful woman who was earlier firmly confined under the hegemonic limitations. She fights with her guilt too. She exclaims: "You get used to everything¯you learn how to live with suffering, pain, death. Why not with guilt then? Yes, I would learn to cope with guilt as well" (Deshpande 152). Hence, she dares to break the circumscribed life which a woman is expected to lead. Studied thus, it is apt to mention Atrey and VinayKirpal's observation:

> Deshpande's art lies in selecting situations with which most Indian women can identify. Her focus is on the woman within the marital, domestic relationship. She seeks to expose the ideology by which a woman is trained to play her subservient role in society. Her novels eclectically employ postmodern technique of deconstructing patriarchal culture and customs, and revealing these to be man-made constructs. (15)

Devayani realizes that by being unresponsive to her own feelings, she has cheated herself from her inner voice, longing and urges. Every other relation in her life believes that s/he knows what suits Devayani. But by asserting her will and taking charge of her actions, she confirms that she belongs to herself and then to the world of others. Importantly, Devayani despite having played the role of a good daughter and a good

sister to perfection; finds herself alone and estranged. She realizes that she has been unfair to herself. There is something more she desires for. Hence, she does not discourage herself from acknowledging her friendship with a married man. Devayani is different in the sense that she dares to question the established identity of a woman and provides a new face to herself and to the society she is part of. Usha Bande observes something similar when she comments:

> Shashi Deshpande lets her women experience the confusing and disturbing silence within, get a glimpse of their inner being and empower themselves to confront the power politics, comprehend the situation and get control on their lives. In that their intention to assert and defy is evident. That is how the novel resisting patriarchy is born. (47)

Devayani is drawn towards Ashok as he treats her as his equal, gives her time and the required space. He never imposes anything on her and waits patiently for her responses and decisions. She is impressed by his truthfulness and straightforwardness towards her.She develops an easewhile being in his company. There prevails a maze of doubts, uncertainty and fear but this relationship solves the incertitude.Both Ashok and Devayani are negating the age old conventional schemas of the society and project the new breakthroughs in their own respective gestures towards each other. There is no denying the fact that they bond well and are affectionate towards one another but they leave no strings attached when they unanimously decide to part their ways. They take no time to move ahead. Ashok handles the whole situation in a well-planned manner and takes no strain of this relationship within him. As soon as he gets promotion, he goes away. Devayani¯in her unique way¯copes with her emotional ties, fights her desires and comes out to be victorious. She feels as if she has won over herself by defying the world she inhabits. She contemplates about her own deeds and connects them with the socio-cultural chains which stuck forcefully to everyone's personality. She feels:"And then I thought of what I had done, I thought, why had I done this? I knew it was wrong; nothing could make it not wrong. And yet, I had rushed into it. Why had I done it? I knew the answer. I did it because I wanted him, I wanted to be with him, I wanted to be in his company, I wanted to sleep with him, I wanted this relationship…" (Deshpande 142). She uses words like 'the other woman', 'the kept woman', 'a mistress' for her own self but after a while brushes all these abuses and accepts her decision. In this way, she startsliving in 'good faith'. In a way, she has already re-inscribed her being and thus moves "…beyond patriarchy" (Tyson 92) through her counter-hegemonic stance.

Hence,it is a story of a woman who desires to realize herself and regenerate her being with an intention to reconfigure the hegemonic order.

Her resoluteness against the rife-ideologies paves the way for her determination. An attitude of non-compliance to the systems of power fuels her consciousness and thus she is determined to get fulfillment of her core being.Interestingly, Devayani doesn't speak her heart out to anyone except a few contemplative thoughts. Speech and silence convey and confirm the subtle polyphony of the text. In addition to this, the speech-silence relationship, in a way, equals the conflictual poetics of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggle of the narrative. Her strength is silence; her stoic silence which is impregnated with intellect.Thus, the turbulence of her mind and the pain of her heart are never laid bare. Having arrived at a self-determined identity of her own, she faces everything with an open heart and takes responsibility with a firm determination. Her counter-hegemonic aspirations culminate in Ashok's arms which also help her to assert a new being. Seen thus, their camaraderie may also be conceptualized as a transgression of the socio-cultural hegemonic order.Devayani transgresses from a docile woman to a demanding and asserting woman. No more a timid person, she shakes the hegemonic inhibitions and redeems herself. Substantiated thus, it is not simply a repetitive story of a woman suffering because of her unfavorable life but a sensitive concern of a woman's self-making¯her "becoming". Simone de Beauvoir quotes in her influential treatise *The Second Sex:*

> One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature…whichis described as feminine. (281)

Devayani accounts for what she becomes and thus evolves from her *becoming* a new being. In this journey she transgresses the prescriptive gender roles and thus reforms herself by asserting a new being. In this sense, shemay be valorized for standing against the patriarchy by way of asserting her individuality.She defies the normative and prescriptivesocio-cultural order which creates the imbalanced living spaces for its inhabitants. Such spaces are gendered and thus marginalize women from times immemorial. She resists against this hegemonic order by opting a counter-hegemonic stance against it.

Observed thus, the resistance and the disapproval to sustain the hegemonic specificities of gender and sexuality by Devayani is undoubtedlylaudable. The point in focus refers to the acceptance of Devayani of her core self/the recognition of her own 'being'. Usha Bande observes:

> …the women of the new generation live for purely personal gratifications, May be sexual or psychological. Critics see this withdrawal variously as quest for autonomy, individuation or a

> deviant behavior. Feminists read it as women's need for a new space that Mary Daly defines as 'new cosmosis'. (210)

Devayani challenges the hegemonic consensual belief wherebythe life of a female is set to stay on the 'threshold'. However, she asserts to be free to think/act.Thus, she counter attacks the hegemonic pressures and successfully "…erodes the male belief that a woman has no need to seek salvation or fulfillment because her world is contained within the threshold" (Bande 210). Hence, Deshpande presents Devayani to be a different kind of female whomoves beyond her ordained gender role and asserts through counter-hegemonic *performance*. Rice and Waugh quotes Judith Butler fromher seminal treatise *Bodies That Matter*:

> …gender is always in fact a performance, not what one is but what one does…the performance of gender is never singular but always citational and reiterative. There is always scope for pastiche, *reformation*, play and *resistance*. (228)

Hence, the heroine of this novel refuses to perform her given gender role and she breaks the cords tied to the female identity.Perspectivized thus, she expressively enters in the country of deceit whereby she explores her own existential space.The analysis lays bare the covert polemics of resistance with which the novelist enablesher female protagonist to subvert *or* confront the dominant structure(s) of power-relations. It is in this larger context that the present study deals with the ambivalent/resistive disputations of the female protagonist.The study also interprets the finer nuances of being a woman as a gendered subjectivity in order to decode complexity of the female experience with a consistent emphasis to delineate the hegemonic structures/inscriptions and counter-hegemonic polemical assertion for achieving psycho-social and existential authenticity.

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Jhumpa Lahiri's *In Other Words:* A Study of Spaces

Neha

In contemporary Indian Literature Lahiri is a distinguished bilingual Indian American diasporic writer well known for her frankness. Jhumpa Lahiri through her various experimentations in fiction, short stories and autobiographical works became the prime figure in the Indian literature.Jhumpa Lahiri was born in a Bengali family, migrated to London when she was just three years old. In this way, she has learned two languages,as parallel mother tongues, Bengali at home and English at school with peer groups. She became uncomfortable with this paralleled situation, so she decided to beanother person. As a college student, she visited Italy and influenced by the Italian culture and language. Her infatuation was so deep towards the language that it was not only she who moved to Rome, but she also convinced her family members to stay there. She mentions very emotionally her kids' reaction on the interaction with the new environment. The book In Other Words, is a result of her experiences with Italy and Italian.

Her motive towards writing this book is to prove that immigrants remain intellectually exhausted in the new culture, a kind of Space remains with them throughout their life, so is the case of Lahiri herself in America and with her kids in Rome. Space according to Ashcroft is, "that carries the burden and meaning of culture and this is what makes the notion of hybridity so important." (Ashcroft 109)

They have been treated as 'other' in that country as if they have no belongingness to that place. She states that, "When I continue to speak in Italian, they ask me: How is it that you speak Italian so well?" (quoted in theglobeandmail.com) Lahiri felt the pain of this otherness so deeply in India whenever she hadbeen visited thereduring her vacations with her parents, she could not adjust to climate, culture and language and,at the same time she was treated as 'other' in America, as her roots are Indians such as her culture, physical appearance, name, different accent and mother tongue. Due to her double lifestyle, confusion arises in her identity

and as she grew up the problem also grew up with her, so she found an outcome of her problem. She did an experiment with her identity by changing the name, place, culture and language. In the middle of everything a quest raises in her to make her new identity in her own way she admits that, she wanted to be another person. This clearly shows that she was not happy with her situation and felt exhausted.

In Altre Parole, is her unique work written in Italian in 2015 and the winner of Internazionzle Viareggio Versillia. Initially this work was written in Italian,but later translated in English by Ann Goldstein. The English translation of this book is titled 'In Other Words' whichrepresents Lahiri's newestwork to autobiographical expanding shelf. According to a review in The Globe and Mail Inc. Lahiri's work :"In Other Words is an account of wanderlust for someone who, I'd estimate, winces at the word, welcoming it insomuch as it applies to her inner life. By no means a travel book, *In Other Words* is book about seeking."(quoted in review USA TODAY.com)This book is her manifestation of her devoted experience and love towards the language for which she struggled a lot and successfully achieved her mission of learning and writing Italian.Undoubtedly the book has been recognized due to the hybridized dimensions of the author. The fact is that despite following the adopted language, the author has further extended the degree of hybridity by adopting the Italian while maintaining the gap from Indian and English languages. Variety of metaphors have been used by her to abstain herself from her actual circumstances. She came out of her comfort zone and proved herself as a successful author.

She critically gained accomplishment on mastering the English language and then shifting her career into an entirely new direction. She describes her situation by saying, "I don't have a real need to know this language. I don't have Italian friends. I have only the desire. Yet ultimately a desire is nothing but a crazy need." (Lahiri IOW 17) On being the daughter of Indian immigrants, she rightly says that to learn this language was not a necessity to her rather it was a passion for her. She doesn't even have any friend or relative over there. She started everything on her own. After reading dictionaries and books she took coaching classes to learn the language with expression, but she never let herself down for her dream.

Multiculturalism is believed to be the wayout to illustrate the Hybrid context of different migrated generations. In the continual redefinition of Hybrid identity, she achieved the possibilities and restrictions of cultural distinction. This cultural diversity is also a battleground of social conflicts. Contradictions remain whenever the spaces emerge with the cultural differences. It is the author's legendary effort which she had always portrayed the cultural conflict in the different generations.Homi K. Bhabha

has of course been more influential than any other philosopher in exploring the dimensions of Space. He explores thecultural representation that provides national perspective from the people of the minorities, as he said; "In this sense, then, the ambivalent, antagonistic perspective of nation as narration so that they may be acknowledged as 'containing thresholds of meaning that must be crossed erased and translated in the process of cultural production." (Bhabha.4) Bhabha argues that those who struggled for survival after displacement they have faced the cultural shock on personal and social level so, the question of identity becomes prominent in such cases.

Her book begins with this beautiful metaphor, "I want to cross a small lake. It really is small and yet the other shore seems too far away, beyond my abilities. (Lahiri IOW 3). She compares her situation of learning the language with crossing the lake. She willingly starts the journey with dedication, but in the middle of the journey self-doubt overpower her. In the beginning of it, she was very confident, but when she actually jumps into the depth of learning task she found it very deep and herself as stuck into it. She admits that she knows how to swim in the river, but still the fear of completing the learning remains with her. On her this situation she says, "I know how to swim I'm afraid of being alone in the water, without any support." (Lahiri IOW3)

Being a female writer, she had other responsibilities which use to drag her time to time such as she is married and mother of two young kids. She remains worried for their upbringing. Her attitude was necessarily imbued with cultural and social practices she has believed. She is modern and civilized woman, whether she is in India, America or Rome the sense of responsibilities and her strength to maintain a balance between both was a challenge.

Her optimistic approach which is her key to success when she belief by saying, "There is a pain in every joy. In every violent passion a dark side." (LahiriIOW48) Her feelings of rebirth are also a symbol of her being positive. She has used the word 'Metamorphosis' which means a noticeable change in characters or like transformation of someone, which she actually wanted to see in herself.She implemented this term on her to make a new identity as she wanted to get rid of her dual identity and wanted to makea complete change in her personality. She says, "Before I became a writer, I lacked a clear precise identity. It was through writing that I was able to feel fulfilled. Butwhen I write in Italian I don't feel that" (Lahiri IOW81). "In postcolonial societies in which alternatives exist, it has been suggested that a return to indigenous languages can restructure attitudes to the local and the indigenous cultures, and can also form a more effective bridge to the bulk of the population hose lives have

continued to be conducted largely in their mother tongues" (Ashcroft et.al). At the point of her relationship with languages she pauses for a moment because she knowsthat each language has a connection with her. Till the age of four her first language was Bengali and she was very comfortable with that,but her first encounter with English made her uncomfortable. She went under trauma because she could not express herself in the language which is not her and she was not familiar with the foreign language. She shares her experience, that how slowly she came out of her comfort zone and steadily get acquainted with the second language. "A few years later, however, Bengali took a step backwards, when I began to read."(Lahiri IOW 138)

Her situation becomes critical when she has to read in both cultures. Her parents could not bear her deep involvement in western culture. They wanted her to speak in Bengali, eat Bengali food at home, dressup according to them and even want her to celebrate their traditional festivals. "I had to speak both languages extremely well: the one to please my parents the other to survive in America." (Lahiri IOW 41)

Linguistic contradiction arouses in her personality due to that she felttorn between the two and started hating both and felt attracted towards the third one. "I had to joust between those two languages until at around the age of twenty five, I discovered Italian." (Lahiri IOW141) Lahiri's quest is dominated by her own passion to exhibit her knowledge and to prove her superiority. She went on exile; a voyager who had left her homeland, reached Italy with family stayed there for few years struggled a lot and learned language and lead life to fulfill her dream of learning Italian language. She rejects both the languages and longs for the Italian language, where she wishes to start a new journey where people don't know about her past. According to a review in the USA TODAY, "There's the promise of something profound in this cleansing reinvention, midway upon life's journey. But In Other Words never does much more than reiterate this central idea, declining to follow it too deep into the reaches of autobiography — Lahiri is steelier than ever here — and alighting instead on a series of year-abroad banalities about the minor errors involved in learning a new language."(quoted in review USA Today.com) Due to continuous shifting, a kind of wandering from the past and she promised for the future. The author has given voice to her talent by writing this book and throughout the book she recalls her experience as a new learner not as a writer. She assimilates her experience in her consciousness and presented artistically in the novel.

Conclusion

She spends voluntary exile in Italy, but it seems that she was looking forward to going back. Her task is to describe her painful past, a mission

that will allow her to comeout of the culture shock. She remains in the dilemma that whether she is in a search of her roots or she is running away from her roots which states her in-betweeness. In place of demanding for the equality she has created multicultural identity. Lahiri's modern idea of multicultural Identity is a highly effective way of thinking which brings turning point in her life from foreign oppression. It weaves together a variety of metaphors and her personal experiences which recalls her past in the present and will remain in thefuture. Keeping this point in mind that she is uprooted three times not rejecting the nation outrightly but, redescribes it from a migrant writer's point of view.

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The Middle Eastern Crisis: Where Are THE Women?

Nivedita

Decades of political instability, fear of violent extremist groups, rising poverty and corroding local trade under global capitalism, Western intervention in Third World countries in the form of war funding, along with feelings of xenophobia – Islamophobia in particular – continue to brutalize women's culture, ecology and social spaces. The creation and continued existence of Israel with administrative, military and ideological aid from Europe and the US has led to unprecedented violence around the globe, especially in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia while also engulfing in its aftermath both Europe and the US. In addition to the protracted wars between Israel and Palestine (1948) and Israel and its Arab neighbours (1956, 1967, 1967, 1973), other Middle East and North African conflicts include wars in Lebanon (1975-90), Algeria (1991-2000) and Yemen (1994), ethnic violence in Rwanda, Congo and Sudan (throughout 1900s), Arab Spring (2010) underlined by violent uprisings in Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Iraq and many other Arab nations. Increasing global trends of Islamic revivalism – socially conservative religio-political mass movements – as a response to western economic, cultural and religious domination has further fortified women's sexualities, bodies and voices. The questions of women's dress, mobility and status received a fresh attention by the Islamists, who institutionalized veiling as a form of resistance against western cultural penetration, and the western interventionists, who wanted it prohibited for women's emancipation from patriarchal oppression. Over this, the infelicitous birth of ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) in 2014 as a response to the US-led invasion of Afghanistan (2001-2014) and Iraq (2003-2014) under its much-contested policy of striking "war on terror" further destroys the possibility of women's democratic inclusion in social and political systems as they become voiceless objects of sexual violence reinforced by western orientalist fascination and/or repulsion as well as beleaguered victims of ISIL's murderous regime.

Contemporary gender analysis of war, war narrative and conflict-resolution appropriately shows that the politics of colonialism, decolonization, nationalism, ethnic-nationalism, globalization and religious revivalism implant, expand and consolidate gender inequalities and structural violence against women(Giles and Hyndman 8). Each of these processes engenders a feminized discourse that gains legitimacy by constructing women's bodies and sexualities as cultural referents without including their voice and agency. The on-going conflicts in the Middle East – Syria, Palestine, Iraq Yemen – highlight the universalization of women's marginalization in politics and in various administrative, legal and cultural discourses that design, shape and control their subjectivity. The silencing on women's location, role and position in these war-zones reflect the commonality of women's experience of the deeply ingrained gender asymmetries in these cultures that are only occasionally disturbed. Despite a history of female political participation in these countries, there has hardly ever been an acknowledgment of women's choice of roles and activities in war (Afshar 1). Women usually figure as beleaguered victims of violence, destruction and disintegration of family and community structures. While unprecedented violence faced by women during and after conflict remains undeniable, there has been a systematic disregard towards the multiplicity of their war experience (Shirazi 3).

The paper examines the reduction of women as mothers and wives in serious political structures like war, nationalism, democracy, citizenship and history. The construction of women based on their familial roles makes women appear as only auxiliary to men, and therefore unnecessary to the political dialogue, framework of political structures and objectives of conflict-resolution. This exclusion of women's activism gets magnified especially in conflicts when the sharp divide between public (political/masculine) and private (non-political/feminine) gets disturbed and women become the primary targets of direct and indirect forms of violence. Therefore, the paper, firstly, highlights the strategic erasure of women from the political scene despite the fact that they are the primary targets of violence, and also the last survivors. With the modern conflicts entering the homes, women emerge both as victims and soldiers responsible for managing household, cooking for soldiers, providing medical aid, sustaining the families in the absence of men, aiding absconding soldiers and, in many cases, women also choose to fight along with their male relatives. Yet neither war narratives nor state-sanctioned rehabilitation processes include women in a meaningful manner. Women, even today, are primarily perceived as war widows or soft targets of rape.This illustration into women's reductive war images would also entail a detailed analysis of appropriation of women's spaces by international

communities, Western media and imperialist powers that often modify women's culture according to their own imperialist interests.

Secondly, the paper illuminates the various roles and activities chosen by women as they resist both organized and spontaneous forms of violence. In a society where violence against women is already a norm (in the form of early marriage, domestic violence, low educational opportunities, low wages etc.), women become subjected to magnified forms of violence as masculinity becomes glorified. Despite the reserves, women employ various innovative and spontaneous methods to resist violence and save communities. Thus, thepaper seeks to question the various political processesthat fail to include women as equals despite women's indispensability to tedious processes of nation-formation, identity construction, community building and rehabilitation.

Women in War

Unarmed civilian population, especially women and children are the principal victims of inter-state violence, conflicts and other violent insurgencies and uprisings. These non-combatant agencies suffer an irreparable loss in the grand battle for self-determination, yet their contribution in these wars goes easily unacknowledged. Women are the un-credited soldiers of civil wars and other conflicts across nations and communities while they are the ones who bear the repercussions of the conflicts. They are intentionally and scrupulously put out of the historical records and rendered alone by androcentric history because the martyrdom of women is denounced as a common sacrifice (Manchanda 12). Their contribution is masked like their very existence in the male-centered matrix of society. They face irreparable damage caused due to their constant dislocation and displacement during and after the war. Along with this they encounter existential dilemmas like absence of a 'home', fear and anxiety of non-belongingness and double marginalization as a second rate native and a third world citizen.

Inter-communal conflicts and upheavals are often fought in the most densely populated regions. While men are the active perpetrators of violence, women become either forced spectators or besieged victims of violence. What goes unsaid is the psychological trauma that they undergo in this scenario, making a constant effort to save their families, keeping up a facade of normalcy for the sake of family, carrying on routine tasks of cooking and cleaning while witnessing deaths at their doors, fearing loss of loved ones and safeguarding the cultural traditions and artifacts from extinction (Manchanda 15). Therefore, physical sufferings and psychological wounds caused by wars form a major experience of the inside and outside reality of women which often goes ignored when one

studies war narratives. Regardless of the fact that women also have a significant role in any war-zone, they receive only a fragment of due for their contribution and none of its glory. This little acknowledgement that they receive merely qualifies them as casualties in war itinerary. They suffer because of the constraints of culture, intimidating and daunting patriarchal practices, colonization and religious fanaticism. Even nationalism, the supposed saviour of all citizens of the country offers little reprisal to women against the violence they have to bear. As Anne McClintock says, "All nationalisms are gendered" and, therefore, dangerous (McClintock 104). All discursive practices based on nationalism are essentially androcentirc and androgenic to a large extent, speaking of male ideology, catering to male interests, and positioning them as the privileged ones. Men and women are differently incorporated in nationalist discourses (Waylen 7; McClintock 105). While men gain the political and economic rights women become only a cultural entity or a prized possession that needs to be saved and protected by men of their community from the reprehensible Western gaze. This classification of women as bearers of cultural identity has a negative effect on their emergence as full-fledged citizens (cited in Waylen 15). Women cease to exist as conscientious citizens of a nation.

The state and nationalist policies during civil strife or colonial occupation, thus, reproduce gendered spaces and cultural boundaries to inspire men for action by personalizing the political. Men, as protectors of their women and, by extension, the women of their nation, avowedly plunge into wars without questioning its nature, objective and discursive agenda. The paper argues that women are indispensable to war and politics. Unlike their populist and stereotypical portrayals in cultural and political discourses as hapless mothers with guns, and as wailing wives bidding farewell to marching husbands, women deal with multiple realities of conflict, violence, destruction and post-war rehabilitation. The multiplicity and plurality of women's war experience is completely lost on historians, war analysts, the state and even academicians, who once the conflict is over, perceive them as a moral liability without husbands and brothers to defend them and provide for them any longer. No wonder women are included in war narratives only as widows/mothers grieving over lost husbands/sons.

The cross-section of Palestinian, Iraqi and Syrian women register their activism and political acumen regularly by using innovative and subversive strategies during conflict to not only defend their families but also the community. They negotiate spaces to gain access to the public arena hitherto dominated by men and emerge as political agents (Rai 24). Whether as 'ordinary' women, mobilized primarily as mothers and wives,

or as political informed strugglers with an aim for social transformation, women participate in all kinds of roles during conflict including serving as couriers, messengers, fund-raisers, ammunition-carriers, spies, route facilitators, nurses, cooks, protesters, demonstrators and even as barriers battling against police brutality and state violence (Manchanda 15; Peteet 51; Giles and Hyndman 42). Palestinian women, dispersed around the globe and inappropriately represented by an authentic political party, continue to resist Israeli and West-sanctioned terrorism by serving in direct roles as combatants and suicide bombers. According to Shalhoub-Kevorkian, women's everyday lives in Palestine have positioned them as 'frontliners'[1]as they exhibit extraordinary political deftness in facing, addressing and responding to violence caused by various economic and political structures (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1). Living in complete absence of government, laws and security provisions, Palestinian women's voices remain expunged as media and war analysts glorify the conflicting nationalisms – Israeli and/or Palestinian. What goes unacknowledged is the everyday-ness of women's response to war and conflict as it touches their private lives while men are gone to fight at the *front*, if there is any.[2]

Recent gender analysis of war and conflict reveal that women are more active and politically visible during the spontaneous phase of the struggle and seem to diminish when the movements begin to be appropriated by both the imperialists and local leaders who reclaim women's spaces and dehumanize them by re-inscribing new meanings into their sexualities and roles (Manchanda 23). Hence, processes of identity-formation, nation-building and cultural revivalism vis-a-vis western intrusion are gendered. With the conflicting portrayal of women as soldiers and/or sufferers by the nationalists, they are fossilized into voiceless symbols and powerless cultural icons representing empathy, motherly forbearance and non-competitiveness so as to contend against a contemptuous western value-system (Baron 5). The colonial enterprise, to prove its own moral and cultural superiority, creates an ideological/ textual violence against women where woman is reduced to an image of uncivilized passive sexual body perpetually oppressed by the native man (Lazreg *Eloquence* 42; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2; Moghissi 13-30). To add to this, the colonizing gaze of western feminists, like that of the white colonizers, is equally reprehensible as they homogenize third world women's oppression as a cause of patriarchal domination without understanding the uniqueness of their geo-political, geographical, historical and local realities. (Lazreg 42)

Re-appropriating Spaces: Female Agencyand the Imperial Gaze

It has been established by now that the continual gender appropriation of political spaces extends to women's inclusion as soldiers,

combatants, guerrillas and terrorists – activities that are often described and defined in an essentialist masculinist vocabulary (Sjoberg *et al* 8). Despite the fact that women readily register themselves in active roles in conflicts, gender-based social relations and sexual division of labour corrode and diminish female agency as women hardly ever reach higher levels of command, combat and policy making (Gonzalez-Perez 2).The paper, now, highlights that the present-day subversive movements and laws on conflict-resolution (both national and international) fail to incorporate the diversity of women's experience of long-term and short-term conflicts, gender-specific violence, displacement, incarceration and post-war reconstruction of families/communities, and acknowledge them as political actors despite their avowed feminist principles.It, primarily,attempts to uncover how Western policies, laws, media and discursive agendas homogenize third-world women as eternally oppressed victims of patriarchy and assume the moral responsibility of becoming their saviours. This examination into the politics of representation of the colonizer shows that female agency and women's political engagement is often shaped, altered and defined according to the imperial interests of the West in the third-world countries and do not necessarily intend female emancipation as is often posed.

Recent post-colonial analysis into colonial histories of various countries have revealed the complex ways in which the hegemonic, political, economic and Orientalist interest of the west in the third-world camouflage the diverse forms of violence used against women by identifying patriarchal oppression as the fundamental cause of female oppression. This politics of representation where third-world women are either exoticized as passive victims or demonized as immoral agents (as in Palestinian case of female suicide bombers) enables the west to justify its own administrative, ideological and economic intervention in these supposedly unjust and inhuman countries. Al-Ali and Pratt write:

> Iraqi and Palestinianmen are not perpetrators of various forms of political, ethnic anddomestic violence because of their sexual drives or frustrations andtestosterone levels. Nor are they culturally hard-wired to be violent,as many Islamophobic and racist commentators may like us to believe.Rather, brutal occupations, states of lawlessness, economic crises, unemploymentand political corruption, among other factors, may shapethe intersection of different identities, rooted in class, nationality,religion, as well as gender, to give rise to various forms of violenceamong men. (Al-Ali and Pratt, Introduction 10)

Hence, imperialists forces perpetuate violence against women in two ways: first, the epistemic knowledge disseminated by the colonizer

discredits women's right to speak for themselves; second, the violence perpetuated against women by the colonised aggravates the already-present gender inequalities in the community by creating icons out of women's lived realities.

Therefore, the gendered experience of war ensnares women's agential location in a double bind. While on the one hand, it augments women's political action, it also multiplies various forms of violent contexts against them. The panoptic political violence by the interceding forces and the traditional patriarchy escalates acts of domestic violence against them which "encapsulates the range of physical and psychological means to coerce and control women" (Kannabiran 197). It ranges from extreme forms of physical assault, honour killings, exploitation, aggressive intimidation, perpetuating discriminatory social and economic structures to less perspicuous acts of sexual abuse, forced or early marriage, loss of educational opportunities and deprivation of food and water to favour the male child (197). The long-term conflict often makes men feel demasculinized and disempowered as they are left exhausted, maimed or unemployed (Manchanda 19; Shalhoub-Kevorkian). Men's sense of loss of control over the political, economic and personal structures legitimizes misogyny, making them violent against women in order to reassert their maleness in the private and the cultural sphere. Additionally, the construction of gendered nationalist narratives where women are defined as keepers of national identity and markers of community honour engenders repressive regulation over their spatial and cultural mobility (Manchanda 13; Waylen 15; Korac 252). It is owing to these constant cultural revisions that women engaged with political activity during conflicts feel betrayed and abandoned by the male compatriots once the war/conflict is over.

Women in Combat and their Appropriation

In accordance with the argument presented at the outset, the concluding section hereby takes for an example the case of the Kurdish female militia resisting the ISIL forces in Iraq and Syria to urge for a feminist enquiry into the politics of silencing used against women vis-à-vis their political struggles. The cause of the Kurdish female fighters, fighting for a socialist vision of freedom and gender equality, seems to be appropriated by both western media and the local nationalist movement as they continue to speak on their behalf and accommodate their voices to fulfil their own political interests.

The Kurdish female fighters of the YPJ (Women's Protection Units), an all-female military wing under the socialist YPG (People's Protection Units) formed in 2013 to resist the barbaric forces of ISIL in Iraq and Syria, recently caught unprecedented attention of the Western media, especially

the US, when it recaptured the plundered towns of Kobane in Iraq (Kollarova 30; Benakay 2). Highly romanticized images of these well-trained and committed female militias pledging agency against both the ISIL and local patriarchy have become quite popular. The case of the Kurdish female fighters not only reflects the orientalist fascination of the West that commodifies Muslim Middle-Eastern women for consumer consumption in fashion magazines like "Marie Claire" and "Cosmopolitan" but also appropriates their struggle to justify its policies in these countries (Kollarova 4). In this case, the US implicitly forges links with the Kurdish female fighters to justify its own strategies of air strikes, funding the militias, providing them with ammunition and resources to fight against the ISIL. With its deceptive agenda of female emancipation, the US constructs a discourse on women's rights and participation which continue to have negative effects on their culture. The colonizer's gaze into the lives, conditions and ideologies of the Muslim women, then, is as destructive as ever. If these West-sponsored articles and videos are to be believed, both Kurdish men and women agree to the prevalence of a culture of female subordination and female seclusion, and show their commitment towards building a gender-egalitarian society while promoting western and pro-liberal ideals (Kollarova 27). Little attention is paid, in the process, to the real politics of the Kurdish women who have remained in the battlefield since 1996 when the first Peshmerga[3] female unit was formed in order to fight the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Interestingly, the images of the Kurdish female militia, which years ago were essentialized as comprising of disenfranchised women deceived into terrorist and suicide missions have today been appropriated by the west as truly emancipated Muslim women holding guns, conducting mock drills and firing snipers against the brutal ISIL. In this regard, it can be said that political activities of women are scarcely acknowledged as female agency and their goals and motivations are often appropriated and assimilated into western notions of female emancipation. At the same time, the unveiled, militarily trained and politically motivated Muslim women of the Kurdish unit – indirectly aided by US and other European alliances – are also a sharp anti-thesis to ISIL's gendered propaganda that necessitated Muslim women to be heavily veiled, married at 9, educated only in domestic skills and non-political.[4]

Both the violence of the ISIL and the voyeuristic controlling gaze of the western media, thus, urge us to review our own gendered social and political structures so that real agency and political goals of women in war can be understood. The violence embedded in ISIL's fundamentalist understanding of gender roles and the sexualized images endorsed by the west stem from the gender asymmetries produced and reinforced by our own state institutions, public policies, economic laws, security laws

including the prison apparatus, systems governing rights of education and employment, ideological institutions like media, sports and cinema, and various essentialist discourses on citizenship, nationalism, democracy and international relations. These forces collectively create the ground for a masculinized civilization that fails to construct a culture based on the ethics of social cohesion, thus, reinforcing political disdain, social unrest and sexual oppression.

I would here also like to conclude that the western media and academia constructs women's agency in order to restrict, control or appropriate it in order to suit its own political agenda. Despite the numerous videos and articles glorifying Kurdish female fighters, it is difficult to ascertain if US would continue to support the Kurdish cause once ISIL ceases to be a serious threat. In these glorifying videos documented by US and French researchers, there is a deafening silence on the larger issue of Kurdish independence which is the original cause of political motivation for women's units[5]. Also, it is not only the external powers that appropriate women's participation but local resistance organizations also tend to prioritize independence over gender equality. It is difficult to say, at this point, if the YPJ has a well-documented agenda based on a feminist consciousness, a political framework, an appropriately motivated resolve to establish female justice and a well-framed objective except liberation from ISIL and self-determination for Kurdistan. Even a cursory glance at nationalist movements in Algeria, Egypt, Palestine and Iran reveal that most of nationalist/ethnic –nationalist movements give only a perfunctory importance to the women's cause. The women's question often gets subsumed under the larger issue of national independence. Women themselves are motivated to believe that nation comes before personal issues. Masculinist trends, thus, push moral obligations on them so that once the national cause is achieved, women's depolitcization follows naturally.

Clearly, nationalist organizations or international programmes funding development and welfare in native countries do not necessarily facilitate women's inclusion into higher roles of leadership and decision-making. Rather, women more often engage in collective action through spontaneous mobilization in order to resist state or patriarchal authoritarianism. Rohini Hensman's study on diverse resistance struggles in four Latin American and South Asian nations suggests that women's political activism is more spontaneous, innovative and distinct, and therefore indispensable to the over-all struggle as it is more difficult to be stifled by the state (Hensman 53). The study reveals that women's choices, method and activities are amongst the most important elements of political processes that establish them as actors in war narratives (Afshar

Introduction 3). Today, women are joining war forces and various militant organizations for personal and political autonomy. Ambition in the young is not limited to academic fields alone. Women have shown a keen interest in rigorous, time-consuming, hard labouring and unconventional jobs including the military. Significantly, an increasing number of Palestinian, Kurdish and Iraqi women are also joining terrorist or guerrilla groups to fight state and international oppression. While it is not in the purview of the research to address, question or analyze what a multi-layered and oft-debated term "terrorism" means, it can be well said that women have increasingly engaged themselves with challenging roles that demand direct combat, strategic adeptness and the ability for spontaneous problem-solving. The Naxalites in India, the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers, Nepal's Communist Party and Japan's Red Army exhibit high levels of female participation (Gonzalez -Perez 3). Women have also marked their presence on the political scene as suicide bombers. In Palestine, Iraq and Egypt, women's engagement with combat as human bombs has risen drastically. However, women's motivations for joining combat, conflict and struggles are still perceived as different from those of men. It is commonly believed that women join warfare for emotional reasons rather than for their political commitment. Popular images of veiled women acting as suicide bombers or female torturers at Abu-Ghraib prison have both shocked and disgusted the world which continues to essentialize women as fundamentally peaceful, calm and non-violent (Kelley 2). What is largely undervalued and ignored in this essentialist projection is that an "individuals' personal and political choices are complicated and contingent" (Al-Ali and Pratt 2). Many women join war, military and/or militancy because these resistant groups espouse feminist principles and are more open to women's issues. Also, it has been seen in various studies that women tend to empathize with the political cause as much as the men do. It is a different story though that despite serving as combatants, urban commandoes, radio operators, spies, ammunition carriers, medical aids, arm suppliers, smugglers, and also indulging in activities equally risky though less direct like providing for food, medical care and giving refuge, women almost never reach the top levels of organizational leadership (Gonzalez-Perez 21).

At the end it can be said that although women's agency exists, it still falls short of instigating any serious gender transformation in the society that would facilitate their long-term participation and complete inclusion in the political sphere. Quite evidently, women's contribution in wars, civil conflicts, nationalism and citizenship will not be acknowledged and valued till the time women's forms of participation and protest are taken seriously by the war analysts, the media and the state. Both women revolutionaries, women writers and war analysts in the third world are

increasingly working towards opening discussions on the gendered nature of violence, wars, displacement, occupation, international relations and security provisions. There is an urgent need to undertake state studies in order to examine gender policies of states and whether or not women's experience of security laws, labour markets, family legislation, religious revivalism, processes of state building, conflict and reconstruction are appropriately included in its political framework (Sedghi 6). While there is need for the international community, media and academia to question the political and moral problems anchored in imperial intervention, there is also a growing compulsion to examine its impact on gender relations of a given society.

NOTES

1. Shalhoub-Kevorkian identifies all women living under military occupation as frontliners because it is with the resilience and constant survival strategies of these women that the Palestinian resistance (or any conflict across the world) has survived.
2. The Palestinian conflict is unique as the Palestinian people have lived dispersed across the Arab continent, including Lebanon, Syria and Jordon, in highly hostile surroundings and under a refugee status. In 1948, Palestinians were exterminated from their own country by the Zionist government in an act of Ethnic Cleansing. Since then, Palestinians have been fighting a war for their return while being in a perpetual state of exile. Hence, there are no fronts and battlegrounds for Palestinians as they do not have borderlines to fight from.
3. Peshmerga forces in Iraqi Kurdistan and YPJ forces in Syria have been an indispensable part of the Kurdish independence struggle, forming and expanding at different times, and have contributed to the armed struggle in combative roles and suicide missions. ISIL has more recently been countered by the Kurdish women militias of the YPJ and Peshmerga units in Syria and Iraq respectively.
4. Committed strongly to the objective of establishing an Islamist state based on Shia principles, ISIL has been involved in a murderous conquest of Iraqi and Syrian regions. Women in these places have been forcibly converted to Islam, kept in sexual slavery and then sold in slave markets and multiply raped. The ISIL has also imposed severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, expression, education and healthcare.
5. The YPJ military forces mainly comprise of poor local women of the region who fall under direct threat of the ISIL barbarity. It would be interesting to see if the various nationalist organizations unifying under the common agenda of resisting ISIL domination would continue to submerge their ideological, religious and regional differences over the questions of women's gender equality in all social and political structures.

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Changez' quest for identity in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Pooja Batra

One of the greatest challenges that the present day world is facing is the threat of terrorism. Both the U.S. and the Islamic nations have been and are at loggerheads with each other. The terror attacks on the World Trade Centre on September 9, 2001 have left a disastrous impact on the world. Even though it is more than a decade now that the 9/11 attacks have taken place, but the aftermath of the event still continues to produce a plethora of texts in many modes and genres.

Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is one such novel based on the theme of 9/11; it traces the journey of the protagonist, Changez, from Pakistan to the U.S. and then back to Pakistan; culminating in his becoming a fundamentalist in the concluding part of the novel. He is seen "caught up between two worlds—one which is dead as [he has] left it behind and the other which is not yet born as [he has] not yet accepted it" (Nityanandam 14).The binary opposition between "us" and "they", the land of immigration and the mother country are inevitable in the novel. It is the result of the conflicting interfaces between two different kinds of cultures that Changez becomes a fundamentalist in the end.

In the opening pages of the novel, Hamid shows Changez enthusiastically crossing the native frontiers and entering the enchanted world of the U.S very enthusiastically for getting higher education and also for making a career in a reputed valuation firm. Fortunately, he gets recruited in a valuation firm, UnderwoodSamson & Company, which offers a base salary of over eighty thousand dollars to fresh graduates. Even though he tries his utmost in acclimatizing himself to the new environment, still he is inextricably caught up in the labyrinth of his deep-rooted love for his motherland, language, religion, custom and folklore. Changez' persona is influenced by oppositional forces: one that draws him towards luster, glamour and riches in the foreign nation and the other that thrusts him to serve his native land. He encounters cultural dilemmas in the foreign land. It is ironic to see that the same principles and values that set

a "deep, horizontal comradeship" with people of his nation, exclude him from being accommodated inside the imaginative borders of America(McLeod 72). The dominant discourses of race and ethnicity function to exclude him from being recognized as a part of the U.S. society.

Hamid introduces Changez to a few Americans like Jim and Erica, who act as his torch-bearers. With his "piercing insight", Jim recognizes Changez' talent and sharp wittedness and truly empathizes with him for he just knows what it means to "grow up on other side" (70). Erica,a young Princeton graduate, is another character who appreciates and respects Changez for being a non-White. She shows her inquisitiveness as regards Changez' roots and asks him, "So what's Pakistan like?"(17). Such a question triggers Changez' mind and he readily takes a nostalgic leap into his hometown: in illustrating its scenic beauty, in his comparison of Lahore to Manhattan, in taking pride in his rich and elite family background, food and beverages and in explaining his love for Pakistani poetry, folk songs or miniature paintings. "The national history functions like a "story of the tribe", providing the people with a sense of shared origins, a common past and a collective identity in the present" (McLeod 70). Changez boasts of his native place where he has imbibed golden virtues of self-respect, reverence for the elderly, deference in speech, attitude of sharing and banking upon each other in a joint family and abstinence from making wasteful expenditure and from enjoying unbridled freedom in adolescence. So much so, he even owes his recruitment in the prestigious company to the grooming he has had in Pakistan.

The novelist shows that on embarking the land of America, Changez undergoes significant phases in his personality as an immigrant who endeavours to conform with the life and culture of the U.S. Frantz Fanon, the renowned postcolonial thinker, has outlined the "tripartite schema of anti-colonial struggle" which play a significant role in the cultural and political resistance; Boehmer has analyzed these stages in the essay,"Postcolonialism" (Boehmer 345). On analyzing Changez' quest for identity in the novel,one can find that all these three phases form an integral part of his journey.In the initial phase, Changez endeavours to assimilate himself with the culture, language and ethnicity of America. He voluntarily gives up some of the original cultural identity markers, in order to quickly integrate himself to the new social environment. He readily subsumes his Pakistani background in a bid to cherish acceptance by the people of the host nation: "On that day, I [did] not think of myself as a Pakistani, but as an Underwood Samson and Company trainee, and my firm's impressive offices [made] me proud" (34). Changez tries to adapt himself to the new environment and acquires "a good part of comfort and satisfaction" (85). When he leaves for Manila to work on his first

assignment, Hamidelucidates the affectation in Changez' persona, "I attempt[ed] to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an *American*" (65). By portraying such an attitude, he seems to "deny [his] origins in an attempt to become more English than the English" (Ashcroft 4). In Edward Said's terms, "This was a process of conscious affiliation proceeding under the guise of filiation" (Ashcroft 4). The more Changez feigns to adopt the outlook of an American, the more he suffers from the problem of identity. "Mimicry, thus, becomes a sign of inferiority on the part of the colonized" (Singh 104). The "gaze" of the Filipino driver (whom he comes across in a traffic jam) has such an "undisguised hostility in his expression" that it shatters him brutally and makes him realize that he is so "foreign" (66-67). Even though Changez tries to harmonize himself in the alien surroundings but the very fact that he is a migrant, places him on the "border". He feels dejected, lonely and displaced because of his bicultural identity. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha explains:

> Borders are important thresholds, full of contradiction and ambivalence. They both separate and join different places. They are intermediate locations where one contemplates moving beyond a barrier. The "beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past (Mcleod 217).

Soon after the Filipino driver's incident, Hamid subtly presents Changez instinctively smiling enigmatically on watching the catastrophic attack of September 11 on the television. Such a reaction enables the readers to question the protagonist's straight-laced propriety towards the host nation. Changez is seen confounded at his own reaction. On introspection, he realizes that his fidelity towards America is sham and that the truth is that he is not an American through and through. This is a critical moment in his life because from here he begins an introspective journey. He says, "I feigned the same shock and anguish I saw on the faces around me" (74). Through this incident, Hamid portrays that with the change in the environment, Changez rediscovers his love for Pakistan on one hand and estrangement with America on the other; his identity gets shaped and reshaped.

Immediately after the 9/11 attacks in the novel, Hamid presents the picture of attitudes that have now become obviously biased to those who look non-Americans as 'others'. Changez gets disarrayed on seeing the incidents of hate crimes against people of other nationalities, especially the ones from Muslim background. It is at the Manila airport that he experiences first hand brutal psychological assault. He is "made to strip down to his boxer shorts… and [he] is the last person to board the aircraft" (74). On having himself become the target of excessive monitoring, Changez experiences mental torture and racial discrimination. He comes

to realize that the migrants, people of other nationalities and religions become victims of dirty warfare and pitiless surveillance strategies chalked out by the host nation.Through the protagonist's brush with reality,the readers get apprised of the "tales of discrimination" and"stories of rescinded job offers and groundless dismissals" experienced by the Muslims and other ethnic minorities in the U.S. (120). As Stuart Hall argues, far from being externally fixed in some essentialized past, cultural identities are "subject to continuous play of history, culture and power" (Singh 85). Changez feels inextricably arrested in the omnipotent racist atmosphere all around him. Consequently, his constancy and love for the foreign nation waver and dwindle.He is disconcerted further when he gets to know that his loved ones in Pakistan are unsettled and need his moral and financial support. Being miles away from his family, Changez feels homesick and emotionally weak. He endeavours to seek succour and love from Erica but unfortunately, she too is unable to assuage his disturbed demeanour as she herself is afflicted by the memories of her dead boyfriend, Chris. The destruction of the World Trade Centre has churned up her old thoughts and thrown her a year back.Consequently, Changez feels "diminished in [his] own eyes; perhaps [he is] humiliated by the continuing dominance, in the strange romantic triangle of which [he finds himself] a part, of [his] dead rival" (106). At this stage, Hamid brings about a realization on Changez that both Erica and America are enveloped by "a dangerous nostalgia" and seem to have immersed themselves in the memories of their respective glorious pasts (115). As a result, Changez feels further sidelined in alien locales. Soon another incident of discrimination occurs that disillusions Changez further; an unsavoury character shouts at him "Fucking Arab" (117). Repulsed by racial arrogance and ethnic prejudices, Changez shares the plight of a colonized man; "blood throbs in his temples" and he feels like an outsider (117). After facing an array of setbacks, Changez makes up his mind to go back to Pakistan and meet his family.

Having led a fragmented life in the U.S., (especially after the 9/11 attacks), Changez is of the firm belief that his homecoming would be a panacea for him. But it is strange that he himself unwittingly carries the "American gaze" with him to Pakistan (125). Hamid shows that Changez' perspective towards his own people appears to have changed because on having earned a certain degree of respect and social status in the U.S., he has acquired the dominating demeanour of an American. He gets discomposed for a moment; "I [had] changed; I [was] looking about me with the eyes of a foreigner" (124). He is perturbed to see the shabbiness of his house, paint flaking off and cracks running through the ceiling of his house. But it does not take him long to acquire "interior knowledge" of his native land (McLeod 212). His later reflection on his own

"unwelcome sensibility" makes him censure his earlier torpid reaction (124). He feels honoured to see love in the eyes of the members of his family, empathizes with their sufferings and gets disturbed on seeing his countrymen making preparations for waging a war against India.Changez' loyalty towards America stumbles. He feels immensely hurt on knowing that America has refused to offer assistance to Pakistan. The other important political events that impinge on Changez' demeanour are America's daring attack on a Taliban command post and the attack on the Indian Parliament. At the time of his departure, Changez feels as if he is a fugitive who is leaving his country and countrymen at such a crucial time. His parents "sense that [he is himself] divided and that something [calls him] back to America" (128). On the one hand, he feels displaced, lonely and marginalized during his stay in the U.S., and on the other, he is threatened by the thwarting of his dreams when he visits his native place. He shows pronounced characteristics of a hybrid identity. "One serious critique of globalization is that under its regime, identities are dehistoricized. Although globalization dehistoricizes, it cannot certainly erase an identity totally except by creating hybrid identities" (Baral 116). Changez' diasporic identity has a loose configuration. There is a continuous ebb and flow of his emotions for the two nations; he belongs to both the places but sill experiences homelessness at both the places."The diaspora space is a space of contestation, ambivalence and hybridity and the questions of home, displacement and dispersion are reconfigured in this space" (Raj 159). Despite being a sharp-witted person, he loses his balanced state of mind and it is due to the hybrid characteristics in his persona that he behaves in a capricious manner. Despite being a sharp-witted person, Changez loses his balanced state of mind and it is due to the hybrid characteristics in his persona that he appears to be facing identity crises.

Changez' response to his sojourn in Pakistan, results in the change in his physical appearance and outlook; he does not shave his two-week old beard and does not leave Pakistan behind himthis time. He categorically disapproves of the sham and hypocrite garb that he had been gladly adorning earlier. By flaunting his beard (cultural marker), he indirectly "put[s] pressure on the mainstream to give [him his] share in the cultural and political pie" (Narang 29). His beard becomes a mark of distinction, "a form of protest on my part, a symbol of identity" and thus, it stresses upon Changez being culturally different (130). At this juncture, Changez enters the second phase of "attempting at political reforms, even intensively of radical kind, as in demands for self-help and self-representation" which according to Fanon is the second phase of cultural and political resistance (Boehmer 345).By openly announcing his brotherhood with all Muslims, Changez faces discrimination at the hands

of Americans and becomes a subject of whispers and stares. Hamid shows that Changez' second visit to the U.S. disillusions him further.The split in his identity can be understood through the words of Frantz Fanon, "It is the absence of wish, this lack of interest, this indifference, this automatic manner of classifying him, imprisoning him, decivilizing him that makes him angry" (Zahar 161).Changez faces an ambivalence of existence in both his personal and social life. The lack of co-operation on Erica's part and Changez' own contesting identity in America do not let him restructure his personal and social identities in the U.S.

Changez is in an extremely vulnerable state when Jim sends him to work on his third assignment to Valparaiso in Chile to "value a book publish[ing]" company (177). Here, the novelist introduces a significant character, Juan Bautista, the Chief of the publishing company who astutely comprehends the ongoing commotion in Changez' persona and analyses the probable reasons for his nonplussed state of mind. It is through the observant character of Bautista (who seems to have suppressed anger and hatred for Americans), that the novelist thrusts upon Changez the very idea that Americans should be condemned for undermining the respect of the people belonging to other nationalities. Bautista tries to incite Changez and make him realize that he has been disloyal to his own nation. He poses the following path-breaking question to him:

> Have you heard of Janissaries? ...They were Christian boys captured by the Ottomans and trained to be soldiers in a Muslim army, at that time the greatest army in the world. They were ferocious and utterly loyal: they had fought to erase their own civilizations, so they had nothing else to turn to (151).

Bautista touches Changez' consciousness and makes him realize that he has blindly served the U.S., a nation which denigrated and marginalized him. "I was a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine and was perhaps colluding to ensure that my country faced the threat of war" (152). Changez takes the landmark decision to leave the U.S. of his own volition and finally settle in Pakistan. He leaves the Chile project midway and returns to the U.S. On reaching Underwood Samson and Company, it is with a heavy heart and moist eyes that he resigns from the well-paid job, relinquishes his name and fame and his dream to settle in the U.S. "I [was] hit by the enormity of what I [was] giving up"(157). As long as Changez offers his services to Underwood Samson, he is admitted but as soon as his contract is terminated, he experiences the feeling of non-acceptance andis adjudged as a total stranger. Hamid throws light on Changez' shattering experience of submitting his resignation; the split in his persona is quite pronounced here.

Changez' connections with America are not merely professional; Erica is another strong emotional factor that connects him with America. Nothing enchants him in the alien land except for the last hope that he might be able to meet Erica. But unfortunately, on meeting Erica's mother, he comes to the conclusion that his relation with Erica was not a mutual one; she had, "chosen not to be my part of story; her own proved too compelling" (171). Changez, thus, fails to reach out to all those places where both Erica and America have been progressing. He contemplates on his experiences of both identification and the loss from the new homeland before he starts for his journey back home. Changez finds it difficult to "restore [his] boundaries after they have become blurred and permeable by a relationship…" (174).

Changez' response to the U.S. on returning Pakistan is a militant one; he categorically accuses the U.S. for wreaking havoc all over the world, for flaunting its superiority and for unduly exercising its power over Muslim nations. Hamid gives Changez a platform to raise a team of intellectuals who are assiduous, patriotic and who can assist him in waging a war against the perceived enemy.As a local, minor ideologue, he endeavours to become an agent of change; he imparts education to the young scholars in the university, streamlines his own life and gains more knowledge to serve his own nation. The educational institution thus, becomes a site to configure social cohesion amongst the members of the same group. Hamid voices the anguish of the protagonist who is seen battling against the colonizing nation with his teammates.Together they participate in a violent struggle for their emancipation from colonial domination and exploitation. As a fundamentalist, Changez embarks upon his mission to battle against discrimination and domination with the assistance of his sharp-witted teammates."But [my] brief interview appear[ed] to resonate: it [was] replayed for days and even now an excerpt of it can be seen in the occasional war-on-terror montage" (182). He endeavours to recuperate his lost enthusiasm and campaign against America with rejuvenated spirits. In the last part of the novel, Changez is seen desperately "wait[ing] for his Marlowe" —his alter ego; just as Kurtz waits for his'in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (183). Changez goes on a quest for such a Marlowewho is "politically minded" andwho possesses "ex-janissary skills"(179).While living in Pakistan and campaigning against the U.S., still Changez is seen stringently following the guiding principle of "Focus on Fundamentals" (which he had learnt at Underwood and Samson in the U.S.) (98). To sum up, one may say that Changez has entered the last phase of cultural and political resistance (as explained by Frantz Fanon) wherein, "through the process of violently seizing freedom and asserting political power, the native intellectual learns to re-exercise

agency and retrieve a selfhood that was damaged under colonial oppression (Boehmer 345). Changez' final decision to settle in Pakistan gives him profound peace and solace; living with his own people, sharing similar beliefs, customs and traditions. As opposed to this, he had encountered a striking vacuity in the U.S. and had never felt belonged to the nation. He envisions his nation as a strong one and wages a war with teammates against the colonizing nation. Thus, Hamid throws light on the innumerable experiences gained by Changez, (a well-constructed diasporic character) who matures on encountering unsettlement and dislocation in the alien land; the resultant alienation helps him in rediscovering himself, in interrogating as to where he actually belongs, for whom he should serve, where he can develop and prosper, where he can earn his livelihood and where he can lead a life of his own. Throughout the novel, the novelist presents Changez' quest for identity; the quest of a disillusioned diaspora which proves to be tumultuous and fretful, both at his motherland and his new found homeland, a quest which goes on and on.

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Out of the Ordinary: Symbolism in Miljenko Jergovic's Select Short Stories

Rini Reba Mathew

The nation of Yugoslavia was formed after the First World War and it was composed of Slavic Christian communities and a considerable number of Muslim minority groups. But later by the time the Second World War broke out, Yugoslavia was invaded by the axis powers and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito was formed. Tito's Yugoslavia collapsed after his death which led to the beginning of yet another brutal episode in the history of Yugoslavia. The individual republic nations within Yugoslavia wanted to have autonomy and hence the Balkan war of the 1990's started. The wars were described by witnesses as the most deadly since World War II and various ethnic and religious communities faced the wrath of this brutal war. Among this array of wars, the War in Bosnia- Herzegovina which spanned from 1991 to 1995 is described as follows:

> This was a three-way war between Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks (Bosnian muslims), with changing alliances, the bloodiest and dirtiest war with participation of foreign volunteers and mercenaries on all three sides. UN intervention was only partially effective. Huge casualities with about 100,000 killed, many more wounded, almost 2 million (out of 4 million total inhabitants) exiled from their own homes, genocidal rapes, large scale destruction of sacred objects and mass burning of homes. Many of these brutalities were carried out in the name of religion. (Mojzes 8)

Yugoslavia was populated mainly by the ethnic communities like, the Serbs and the Slovenes who are Orthodox Christians, the Croats, who are Catholic Christians and the Bosniaks, who are Muslims.The constituent republic nations which were in power from time to time unleashed their hatred and dominance over the rest of the nations and wanted to declare their superiority. Minor ethnic communities like Jews and Romaswere completely exterminated by the dominant ones. This ethnic cleansing

finally led to barbaric genocidal wars during the 90's. The people of Yugoslavia were literally living a terrible nightmare during the war. The war destroyed their normal lives and pushed them to believe that this nightmare is no dream, but a reality.MishaGlenny, writer and BBC correspondent during the Yugoslav crisis, says in his book *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, "It is all so unreal, so inconceivable, that it is hard to grasp, atleast for me"(xiii). Ethnic cleansing turned out to be an important part of these wars and it indeed was genocidal in nature. Yugoslavia had a mixed population of Christians and Muslims which after the war was forcefully segregated or annihilated. It is quite disheartening to count on the fact that all the three major ethnoreligious communities, say, the Serbs, the Croats and the Bosniaks, were equal in lashing out war crimes and genocide on the other two groups. The Balkan war of the 1990's is thus considered as the most brutal one in history because of this genocidal character and ethnic cleansing.

Misha Glenny says, "The impact of the second World War and the genocidal struggle between the Serbs and the Croats was felt most keenly in Bosnia" (*The Fall of Yugoslavia* 140). This statement clearly points to Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia- Herzegovina and today's cultural centre of Balkan arts and fashion. But there was a time when this city suffered the paramount violence and degradation.The city of Sarajevo is the most important city among the various parts of Yugoslavia which faced the brutality of the 90's wars at its highest level. The city underwent a siege which lasted 44 months from April 1992 to February 1996 during which it was completely cut off from the rest of the world. The city of Sarajevo and its story of death and revival are widely used in Balkan literature. Writers of different Balkan nations made use of Sarajevo and its history to picture wartime Yugoslavia in their works. For them, Sarajevo symbolizes the hope for survival and an optimistic spirit with which they can live through the tough times. The inhabitants of Sarajevo never lost their hope that this war will end and a dawn will come. The international recognition and attention that the city receives today exemplifies it. MishaGlenny rightfully points out, "Despite the weird creatures which festered in Bosnia's social undergrowth, the people of Sarajevo, were blissfully optimistic that they would be spared war….while war was raging in Croatia and economic life being savaged in Serbia, Sarajevo's social life continued to be the envy of hedonists from around Europe" (157). The tumultuous life in this Southeast part of Europe is still shrouded for most of the world. When it comes to portraying or documenting this eventful history of the Balkan lands, their literature seems to be quite new even among the European literatures. Even thoughthe Balkan literature is richly inherited by the Byzantine and Ottoman empires, it was unknown to most of the European countries and the rest of the world. But later

when writers like Julia Kristeva, MirceaEliade, TveteanTodorov, Ismail Kadare, OrhanPamuk started to write in French and thus redefined the image of Balkan literature. And by the 20th century, when many Balkan writers started getting translated, Balkan literature attained a new status in the global literary arena.

Miljenko Jergovic is a Bosnian prose writer who was born in the city of Sarajevo. He is one writer who made his voice heard and thus became a representative of the Balkan lands in European literature. *Sarajevo Marlboro* is his collection of short stories which he published in newspapers and magazines for a long time. It came out as a collection in 1994, the time when Yugoslavia was still witnessing the war. The collection whichdetails the author's nostalgic memories of his past days in Sarajevo is interspersed in fictional narratives and also focuses on the plight of innocent lives amidst war. The book attained international attention within no span of time and was translated into many languages. The book was translated into English from Bosnian by StelaTomasevic in1997.

The stories included in the collection, *Sarajevo Marlboro*, are bits and pieces from wartime Yugoslavia of the 90's, especially, the siege of Sarajevo. Jergovic's style of narration is in such a way that the reader finds it curious to notice that even the plants and inanimate objects in these stories speak for the cause that author tries to support. In stories like "Beetle", "Theft" and "Mr. Ivo", ordinary objects act as symbols which evoke hope with which they withstood the violence of war. Here, these ordinary objects turn intocharacters which speak throughout the plot. Jergovic makes the maximum use of props in these stories by sidelining the major characters. J. A Cuddon says, "A literary symbol combines an image with a concept (words themselves are a kind of symbol). It may be public or private, universal or local. They exist, so to speak". (906)So these objects can be considered as literary symbols as its existence signifies the enduring strength with which they live through the fate of the city and the effects of the gruesome war.

"Beetle" is the story in which the first person narrator buys a used Beetle car from a person named Milos. Jergovic begins the story by describing the car in a personifying style. The reader first gets the idea that the narrator is talking about a woman. He says, "She spent her early life in RavnaRomanija mountains with a chap called Milos, who put her to the hardest and dirtiest jobs" (Jergovic 22). The narrator goes on illustrating his car and the way he drove it around and brought it back to Sarajevo. He considered his car as a brave woman when 'she' crosses the border of Romanija. The car means a completion of passion for the narrator, even though he was able to afford a much expensive car. He just wants the Beetle to be in his parking lot. Even when he saw the Beetle for the

first time, he realized that the car won't survive for a long time as "she stank of cement and manure and liquor" (22). The plot thickens with the clear portrayal of the car with its petrol supply getting blocked and its clutch not working. But the narrator feels these flaws as trivial because the Beetle meant his happiness not his necessity, which becomes clear when he says, "It wasn't as if I needed the car to escape anywhere or make a getaway" (24).He was ready for its inevitable fate at one point or the other. But as the story moves, the expectations took a decisive turn. When the war started, the people in the city of Sarajevo ended up in a cellar, where they were supported by only the essential amenities. The narrator seemed to remember his house and car during his stay in the cellar. It is important to note that he hopes even though his car won't make it out, the house will survive. He thinks, "I think I already had a picture of the Beetle as a dark metal skeleton, but I'm not sure." (24)But when the shelling was over, it was a surprise for the narrator to find his car among the other wrecked cars in the parking lot."She was covered in dust with a slight shrapnel wound, but I drove her home, opened the courtyard gates and parked the car inside" (24). The sense of joy, the narrator felt at that time, was one of relief and nervousness at once, because he knew well that war actually is on now. When he says, "no more driving for you" (24), he implies his own existence too, as he realized that the war can destroy everything, but the same spirit with which his Beetle car survived, he can also hope for a survival.

In this story, the Beetle car symbolizes the people of Sarajevo themselves. Even at the beginning of the story, Jergovic gives the stature and nature of a woman to the car. He calls it, "Nazi frau" (22), which mean a married or widowed German woman. Later when he went on describing the car, it had the style of personification all over. When the writer made the car to survive the heavy shellings and bombardments, he expects the entire city of war torn Sarajevo to experience the same hope and spirit. The narrator finds his car amidst the other wrecked and burnt out cars which signifythat even though the war can cause immense pain and tribulations, the people can come out of it in time. By drawing a parallel between the Beetle car and the people, Jergovic transmits a ray of hope, which is definitely the need of the hour.

Another story titled "Theft" portrays two neighbouring families which drift apart due to an incident that happened years ago.Jergovic comes up with an image of an apple tree in this story. The apple tree stands in the narrator's house and one day he caught the two girls from the neighbouring house stealing the ripe apples from his property. His decision to tell on these girls to his mother led to a family feud at the end of which Uncle Rade, the girls' father, shouts back at them. The two families never spoke a word to each other since then. The apple tree stood there withstanding

all these disputes and grudges. When the war broke out, the army interrogated Uncle Rade and his wife Aunt Jela for keeping hunting guns and an automatic rifle. This explains to be because of the rumour that Rade was "a gangster from Kalinovik". This incident shattered Rade's family and ostracized them in the community. The narrator feels sorry when Aunt Jela fell ill and Uncle Rade had to take care of her. The story ends when the narrator gives a bag of ripe apples to Uncle Rade and he returns a bottle of apple jam to the narrator.

The apple tree in the story "Theft" stands throughout the plot like an omniscient character. Its presence is not many times acknowledged by the writer but still the plot journeys through the incidents surrounding the apple tree. The very first sentence of the story goes, "In our garden, there was an apple tree whose mouth-watering fruits could be seen from the upstairs window of the house next door" (17). So both the houses are situated in the visibility of the apple tree and children from both houses cherished the idea of tasting those overripe apples. After the fight between the two families, it is noted that Uncle Rade's family never tried to steal or take the apples, even when the branches grow very near to Rade's room upstairs. The apple tree stood there watching the plight that Rade's family went through during the war. The army interrogation, the suspicious glances and verbal insults that they faced were beyond explanation. But the sight of this apple tree in the next door reassured Rade of a fresh start. When he says, "Sometimes I look at these apples and marvel at the life in them. They don't care about all this." (20), it indicates the hope and expectations he acquired from this sight.The overripe apples symbolize the fullness of life to him. He expects a new, calm life after the war. He expects his wife to be healthy again and they can live a happy life. When the narrator gives away the bag of apples that he picked from his tree to Uncle Rade, there is a reconciliation between them. It completes when Rade returns the bottle of apple jam to the narrator. His hope is transferred to the narrator's family. The two families' reconciliation builds a kind of strength in them to overcome the horrors of war. Thus through the symbol of the apple tree, Jergovic succeeds in presenting the optimism that both families achieved in spite of the ongoing war.

"Mr. Ivo" is the story of a gentleman who supposedly is from a place called Dubrovnik.He is considered as a man who is "invariably perfect in terms of decorum" (31). The story is about how Mr. Ivo reconstructs the garden and a blocked-up well in his compound soon after he heard the Chetnik bombing in Dubrovnik in 1991. People in his village couldn't believe that their perfect gentleman could immediately turn into a muddy labourer.But Ivo stays unpredictable as he comments, "Who cares?, If the war spreads, heaven forbid, I'm well prepared." (31)Thus at the

beginning of the war, Ivo "bought five hens and a cock and dug up the roses in his garden…he uncovered the blocked-up well…reopened the shaft and rebuilt the well using flat white stones. (31) The story changes its direction from Mr. Ivo to the well he built, when one day the villagers find that their water pipes and the drinking fountain had completely dried over a fortnight. From that day onwards, Mr. Ivo started supplying water from his well, which became his daily routine. The plot becomes interesting when Mr. Ivo started to fix a time schedule for the water supply and took leave from his duty once in a while when city water supply was restored. The story ends with the intrusion of a first person narrator wondering at the life of Mr. Ivo.

"Mr. Ivo" is the story of a perfect gentleman and his fellow villagers finding a well becoming their life source for them during the war. When Ivo rebuilt the old blocked-up well, he never thought of a situation where he can help the entire village. But his well becomes the hero when the war starts. The lives of everyone in the village was revolving around Ivo's well. Thus the well becomes the centre of one village. The well represented life for the people and they adored Mr. Ivo for reconstructing it and also for lending them a helping hand in danger. The well survived the shellings and bombings while all the other water supply systems in the villages got damaged. A well which can be left without giving much significance becomes the symbol of life and sustenance. Towards the end, when the villagers stand in a queue to collect water, Mr. Ivo stares at the well and thinks what his well meant for his village. The narrator says, the well's "clear water represented for this particular neighbourhood all of the goodness in the world" (33). Along with the well, the garden also becomes the symbol for positive energy and optimism for the village. It says, "It didn't take long for the neighbours to imagine that the clucking in Mr. Ivo's garden was the singing of birds of paradise, an irresistible sound that brings you out of the world of shadows and into the light of day" (31). They appreciated the way Ivo takes care of the garden and the well so that his house and the surroundings became their place for hope, a place from where they can look forward to their future.

Jergovic tries to 'defamiliarize' the ordinary objects and gives them a new dimension. The literal meaning and the general aims of the objects are not important in these stories. The speed or the engine power or the petrol supply of the Beetle car mentioned in the first story is a superficial description only. Beyond it, the way the car survive the shellingsmatters to the author. Likewise, it may not the taste of the apple fruit or the productivity of the tree, but the way the tree reconciles the two families during the wartime that matters to the author. And in the story, "Mr. Ivo", when the war broke out, the way in which Ivo reconstructed the well and the garden and how it nourished the entire village and gave them a new

ray of hope become important rather than the amount of water the well gives or the fragrance, the flowers in his garden spread in the air. So the usual perceived notions about these objects are defamiliarized here, as Viktor Shklovsky means by his term "defamiliarization" (Cuddon213).

> To 'defamiliarize' is to make fresh, newer, strange, different what is familiar and known. Through defamiliarization the writer modifies the reader's habitual perceptions by drawing attention to the artifice of the text. This is a matter of literary technique. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important. (214)

The three stories discussed here use commonplace objects as symbols which in turn give the story a different perspective to look at from. These three stories, "Beetle", "Theft" and "Mr. Ivo", which set in the background of the series of Balkan wars which continued for a decade in the 90's, give the opportunity to analyze the implied use of symbolism in Jergovic's stories. Usually, writers portray characters who demonstrate a paramount amount of optimism and strength even during times of severe pain. Such characters are hailed as heroes in literature. But in these MiljenkoJergovic stories, he weaves narratives in a way that the commonplace objects attain a supreme status along with the living characters. Many of the human beings are known for their spirit of survival regardless of all problems. In these three stories, the Beetle car, the apple tree, the well and the garden symbolize the greater cause of survival. These symbols are equalized with human beings in terms of their sanguine nature.Jergovic thus took these objects from the ordinary world to render his idea of finding hope and optimism in times of war.

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River of Smoke: A Dialogic Corrective to the Politics of Colonial Representation of Orient in the Western Historiography

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River of Smoke, third of the *Ibis* series, is a novel byAmitavGhosh that comprehends and contends against the colonial representation of China and India as orient. The novel delves deep into the histories of Opium-War and pin-points the hegemonic moves of West that defined and intervened into the cultures of colonies for generating more surplus-value through cheap labor and raw material. Using India and China as big markets for the outlet of their finished goods was the real intent that they hid behind the cultural representation of east as backward and uncivilized. Execution of such other economic pursuits for the long run demanded cultural and ideological masks that dichotomized the orient and occident within the boundaries of hierarchies. *River of Smoke* uses alternative fictional strategies of creating intertexts of historically present and absent paintings, botany and plants, letters, documents, diaries, articles in the journals and other imaginatively pulled measures to produce the semiotics of such hegemonic colonizing processes. It foregrounds the politics of representation by fictionally analyzing the procedures of the construction of ideologically charged meanings about the reality of east. This paper aims at exploring into the fictional strategies with which the novel counteracts such representational politics. It has been seen how the epistemological implications functional in such construction of meaning and reality of orient have been very implicitly through the counter-ideological significations inversed in this novel. The reverse-discourse of this novel rather lies in re-defining the 'the third-world space' of orient in new terms with the help of the recovered historical data from the land of Mauritius present in the personal archive of Neel Rattan Halder, the dislocated King of Raskaly dynasty of Calcutta under British regime.

Analyzing *River of Smoke*, by Amitav Ghosh, it has been seen that displacement of experience and ephemerality of reality have been achieved through the fictional strategies which signify a break from the realist

fiction. Side by side, instead of rejecting history for pure imagination, it has been pulled into revision through other ways of looking at reality. No doubt fact has been accepted as an important instrument of disclosure of the past reality; other purely fictional tools have also been employed to activate the lethargic significations that aim at binding reality in a static frame. Fact and fiction, in other words, co-exist in this novel to displace the motionless-ness of static and hegemonic perspectives. For example, the edicts issued by the king of China and the high commissioner Lin Zexu to the opium merchants, the real letters of these big historically known merchants to the queen Victoria and the king of China, historical documents in the form of books and other records in the archive of the dislocated king of Halder dynasty of India, treatises and the trade reports published in the magazines of Canton and China, and the correspondence of the British officials and merchants in Canton present in the historical records of London Library, all co-occur with the same privilege that has also been given to the personal letters of Robin (an Indian-English hybrid), diaries, paintings and botany. Even the personal letters of Robin to Paulette have been used to form an inter-disciplinary space of hybridity, where history and fiction cross through each other. Robin cites or gives description of historical letters/edicts/reports in many of his letters to his childhood friend Paulette. His letters exhibiting a space of such mixing have a parallel signification in his own hybrid identity. Robin, the son of an Indian woman (servant) and a British painter Chinnery; the former being an imagined character and the latter a real historical one, himself is a signifier of such hybridity. His personal letters combining both fact and fiction displace the unitary perspectives of the writers of these historical documents. Both the ways of narration: with or without inverted commas, have been employed in narrating these letters to Paulette. This strategy has produced the reality of opium war and the situations precipitating it through both the eyes: the hegemonic authoritative and imagined alternative. Most of the time, Robin's interpretations of the historical circumstances of opium war dissect the colonial and hegemonic versions of the reality given by the British merchants and officials. While ruminating on Mr. Slade's report on the riots of 12th December in Canton, published in his own journal *Canton Register*, Robin shows his solidarity with Charles King's version of reality. Mr. Slade's colonial manipulations justify British opium trade/smuggling in China on the name of Free Trade. King Charles is the historical character who is shown to contend against such colonial moves of the people of his own community (369-70). Robin delivers this contention between Slade and Charlie with a critical attitude toward Slade's colonial hatred for mandarins and with an appreciative standpoint for the anti-colonial humanist perspective of Charles. Smuggling of opium by these foreign merchants leads to the capital

punishment for a Chinese opium dealer. Slade and other merchants' (British and U.S.) conscious blinded by the lust for profit refrains them from caring for his life. King Charles tries to awaken their dead souls with all his efforts but in vain (369-70). Such ugly face of colonialism may be inferred from the following observation of Robin given in one of his letters to Paulette:

> 'Company Hall', where the meeting was to be held, we were all stricken with dismay; for no sign of remorse—or indeed even the faintest acceptance of culpability- was visible in the mien of the foreign merchants who had gathered within. Their attitude was expressive rather of an increased belligerence; their regret seemed to be centered solely on their failure to mount a more aggressive defense of the enclave. (371)

His version replaces the imperialist interpretations of the riots that occurred in Canton after the hanging of a Chinese. Western merchants held responsible the King and the High Commissioner of China for this death, and they justified it through their colonial definitions of the King and the Commissioner as tyrant and uncivilized. Their letters to the queen imbibing such interpretations of the Chinese authorities have been indicted, for the reader, with Robin's counter-ideological interpretations of the circumstances as written in his letters to Paulette. He, instead, reveals the people of China in harmony with their king and the High Commissioner. He writes in one of his letters to Paulette:

> The disturbances were proof … that the foreign merchants are utterly mistaken in their belief that the populace is not in accord with their rulers on the matter of opium. They are on the contrary, wholly supportive of the official measures against the drug; indeed there is immense public indignation at the impunity of the foreigner—else the public would not have turned upon us all at once, and we would not have needed police protection against them. (370)

Thus, holding the foreign merchants in China responsible for the riots of 12th December, Robin reverses the colonial historiography of the causes of opium war: relieving China, her King and the High Commissioner from the burden of the hegemonic mis/re-presentation in the colonial historiography. Almost every letter written by Robin to Paulette vibrates with such de-colonizing pulse. The novelist has been able to pierce into the colonial perspective present in the historical records/reports of that time with the fictional and non-documentary mode of letters. The appearance of historical documents in abundance in this novel and then their re-examination by a fictional character Robin evidences how the novel forms an equation of history and fiction connecting both in the

unit of everyday changing reality. The sources of these historical documents have been acknowledged fully at the end of *River of Smoke*.

The most important thing in the across-boundaries strategy of the novel is that any kind of absolutism is not allowed into it. If the historical characters mix with the imagined, they do not stand for a unitary perspective. For instance, Charles King, one of the foreign merchants, is not like his comrade western merchants fully engrossed in the greed for profit. He does not do the trade of opium at all. He may be seen discoursing against the politics of using 'Free-Trade', 'liberties' and Christianity itself by the western merchants for increasing their profits out of the opium trade. He also forms his critique on their criticism of the Chinese attempts to restrict the flow of opium. The following excerpt from the novel may be seen in this light. His words may also be seen as a tool to disperse the absolutist colonial definitions about the people of China or of the other colonized nations of the world:

> He sees them as a people who have their virtues and their failings, as do people everywhere – but to exploit the more feeble-minded among them by pandering to their weaknesses seems to him just as unconscionable here as it would be anywhere else. And the worst of it, in his view, is that the foreign trade has created, in the eyes of the Chinese, an inseparable linkage between opium and Christianity. Since many of the men who peddle the drug are loud in proclaiming their piety it is inevitable that the Chinese should draw the inference that there is no conflict between trafficking in opium and the strict observance of Christianity. (455)

Charlie challenges the colonial definitions of East supported by Free-Trade, when Mr. Burnham; a British merchant, holds China herself responsible for getting addicted to opium due to being 'feminized' by its taste for soft arts like painting and poetry. Charlie dissects his paradoxical colonial politics by designating the real culprit in the following way:

> If the gentry of this country had not been weakened by their love of painting and poetry China would not be in the piteous state that she is in today. Until the masculine energies of this country are replenished and renewed, its people will never understand the value of freedom; nor will they appreciate the cardinal importance of Free Trade.
>
> 'Do you really believe', retorted Mr. King, 'that it is the doctrine of Free Trade that has given birth to masculinity. If that were so, then men would be as rare as birds of paradise. (469)

As King Charlie stands against the powerful sway of the majority of his own community, the new Chinese High Commissioner Lin Zexu undermines and takes action against the corrupt officials of his own country that benefitted from and facilitated the spread of opium in China. His edicts, pulled as historical documents in the novel, declare death-penalty and other strict punishments on the Chinese people who would not refrain from indulging in the smuggling of opium. He actually does so by beheading a local opium-dealer who disobeyed his orders. Lin Zexu issues the same kind of edict for the foreign merchants too, the disobedience of which causes threat to the lives of the smugglers of China. This resulted in an unrest and outburst in the Cantonese people against the foreign merchants, and consequently causes the notorious riots of 12th December in Canton (462). Hence, Lin Zexu has been shown as an exception to the corrupt Chinese officials who themselves precipitated the havoc on their own country.

Another creative way of shattering such absolutism about west and east as superior/inferior and civilized/uncivilized, as used in this novel, is the comparison between the people, the economies, and the cultures of India, China, and the Britain itself. Charlie, whose character has been discussed above, presents deconstructive comments on such dichotomic binding of orient/occident in his following words:

> Throughout this affair the behavior of the Chinese has been absolutely exemplary: they have made the most reasonable of requests – that the foreign merchants surrender their contraband and pledge never to smuggle opium again, which is not much to ask. The foreigners, on the other hand, have conducted themselves in such a fashion as to utterly discredit their claims of belonging to a Higher Civilization: they know full well that if any Chinese were to attempt to smuggle drugs into their countries, they would be sent instantly to the gallows. (458)

Absolutism in representation had been the main strategy of colonialism to establish its hegemony over other nations. Absolutist interpretations of the orient fixed racial boundaries. The notion of the purity of race facilitated the construction of hierarchies, which in turn built the atmosphere conducive for the imperialist exploits of the East India Company and other foreign merchants. *River of Smoke*, through the above given methods of smashing the absolutist definitions of orient and occident, rejuvenates the reader's perspective on history. Both get re-evaluated through the new eyes of the new times in new terms. One more point of alterity in the modes of expression in this novel may be seen in the use of signifiers in it. The creative ability of Ghosh does not implant signifiers in sentences as static capture of stagnant meanings.

His metaphors as words seize the ever changing flux of meaning and reality. For example, *Ibis*; the ship that carried Deeti, Kalua and many others to the islands of China, signifies a movement on the black waters of sea. This movement, at the second level of signification, connotes the change in the lives of the travellers that might not be undone. Not only the words signify movement/flux of eternally shifting meanings and reality, the sentences, paragraphs and full scenes and stories become a single metaphor implying such liquidity of reality. For instance, the history of the slavery of Indians under the guise of indentureship imposed by the East India Company on them has been 'frozen' in the mural painting that Neel and Deeti did on the walls of a temple in Mauritius. Deeti's depiction of "the scene was framed as if to freeze forever the moments before the fugitives' boat … swept away from the mothership by angry waves: the *Ibis* was portrayed in the fashion of a mythological bird …" (13). Here, this whole mural painting becomes a signifier that catches the slippery meanings of history and time. In this painting, Deeti's body is portrayed in the manner that she seems to "be suspended in the air, well above the deck". The further depiction of the scene goes like this:

> Deeti's body was drawn in such a way that she appeared to be suspended in the air, well above the deck. Her head was tilted backwards, so that her gaze appeared to be directed over Zachary's shoulder, towards the stormy heavens. As much as any other element of the panel, it was the odd tilt of Deeti's head that gave the composition a strangely static quality, an appearance that seemed to suggest that the scene had unfolded slowly and with great deliberation. (15)

The whole painting with many scenes in it becomes a single metaphor able to catch the gradual movement of history and time. This slow movement of time and history is 'seized' in the time 'present', where Deeti, Neel and many others have absorbed all the changes from past to present. Their present echoes all these voices of past: it is not simply a moment of 'now'. Such connotations of the scene depicted in the painting; though implicitly, suggest the historicity of the novel. Viewing present as echoing the symphonies of past and history can never be seen as a pure postmodern expression, which Ghosh has mostly been ascribed by the critics.

In the same way, at many other places in the novel, the incidences of the time past (the time of and before the opium war) have been shown to converse with the events of the time present. The roots of the present economic state of China and its relationship with west and India have been contextualized in the wider background of history. Like, in the warnings against opium trade/smuggling given by King Charles to

Behram; a Parsi trader from India, the impact of the past events reaching the present relations between the countries China and India may be discerned:

> Amongst all of us it is you who bear the greatest responsibility, for you must answer not only to your own homeland but also to its neighbors. The rest of us are from faraway countries – our successors will not have to live with the outcome of today's decision in the same way that yours will. It is your children and grandchildren who will be called into account for what transpires here today. I beg you, MrModdie, to consider carefully the duty that confronts you at this juncture … think not of this moment but of the eternity ahead. (470)

Unlike postmodern fiction, present has been tried to locate in history deciphering past and present as inseparable from history. The use of personal letters of Robin, memories of Deeti, and Neel's diaries as in conversation with the Chinese and British documents implicates covertly the relevance of both fictional and historical; subjective and objective; or in other words, fact and fiction, for reaching a comprehensive and deep understanding of life.

Treatment of time in this novel is not so simple. It is not like the postmodern way of separating past from present. It is also not like the modernist way of imposing linearity/sequentiality on time. The synthetic approach of the novel clubs both continuous and contingent notions of time. History has been seen as a dialectical process but moving in a contingent and spasmodic motion. That's why, the realist descriptions of the above discussed incidences co-occur with the magic-realist accounts of certain events. The storm that caused the release of Kalua, Neel, Ah-Fatt and some other travellers on *Ibis* from the clutches of indentureship has been imagined by Deeti as a heavenly help—"in the brief interval before the passing of the storm's eye and the return of the winds, it was as if another tempest had seized hold of the *Ibis* … the typhoon was upon them again" (17). In her mural painting of this scene of the escape of Kalua, Neel and others, she sees/paints the happenings "through the eye of the storm" and again succumbs to the "seizer or hallucination" that she experienced during the time of its happening. Like believing "in stars, planets and the lines on their palms", she believes that "the eye of this storm" could "reveal something of fate to people who knew how to unravel their mysteries". She further thinks: "So why not the wind? Stars and planets, after all travelled on predictable orbits—but the wind would choose to go. The wind was the power of change, of transformation. . . ". She deems this "wind"/her "*karma*" responsible for her journey to Mauritius: "it was the wind that had sent down a storm to set her husband

free …" (19). She inserts the miraculous powers of "*karma*" into the rational calculations of the "predictable orbits". The power of the "wind"—the unexpected events in the time to come- displace the calculations based on continuity/causality of events. The deeper connotations move beyond the course of Deeti's personal life and encircle the dialectical movement of time and history. The "eye of the storm" unexpectedly and metaphorically disturbs the circular/continuous/dialectical movement of history, which leads to contingent and undecided routes/denouements. When linking with the major events of the imperialist contact of east with west; which also comprise of the smaller events of the individual lives of these characters, the very subtle meanings of the changed future of India and Chine in an uncalculative and unexpected way after their 'stormy' contact with the west may also be inferred. The course of the natural development of these countries, which may never be the same, has been implied here. Canton as a signifier of hybridity concretizes such implicitness of meaning. Canton, like a "ship at sea, with hundreds—no, thousands—of men living crammed together in a little silver of a space", becomes the abode of Indians, British, Japanese, Americans, Chinese and many others. Many of these foreigners' illegal children from the Chinese women living on the coastal area of China mainly become the inhabitants of this place (185). The hybrid cultures get formed due to imperialism and more surplus value generation of west. Such colonial contact converted Canton into "the last and greatest of all the world's caravanserais" (185).

Paintings of the Cantonese people that appeared at the juncture of this colonial contact too connote such unchangeable/irreversible hybrid reality through the signifier of "bastard art" (248). The "wind", or the 'uncalculated/unexpected' for the east, i.e. the flow of surplus value of the western factories, and their need for the cheaper raw material and market for the outlet of their finished goods, put their future 'destinies' on unimagined itinerary.

In addition to the freshening and altering of the official histories of opium war hurled on China by the British government, the novel also revises and rewrites the social-histories of ordinary people. In this context, the silences in history about the regulatory limits of gender-behavior under the so-called modern British rule are also put to question in this novel. Paulette, a passionate botanist, "had imagined that she would be collecting plants in the wild" (104). But she comes to know that "European women aren't allowed to set foot in Canton. That's the law" (103). The cage of such gender-hierarchies disappoints her and she feels "as if a flaming sword [has] descended from heaven to shut her out of Eden, forever depriving her of the chance to inscribe her name in the annals of

botanical exploration" (104). The colonial discourses hid their profit-concerns under the masks of Free-Trade, Christianity, liberties, and western feminism. They proposed to liberate the women of the colonies from the feudal-patriarchy of their countries. This piece of the text lays bare the paradoxes of their colonial-ideology. Disguise of feminism as imperialist politics contradicts their patriarchal attitude toward their own women. Their own women were not allowed to be traders on the ocean. They were not even allowed to take frequent baths on their own. The bathing was done as a ceremony by cushee-girls that were deployed on Paulette. Mr. Burnham's wife took charge of this activity on the name of Christianity. If in *SOP* religion was shown conspiring with patriarchy, in *ROS* economic instability is attached to patriarchal norms so that the women could not have their full flight. Such exposition of the patriarchal nature of Christianity and their economic ethics foregrounds the other perspective on the history of the so-called 'enlightened' and more scientific colonizer.Their project of western feminism and enlightenment itself becomes questionable when seen in the light of the condition of their own women.

Hence, it may be concluded after the above given analysis of *River of Smoke* that the novel attempts at reversing the orientalist historiography of India and particularly of China by re-writing the lost histories of the proud struggle given by east to west. It logically imagines the missing facts of anti-colonial participation of east and the cunning colonial/ imperialist politics of west by imaginatively calculating into the gaps of the available hegemonic and non-hegemonic versions of history.

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The Oral Manifesto: The Subaltern History of Caste-bound Bharat

Quleen Kaur Bijral

Caste relegates the subalterns to the fringes and disallows them to rise above their imposed station. It brands them as untouchables, nevertheless employing them as bonded labour. The subaltern in India, as examined in Mahasweta Devi's *The Glory of SreeSree Ganesh* (2003)protest this marginalization through the medium of songs, which presents an indispensable value and service of Orality as a means of articulating one's identity and subaltern consciousness. It is in these oral songs, that the subaltern expresses his/her exploitation at the hands of the elite and hence gives a voice to his consciousness. Can then it be said that these records if captured in an authentic light serve as a source of subaltern history? Can it also be claimed if these songs are prohibited then that invariably silences the subaltern? While examining these two questions vis-a-vis Mahasweta Devi's *The Glory of SreeSree Ganesh*, the paper argues; firstly how imperative it is to underscore the importance of Orality; secondly how as means of protest it empowers the subaltern; thirdly how Orality is an articulation of subaltern consciousness; and finally Orality as a subversion of historical texts and an ally of subaltern history. In the novel, these issues are investigated to highlight this work as an intervention in the writing of subaltern history vis-a-vis Orality.

Mahasweta Devi's objective to record the significance of Orality is to further lay stress on the question – who is listening? True the subaltern is speaking, but the issue is who is listening. Is the government, the police, and the courts taking note? Are the social service initiatives taking note? If they are, then are doing anything about it? In speaking about the exploitation, exploitation cannot be defeated. In listening to it, then again it cannot be a subverted unless an action is taken to prevent it. Further, if an action is taken, it also needs to reach the fringes, the abysses than survey the eddy on the ocean while the ocean dances with draconian systems and elitist debaucheries. As it is noted that in the novel, whatever developmental schemes and projects are introduced, they are sidelined as paltry, useless and even detrimental to the order of

elitist system. They are brushed aside as mere 'legal jargon' and nothing more. This aspect has been examined further in the paper.

The novel has been written in the backdrop of a typical Indian village with systems of feudalism practicing its iniquitous measures of social stratification. The setting of the novel conveys the issues as tyranny of elite, exploitation of the subaltern, and India's changing landscape that however fails to reach the grassroots. Mahasweta Devi makes interspersed references to the actions of the elite class through the depiction of the Rajas, the zamindars and their goons who are regularly immersed in the activity of seizing lands and abusing lives. Devi notes:

> So much terror still to be struck, so many subjects' huts still to be trampled on by the elephants. So many adivasis (aboriginals) still left to be chased out of their forest settlements when the hakim came hunting. The entire pasture and forest land to be cleared of the ahirs (ethnic tribes).
>
> (*The Glory of SreeSree Ganesh* 13)

While apprising the readers with the daily life prevalent in an Indian village, Devi establishes how she will not only expose but also shame the customs of the elite who deem it justified to exploit the subaltern. Further in the novel, Devi apprehends the social hierarchy established in the society which imposes rigid roles and duties to the subaltern while ensuring the incumbency of the elite. This stratification has been cemented by mores which act as a governing body for the subaltern who are forced to direct their lives in accordance with its diktats. This obdurate system is hence consciously enforced by the elite to assign arduous work and labour to the subaltern. Devi writes:

> ...the lower castes had different roles to play at different times; sometimes these men and women were bonded labourers, sometimes debtors, sometimes they were landless farmers evicted from their land, sometimes kept women – these roles were decided by the higher castes. Who usually spoke while the lower castes listened.
>
> (*The Glory of SreeSree Ganesh* 28)

In the presence of these draconian rules which entangled the subalterns to perform rigorous labour, it was impossible for him/her to articulate his voice. Caste system hence is the model which is adherently employed by the high castes to legitimatise their exploitation of the subaltern. The author exposes this devious connivance of caste system and feudalism and highlights how they are the root cause of exploitation in rural India.

II. Orality as Birthright& Subaltern Records of Past

In the society ridden with caste system, though the subalterns have been incapacitated to speak, they have but invented seditious yet discrete ways to verbalize their exploitation. This strategy of the subaltern is the most poignant and powerful episode which identifies with the subaltern consciousness and its expression by the low castes in the wake of a system hell-bent to diminish their voice and spirit. In the novel, the bhangis are the untouchable castes who are assigned the most degrading jobs as manual scavenging. It is through their oral articulation of this profligate system of exploitation, that Mahasweta Devi has captured; firstly how the subalterns employ songs to vent their anger and exasperation at the system; secondly how Orality gives them a mode to protest; and finally how the elite do not interfere because if they do, the bhangis would revolt and then who would do the objectionable jobs. These aspects can be examined when Devi avers:

> The bhangi folk would compose a song...it's their birthright...They composed songs about new laws, about murders and fights, about the oppression of the police and the scandals of the maliks. In fact, (and this needs to be stressed), in that malik-controlled barha area, the only history of exploitation and oppression of the poor was fund in their songs.
>
> (*The Glory of SreeSree Ganesh* 42-75)

In these songs, one can recognize the bloodthirsty stratagem, decadent lifestyles, and degenerate systems which fortress the immoral and illegal activities of the elite against any protest and retaliation. In their lack of fear and their being no deterrence, the elite hence go to extreme lengths to extract undignified labour from the low castes. It is in these oral songs, that the readers are made aware of this unwritten, undocumented and unprinted history which nonetheless is a history of human exploitation and consequent abuse. It is pertinent to observe here that that the paper employs the term subaltern as"reification" or reference for the bhangis, as Mahasweta Devi has directly mentioned the castes as bhangis, a name they are known by in India, "The subaltern is a creation, a reification for historian. No one in India calls them subaltern, nor do any of the writers quote Indian terms which were equivalent" (*Reading Subaltern* 205).

Therefore, in appreciating the subversive and scrutinizing role of Orality, it can be declared that Orality serves to apprehend the mischievous tampering of official history. In the writing of subaltern histories, there is a distinction made between what is official and what is popular history. In saying official history, the attempt is to expose those transcripts, records

and documents as in "the narratives of state officials, of newspaper editors, and those to be found in institutional collections of 'private newspapers" which are one-sided as they are produced by the dominating or ruling class. While Orality or oral sources such as "narratives of storytellers, and balladeers, and folk memories available in oral accounts" serve as popular archives which are marred as unfaithful record of past. It thus can be reiterated that both the sources should be "read" that is scrutinised if subaltern history is to be manifested (*Mapping* 284).

In this discussion, the paper discerns - if the official history remains deviously obstinate to bury the sins of the elite and the sufferings of the subaltern, then how significant Orality is which exposes these gaps and rather takes up the role of history to become history. This history is then a proof, evidence, and a confirmation of not only the truth of subaltern dehumanization but also the strategic chicanery which promotes elitist agendas and tyranny.

Devi in being emphatic to note the significance of Orality further attests:

> In large, all powerful Rajput kingdoms when great kings-and-emperors, masters of millions, perform good deeds like secret assassinations, killings of their minor wives, murders for property, it is not the minstrels but the bhangis who make up songs about this and go around singing them in the capital city.
>
> (*The Glory of SreeSree Ganesh* 59)

In her another story "paddy Seeds", Mahasweta Devi has depicted a landless labourer who through his protest songs articulates the sufferings at the hands of the elite and hence mobilises the consciousness of the victims to revolt(*Listen to the Heron's Words* 185). In surveying the significance of songs, it is deemed to be the "most powerful genre of oral literature" due to its "versatility and communicability. It is distinguished from the oral narrative not only by its mode of performance and use of verse, but also by its extensive use of imagery and symbolic language "Oral Literature 14"). Further, it has been observed:

> ...songs have managed to express what nobody cares to say... (they succeeded in)fostering and perpetuating the spirit of common history, common social experiences and a common vision.
>
> (*African Oral Literature* 27)

While examining these songs and their content which is highly subversive, Devi also asks how come these bhangis who are deprived of rights, are but allowed to compose these sedition through these songs. It

is exceedingly odd that on one hand the bhangis are divested to protest, but finds no opposition to their incendiary songs. Devi notes this apparent conundrum:

> No one knows who, after depriving the bhangis of their right to live as human beings in caste-bound Bharat, had given them the right to make up such songs and sing them...the bhangis got this kind of freedom everywhere... No point in abusing Mahatama Gandhi. This hoary tradition goes back to a period of much before Gandhi.
>
> (*The Glory of SreeSree Ganesh* 59)

As noted earlier, the elite fear a hostile response from the subaltern if they are forbidden to make such songs. The subaltern might rebel if they are refused to vent their sufferings. Fearing this backlash, the elite remain silent and even more strangely the elite seem to rather get entertainment out of it. Is it that the way the subaltern have had accepted their exploitation, the elite also have had accepted this oral caricature of their foibles. Is this an aspect of tolerance, forced acceptance, agreeing to disagree as otherwise it would lead to conflicts beyond anyone's control. The elite allow the low castes this much freedom and in return extort forced labour, while the subaltern unable to protest in deeds, hence compose songs to preserve and cherish their identity. Further it can be emphasised that in the songs, the bhangis are able to find a sort of mooring, which otherwise they are dispossessed of by the elite.

III. Protest Songs: An Articulation of Consciousness& Subaltern History

In these episodes, three interpretations can hence be drawn; firstly the songs serve to articulate the sufferings of the subaltern; secondly it also in some way assures the subaltern that they are in control of their lives, no matter the degree of this control, and that they can protest, indict and expose the elite as they have freedom to do so; and thirdly the subaltern have become so subdued, that they consider it to be their fate to be abused as slaves. That is, they know they are being exploited, but that they should revolt and manifest their subaltern consciousness is lacking. Why it is lacking perhaps because the system had been running for so long and hence entrenched in the psyche it had become naturalised or that the system is considered to be impregnable and hence the subaltern do not think they can fight it. be that as it may, it is still present, this subaltern consciousness, but needs an awakening which triggers, mobiles and stirs it. It can be noted that "Subaltern consciousness" which is developed in the novel "is the consciousness of resistance and in resistance. Such consciousness many contain within it ideas of religion,

and caste, ideas of status and power but they all are subsumed in the act of protest and opposition to domination" (*Reading Subaltern* 205).

Hence serving as a record of history, there is no doubt that by exposing the decadence of their times, the bhangis are recording a history and through Orality are hence also exposing the errors in the official narratives.The target of these songs has been to attack the scandals of the elite, and consequently satirize their follies in the open. It can be said, that the songs of the bhangis hence bear a pungent note of satire, and aim to, "...ridicule social weaknesses. Irony is the main literary tool used in the songs for satirical purposes (*Literature of the Embu* 16). But as far as believing the subalterns are in control of their lives as they enjoy freedom to verbally protest, is nothing but a delusion which can change once this verbal articulation of subaltern consciousness, this oral manifesto, is performed in a collective action. This last aspect has been taken up in the concluding sections of the novel as a cumulative result of the sufferings faced by the subaltern and how one episode serves as a last straw, and the subaltern protests. To reiterate, it can be emphasised that in protesting through Orality, the bhangis take the first step towards realizing their subaltern consciousness which once is achieved, the subaltern is compelled to revolt than play the defensive. And these transformative stages can be evidenced in any peasant revolt which is emblematic of how a peasant first recognizes his consciousness and then manifests it as an uprising against the elite.

V. Misrepresenting the Subaltern: The Elitist Agenda

In the absence of Orality, the elite will speak for the subaltern and thereby misrepresent him, underrepresent him, and depict him as a 'criminal' (colonial stigma), untouchable, fanatic (native elitist stigma) and etc, hence suppressing the human element of the subaltern and his/her subaltern history. This aspect of misrepresentation is evidenced n the novel, when the village is passing through the stage of development, the elite speak for the subaltern in that the subaltern do not need rehabilitation. In this speaking on the behalf of the subaltern, one can observe the discriminatory mentality and deliberate oppression carried out by the upper castes to continue imposing subalternity as it keeps the society stable and peaceful. Devi notes this illogical elitist logic:

> What's the point of sinking so many wells, digging so many canals, building so many roads – I just haven't a clue. Look...the more backward a place, the more simple its folk – they remain obedient, they fear the police. Progress spoils them. It annoys the maliks, and in turn we face problems. Development is not suitable for rural India.
>
> (*The Glory of SreeSree Ganesh* 78)

This logic has been and is still extant in the design of the elite. Some might claim to abjure from it, but consciously and unconsciously this mentality has remained as it ensures the incumbency of the elite and forced labour of the subaltern. In this question of who is speaking for the subaltern and can subaltern speak, the argument is that the subaltern firstly cannot access the institution through which to articulate its exploitation; secondly if s/he is speaking, the official and dominant discoursers suppress his voice.

In examining the first aspect, it can be stated:

> The subaltern are simply in a subordinate position to elites...(rather) unable to access structures and institutions that would allow grievances to be recognised. And recognizable. Thus, the subaltern cannot speak, as Spivak famously and controversially argues, not in the sense that the subaltern cannot talk, but in the sense that they do not have the institutional means of having their voice registered and recognised.
>
> (*Subaltern China* 31)

Similarly, the second aspect can be ascertained as:

> It is not that the subalterns are not speaking; voices are being raised but the mainstream discourses have constantly overpowered them. This process produces the feeling that these voices are mere noises among the real sounds.
>
> (*The Subaltern Speak* 217)

In this rigmarole of representation of the subaltern, hence the question is can the subaltern access the official apparatuses to articulate, and if he can, then will he be heard or his voice will be dumped in the trash bins of history. Further, there is another twist to this argument – the ones hearing the subaltern, were they listening adequately to be sensitised enough to help. That is, it is not sufficient to know the exploitation but also survey its cause, its and ramifications otherwise any superficial or little knowledge will only worsen the case.

IV. Conclusion: The Subaltern Protest

Towards the conclusion of the novel, it is observed that due to the suicide of Rukmani, a low caste, who was abused by Ganesh, the entire subaltern community is up in arms. Ganesh still perverse in his mentality decides to burn the forest but has to flee for his life. He has the insolence to seek a haven in Lachimma's home and uses his cunning to persuade her to save his life. It is in Lachimma's powerful reply that one can find the rising of a subaltern consciousness and how Devi describes it as an "explosion" in her head. Devi writes:

> Something exploded inside Lachhima's head. The explosion made her calm, violent and focussed. Lachhima said, Only I could have saved you then. Today, I shall save you again. But, not, Ganesh Singh, in the way you want me to. Today I shall do it my way.
>
> (*The Glory of SreeSree Ganesh* 164)

Lacchima raises her voice and alerts the organized party that had come to stop gnash from setting the forest ablaze. They hear her and in unison prepare their attack. Lachhima also 'becomes one with the crowd' and this sentence one can note that only by a collective action, united, organic and cohesive front the subaltern can protest. Their subaltern consciousness was awakened, and they knew it was time to manifest it and by becoming one with each other they revolted. And as Gramsci has also averred that subaltern groups, "are always subject to the activity of the ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up; only permanent victory breaks their subordination (*Contemporary Society* 4). It is in this end, one can discern the subaltern in his awakened subaltern consciousness which hence leads to their permanent victory. It is this realization which Mahasweta Devi intends to emphasize by highlighting the powerful interpretations of the songs, the consciousness of the law castes, and the manifestation of a revolt. The work has championed the voice of the enslaved and marginalized low castes-the Lachhimas, the Rukmanis, the Mohors and the Haroas and has attacked the subversive practices of the elite lords-the Medinis and Ganeshas.

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Ajay Sharma's Basra Streets: A Potent Petro fiction

Sandeep Chahal

Dr. Ajay Sharma's *magnum opus* petro fiction *Basra Streets* published by Aastha Prakashan in 2007 is the most important literary work in present times. Dr Ajay Sharma's *Basra Streets* heralds a new beginning of new genre of petro fiction in modern literary world. *Basra Streets* is a powerful petro- fiction to date that focuses on the oil industry in gulf and portrays the cultural encounter between occident and orient.

Benedict Anderson in his seminal text on nationalism *Imagined Communities*, defines nations as 'imagined political communities', therefore Iraq also imagines its community 'through and with oil', it means that the communities are 'naturalized' in relation to the social, environmental and political effects of oil exploration and its production. For Iraqis a nation is a community socially constructed, imagined by natives who perceive themselves as the part of that group. As *Basra Streets* is an imagined community, one imagined through oil, does not fit neatly within Anderson's paradigm but the novel's hybrid form (imagined community as protagonist) mirrors the hybrid formation of the hydro-carbon novel's imagined community. So, Anderson's points are vital to understand the formation of an imagined community as a result of hydro-carbon capitalism instead of print-capitalism. Petro fiction refers to narratives that directly address the issues related to oil industry on one hand but also to fiction that assumes the impact of oil industry on American culture. What makes this literary genre particularly intriguing is its indirectness with which it addresses the issue- where the oil is, who wants to have it and how they go about getting it. It relates to cultural encounters as the world is exposed to the scramble for oil by developed countries especially in the Middle East. Petro fiction studies the world literature of energy and natural resources. It is a work that analyses the significance of oil. Our lives are saturated in oil – it is the most significant resource of the modern capitalist world system. It is everywhere, especially in those places where it appears invisible, scarce, or undiscovered. It determines

how and where we live, move, work and play; what we eat, wear and consume. It is heavily invested in the shaping of our political and physical landscapes. To think about oil is not solely to think about automobiles or derricks or spectacular spills or barrel prices. The universality of 'Oil' makes it as controversial as it is ubiquitous in its apparent vitality and necessity. Modern culture is a Hydrocarbon culture, which germinates hydro carbon genre viz *Basra Streets*.

Basra Streets exhibits the ingredients of petro fiction as mentioned above at various levels. It is effectively portrayed and projected through the characters like Akash, Bushra, Gulnar, Aliza, Julia, Abu Majid, Umar, Channan Singh etc. We are able to witness the different layers of meanings of hydro-carbon fiction of the countries like Iraq, Iran, India and USA, when the above-mentioned characters undergo different experiences in complex situations in these countries for insatiable thirst for scramble for oil. The main protagonist Akash-Indian doctor cum interpreter has a keen desire to go abroad in search of better career prospects after completing his B.A.M.S in Punjab. Akash's three friends come back from Iraq and narrate to him the high standard of living, nice salary package and exquisite lifestyle there. This motivates Akash and his friend Naresh to go to Iraq to earn money. Here we witness the nature of the migration of Punjabis to Middle East who are tempted with a thought of earning petro-dollars. The glimmer of Iraqi Dinars attracts Akash and his poor parents are more than ready to send their sole son abroad, even if they have to borrow money. And the sons who go abroad in search of better pastures also believe in this notion that the spend spent could be easily earned back within a short span of time. Thereafter, they would send the money back home to their families in Punjab to uplift the standard of their living and solve all of their monetary problems.

Basra Streets reveals connected international patterns in literary form and theme. Patterns that confirm the effectiveness of a recently reconfigured world literature as method and resource to map and critique the way in which the world's resources are unevenly produced, extracted, refined and exploited on a global-local scale. It reveals vulnerable populations in Iraq around the globe are subject to corporate and state oil imperialism. It portrays the eco-critical frame to view texts registering oil's relations with ecological crisis, war, urbanization, and campaigns for environmental justice. In tracking the development of cultural and political responses to oil production and use throughout the twentieth century, the text of *Basra Streets* also maintains a focus on speculative forms of energy futures – and demonstrates why fiction offers a novel way to think about 'oil politics'. *Basra Streets* is a forceful hydro carbon genre

based on the triangular struggle of war, peace and love. It highlights the social realism, mental conflict and deep psychological insight of an Indian doctor in the oriental city of Basra (Iraq) torn apart by US-Iraq war. The novel effectively portrays the restlessness, helplessness and exploitation of the Iraqi citizens especially of the Iraqi war widows amidst the ugly US-Iraq imbroglio in the post colonial world. The thematic structure of the novel traverses from romantic paraphernalia and reaches national and international dimensions. This anti-war novel depicts the civilized man's basic instinct of ruthless devastation and his inner urge of vain domination of the uncivilized and the civilizing world in the garb of a pseudo-political war.

Dr. Ajay Sharma takes us unknowingly to the exotic city of Basra which is world famous for its priceless glimmering pearls. He unintentionally and spontaneously co-relates these priceless jovial pearls with the painful pearly tears of Iraqi widows in the war torn towns of Iraq. Dr. Ajay Sharma has successfully created a microcosm out of macrocosm by drawing an exquisite parallel between the U.S-Vietnam war and U.S-Iraq imbroglio. The novel is an open attack on oil politics and arm-twisting technique of the developed countries, which they often use to subjugate and dominate the developing countries viz Iraq, Iran, Kuwait etc. Dr. Ajay Sharma's fourth novel Basra ki Galiyan (2004) translated into English as *Basra Streets in 2007* has become a milestone and a beacon of light for the millions of subjugated people in the third world countries. The novel is also a fiery dictum against female foeticide, which is the main reason for the sudden decline in the female sex ratio in Asian and Arabian countries. It depicts the miserable condition of young boys who are being used as suicide bombers by Saddam Hussein's regime in the name of *Jehad*. The sarcastic, ironical and caustic remarks of the Iraqi citizens against the dictatorial and brutal attitude of Saddam Hussein are another highlight of the novel.

When Akash reaches Iraq he has to work as a translator in a hospital at Basra, where his job is primarily to translate the conversation of the Iraqis and Asians into English to the doctors concerned and vice versa. Akash meets Bushra in a telephone exchange company situated nearby his hospital. Bushra comes there daily in order to supply the delicacies of Basra- *Khajoor* biscuits. Akash develops strong affinity, fascination and intimate bond of love with Bushra. One day, they decide to marry. Bushra's mother wants the wedding ceremony to be conducted with Iraqi rituals and Islamic customs. Therefore, Bushra tells Akash that he has to undergo the traditional circumcision ceremony- *Khatna* before their Nikkah, so that he is

duly inducted into Iraqi community as per the Islamic traditions. Akash's identity is totally shattered in the name of marriage. Bushra and her mother try to crush and devastate Akash's Ethno nationalism. Akash is forcibly subjected to the cruel and brutal ceremony of *Khatna* in the name of Islamic tradition. Akash loses his identity and individuality when he has to undergo the cruel circumcision ceremony for the sake of his survival in an alien land.

Many multinational companies run hospitals and other businesses in Basra. They sow the seeds of hatred amongst the workers of different countries because they often unite together for their genuine demands. Therefore, the company adopts the strategy of divide and rule like the British Colonizers. The authorities of the multinational companies exploited not only the local Iraqis but also sowed the seeds of hatred among Indian and Pakistani workers in camp area. They were infact worse than the British Colonizers as they not only paid the workers less wages and but also provided minimum facilities to them. When Akash finds the markets of Basra flooded with foreign goods he realizes that these companies are there only to curb, crush and subjugate their nationalism. He at once remembers role of East India Company in India during British rule and Mahatma Gandhi's struggle against it.

In Basra, Akash and his friends often go to bazaar on every *Jumma*. There they see hoard of *hoors*- posh butterflies of Basra. He comes to know that these posh women are infact Iraqi war widows who dominate all the government offices of Iraq. Iraqi officials and most of the visitors often visit these Iraqi war widows who are forced to take up the profession of prostitution. Here Akash meets a beautiful *hoor* named Gulnar and is instantly infatuated with her. He soon develops intimate relationship with her and visits her quite often. The character of Gulnar paints the miserable picture of the Iraqi war widows in war torn Iraq. After some days, when Akash again visits Gulnar she says that due to US Iraq war the inflow of tourists in Iraq has decreased considerably which has led to slump in flesh market.

Though Akash is married to Bushra, yet his married life is not happy. After some time, a son is born out of their union. Soon there are rumours of the outbreak of the US Iraq war. Akash and all able bodied males in Iraq are forcibly recruited into Iraqi Army as per the dictates of the Saddam Hussein's regime. Here, we witness the new war tactics of Saddam Hussein. Such is the shortage of men in Iraqi army that the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein forcibly recruits almost all able-bodied young, adult and old males into army to fight the US army. Umar discloses the horror of war and miserable predicament of Iraqi women.

Umar's father who is a professor of language in Basra University philosophizes on the imperialistic attitude of the mighty western countries especially USA who always have an axe to grind and they subjugate and dominate the third world countries like Iraq. Umar also comments on the quest of his identity and impact of the futile war on the current and coming generations in this passage. Later on Umar acts as a savior to the protagonist Akash when he listens to his tale of woe. He feels sad when he comes to know about the cruel *Khatna* episode, unhappy marriage of Akash with Bushra and his miserable plight in Iraq. Umar disclosed to Akash that his mission was to kill US army general in Fidayeen attack. It is quite evident that it was not possible for the Iraqi citizens to revolt against Saddam Hussein and raise a voice of dissent because he was very brutal and cruel at times, especially during war. Saddam Hussein forcibly crushed his citizens and used them as human shields and human bombs for his own selfish ends. But still most of the Iraqis felt that it was better to be ruled by cruel dictator rather than by outsiders like USA. The nationalistic zeal of the Iraqi citizens motivated them to fight Saddam Hussein and US forces at the same time. That is why when Umar executes his suicide mission plan so perfectly that it paves a way for the liberation of Akash.

When Akash alias Mr. Smith lands in Basra with a team of US commandos, he comes to know that one of the commando is a woman named Aliza. Aliza tells him that she got recruited in US army when her husband was killed in Iraq in US Iraq war.We come to know that Aliza joined US army with a strong streak of hatred for Iraqis and with a zeal of nationalism for her country. But slowly she also realized that USA was indulging in arm-twisting technique to subjugate lesser-developed states. This is the reason that she is disillusioned with the war.

We are shocked to learn that the US army officers and policy makers exploits their own citizens in such a way that they become living vegetables like Aliza. People like Aliza are used and misused by US officials for their own selfish ends in the name of war. Thereafter Mr. Smith thought of a plan to get out of the war zone in Basra. He requested Aliza to help him and asked her to shot bullets on his legs so that he may be hospitalized and finally sent to India. Akash was treated in US hospital and then he was finally dispatched to India. Akash returned to his roots and went to Haridwar to cleanse his soul and to discard the troublesome memories of Basra. His conscience finally goaded him to reach his native land, a place where he found solace. Akash's strong sense of Ethno nationalism motivates him to complete his journey from Basra to India.

In fact, USA had been using arm-twisting technique to subjugate Iraq and indulge in oil politics. French economist and business representatives had clearly mentioned in 1918 that the country that had total controlled on the oil wells of the world would have complete control over the world and would become super power. Even US President George Bush Senior admitted that if the vast oil wealth of the world came under the direct control of Saddam Hussein then , all the developed countries would be endangered . This demonstrates the negative nationalism of USA, which poses a great threat to the territorial, and ethno nationalism of Iraq. This was why Saddam Hussein hated US President George Bush Senior to the core and considered him as his sworn enemy. Saddam Hussein never let any opportunity to insult George Bush Senior. His personal animosity with him was also one of the reasons of the outbreak of U.S Iraq war.

The boundary of the two countries which were relative to Shat al Arab waterway was a bone of contention between Iraq and Iran. US exploited this situation and in 1979 and used a satellite photograph taken by NASA and published it in Washington Post newspaper in which it was mentioned that this area had the world's maximum oil reserves. This discovery led to the Iraq and Iran war. Unfortunately, Iraq and Iran fought for eight years and more than hundred thousand people were killed (mostly males). Such was the miserable plight of two countries that they came to be known as countries of war widows. USSR supplied weapons to Iran and USA to Iraq. In this way both USSR and USA manage to keep their arms and ammunition factories running in full swing. In 1988, USA asked the both countries to give oil-drilling rights to US companies as Iran and Iraq had virtually no funds available to do so. Unfortunately, when the US companies reached his disputed border area, and began drilling it , they found that it had minimum oil reserves. Thereafter, USA indulged in face saving exercise by publishing an apology in the same Washington Post newspaper that NASA had made an error while clicking the photograph of the disputed region. Therefore *Basra Streets* is a potent post-modern fiction of petro fiction category which exposes the pseudo-policeman role of developed countries like U.S.A who try to establish their sway on the lesser developed oil rich countries of Middle-East like Iraq.

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Interpreting Duality of the Self and the Other in Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*

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Sartre's phenomenological ontology highlights the idea that consciousness always exists in a social context which is populated and co-inhabited by other consciousnesses. Accordingly, understanding consciousness and its mode of being necessitates an investigation of its relationship with other consciousnesses. It forms the ground for Sartre's philosophical assessment of our relations with others with special reference to conceptualizing the Other in terms of its absolute difference and sincere alterity. In his analysis of the important dimensions of man's being, Sartre postulates three main constituents of 'being' viz. being-in-itself, being-for-itself and being-for-others.

In the Sartrean conceptualization, this notion of being-in-itself relates to objects/entities other than humans. Sartre goes on to contend that being-in-itself is also free from the dialectics of activity/passivity or affirmation/negation. It is huge, firm yet motionless, and is nothing more than what it is. Therefore, it enjoys an exclusive status of 'being' and thus it has nothing to do with other beings. At the same time, it is fundamentally contingent as well. It emits a sense of absurdity in terms of lacking a fundamental ground for the existence of its being. Further, Sartre holds that consciousness is always the consciousness of something. It means that consciousness relates to the being-in-itself (the objects in the world) in a certain manner. Interestingly, consciousness interprets the being-in-itself in its own way. Not only this, Sartre feels that the subject is ontologically immersed into the things of the world. Significantly if the things of the world are *present* to the realm of consciousness, it cannot be conceived as passive, rigid and motionless being-in-itself. It is in this sense that Sartre deepens his stance and holds that, consciousness cannot be¯what it is¯unless it is allied to a being, which is separate and independent of it. As a corollary, this being is separate and independent since it does not require consciousness as a component of its ontological existence. Contrariwise, consciousness is ontologically dependent upon

the being-in-itself. As a consequence, Sartre formulates his key phenomenological position by confirming that consciousness is always a consciousness of something, for example, a car or a laptop. In other words consciousness, a characteristic element of man's being, connotes a separation from being as well leading to the embodiment of nothingness into the world. This is the typical Sartrean conceptualization of man as a being-for-itself. However, it is worth extrapolating that without being the nihilation of the in-itself, there can be no for-itself as well. The third dimension of being is called the being-for-others, which isn't reducible to being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Cox supports the stance: "Every person is a being-for-itself, but according to Sartre this is not all they are. There is another aspect of every person's being that is not for-itself but for-others" (23). It becomes relevant in the context of human-human encounter or intersectionality. Macquire observes: "Even in the most fundamental ways of being, the human existent spills over, so to speak; he transcends the bounds of an individual existence and is intelligible only within a broader framework that we designate as being-[for]-others" (106).

Now, there is a need to elucidate how do we understand others? It is necessitated to explicate the finer nuances of the bridge which binds a consciousness to other consciousnesses. According to Sartre, 'being' is the formative ground for understanding our relationship to others. Therefore, we need to consider ontology since it deals with the revelation of being. Sartre says, "…the Other is an indispensable mediator between myself and me… .I recognize I am as the Other sees me…nobody can be vulgar all alone" (222). He contends that man makes himself what he wants to be vis-à-vis his existential situations privileging the presence of the Other. Moving on, Sartre further holds that our relations to other people represent an essence of man. Accordingly, 'I am' generates a meaning in the presence of the Other only. Importantly, while experiencing others, we also experience the subjectivity of the Other. The realization that the Other, we encounter, is a subject posits a potential threat to our own subjectivity by raising the possibility that we may become an object to the subjectivity of the other consciousness. Seen thus, one experiences oneself as being subjected to the objectification by another subject since "...the Other constitutes me in a new type of being [by making me] his object… .In it I recognize that, as the object of the Other, I am not only for the Other, that is, that I actually am just as the Other sees me" (Theunisson 222). Levy substantiates, "…all human relations can be resolved into this sinister dialectic of looking-at and being looked-at, of objectifying and being objectified in turn" (39). It is a revelation of our (potential) *conflict-ridden relationship* with the Other(s). Sartre opines: "Everything that goes for me, goes for the Other. While I try to enslave the Other, he tries

to enslave me….Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others" (Sartre 364). The fact that others can objectify me compels me to perceive others as objects and by doing so I deny them their subjectivity. It also highlights our wish pattern whereby it is desired that the Other should support/ back our own self-conceptions. However, such wish-patterns may lead to conflicts. It is in this sense that in Sartre play *No Exit,* we encounter the polemical outburst that other people are hell. There is no ultimate solution to this situation. Such conflict-ridden relationships with others are also part of our condition¯a fact which we need to understand existentially.

The preceding discussion highlights that people experience the duality of relating to the Other in different ways, always seeking an equanimity of mutual reciprocity and constitutive otherness with the Other coupled with an ongoing and oscillating master-slave dialectic. It is important to point it out here¯a bit hurriedly though¯that Sartre in his later work *Notebooks for an Ethics* notes that it is possible for the consciousness to have an authentic way relating to the Other wherein both consciousnesses are subjects. He calls this a 'we-relation'. Contextualizing the novel being assessed, the scope of the critique relates more to the Sartrean framework of the being-for-others with reference to his seminal work, *Being and Nothingness*. In the context of Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer,* the Sartrean framework of the self and the Other holds compelling implications especially in relation to understanding the anguished tale of human relationships representing the conflictual, dichotomous, ambivalent and dialectical dynamics of the self and the Other. The critique attempts to highlight that the self-destructive orientations, rebellion and loss of self on the part of Sita can be elucidated by evaluating the duality of their being vis-à-vis the dialectics of the self and the Other. In this sense, Desai's novel reveals an intense struggle of an individual to survive the existential calamities, viz. alienation, anxiety, inauthenticity, bad faith etc. and thus mirror the duality of human condition.

II

Where Shall We Go This Summer? is one of the most widely acclaimed and diversely interpreted of Desai's works. However, it is pertinent to note here that in the substantial body of the critical interpretations of the novels, the duality of human relationships is yet to be interpreted vis-a-vis the Sartrean framework of the self and the Other. That's what the present critique aims to undertake.

Where Shall We Go This Summer? deals with the theme of existential duality vis-à-vis the dialectics of the self and the Other. Chronologically, it is the fourth novel of Desai. However, it intensely resonates with the echoes of *Cry, the Peacock* in terms of its similarity with the thematic

concern(s)—yet it skillfully broadens the scope of the existential conflict caused by the duality of the self and the Other. Singhal opines that the novel culminates on a positive note and, "…thus novel marks a change in the thematic progression from negative to positive, from alienation to accommodation" (79). The novel regresses into this duality (of the self and the Other) with special reference to Sita's ambivalent relationship with the Other(s), i.e., Raman, Maneka and the father. The conflictual relationships with the Other form the existential trajectory of the novel. It is important to highlight here that the gamut of Sita's being-for-others is far wider than that of Maya (*Cry, the Peacock*) and signifies certain fundamental differences as well. Unlike Maya, Sita is a mother of four children and is expecting a fifth one also. Unlike Maya, she has a detached father, brother (Jivan) and sister (Rekha) corroborating her existential morbidity and hollowness. She keeps sulking at the gnawing sense of absurdity of her existential 'I-It' relations with the Other(s).

It is worth reiterating that each consciousness faces the world alone, and must create itself through its own choices by responding to the things around it, whether these are passive, natural objects or other consciousnesses. In the look of the Other, a consciousness recognizes a point of view which is different from its own and it is unattainable because it is a mark of its own incompleteness. At the same time, the look of the Other threatens to destroy it by turning it into an object. In response, the consciousness can choose to retaliate—to objectify the Other. But in doing so it destroys an external view of itself and must resign itself to the incompleteness of its self-understanding. The consciousness is therefore entrapped: it can dominate the Other, or live with the threat it poses. It is in this context that the present critique explores the duality of the self and the Other unraveling the existential aspects of one's relationship(s) with the Other.

The novel mirrors the marital disharmony between Raman and Sita. Consequent upon a total lack of understanding and the deep existential chasm; there exists no harmony between the husband and wife. Resultantly, Sita loses interest in the normal activities of life; feels bored and alienated in spite of living in a grand city of modern India, i.e., Bombay. Her plight is "…reminiscent of that of Antoine Roquentin's in Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea*" (Naikar 77). Being an introvert, she is disgusted with the hustle and bustle of Bombay and feels the world being unsympathetic towards her. Sita "…feels ignored and unwanted. It is a crucial period when one feels a dilemma of existence" (Ram 64). This protagonist of the novel is an extremely sensitive and introvert woman whereas her husband Raman, like Gautama, is a practical, intellectual and rational man. In such circumstances, the birth of conflict between the two is a natural

phenomenon. Raman and Sita¯being the creatures of totally different temperaments¯are entrenched in the dynamics of a persistent, confrontational relationship. They are not ready to yield to the wishes of one another. This signifies the play of the dialectics of the Other-as-subject and Other-as-object in the novel. Another noted critic Prasad points outs that this novel deals with "…a recurrent favourite existentialist theme of husband-wife alienation and in-communication" (54) and thus substantiates the ongoing critique of the novel. Pitching the argument in this context, the novel presents the poignant tale of Sita's existential anguish and ensuing attempts for authentic being-for-others which Ram interprets as "…an irresistible yearning for a purposeful life" (75). However, she fails to establish this authentic being-for-others. Seen thus, the absurdity of existence overpowers her being and she feels choked as none could be a savior. She fails to interpret the absurd nature of existence. Camus defines absurd as: "This world is not itself reasonable that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart" (26) and he further contends:

> Man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him the longing for reason and happiness. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world [the Other]. This must not be forgotten because the whole consequence of life can depend upon it. The irrational, the human nostalgia, and the absurd, that is born of their encounter. (31-32)

It is important to point out that Sita is special, in the sense that the Camusian irrational governs her and hence she finds it almost impossible to authentically relate to the Other. Thus, she finds one of the most intimate relationships to be hostile. There happens to be an enormous fissure between what she desires for in life and what she actually finds. The relational gulf adds fuel to her lacerated existence. The absence of a desired presence makes her feel utterly alone and she is left in a dualistic state of mind foregrounding the repression of her innermost feelings/ yearnings. Extending it further, it would not be wrong to say that the metaphysics of absence create a cyclic phenomenon wherein the metaphysics of presence seem to be over-shadowed. In this context, Sita is another outsider and thus significantly resembles Meursault of *The Outsider*.

Further, it is worth highlighting that the presence of the irrational is indubitably thicker in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* than in *Cry, the Peacock,* and the same is true in terms of Sita's altered defiance to the Other(s). Notably, the novel reinforces the conflictual dimensions of

human relationships on account of a fatal recognition of the subjectivity of the Other. However, this novel suggests that revolt is an alternative to the Other-as-subject for the purpose of living the kind of life one desires. And here lies the tragedy of the protagonist, since an all-inclusive being-for-itself is not possible. The being flows towards others as its pre-requisite structural ontological necessity. Consequently, such kind of being-for-itself is not possible and hence it is an illusion. One's self-conception does not depend solely on an individual because others can always objectify the individual with their conflicting perspectives on him/her, resulting in the subject/object duality. Accordingly, Sita is unable to relate herself either with the mainland (Bombay) or the island (Manori)¯the representative locales of the dualistic structure of the novel. The mainland and the island symbolize conflictual dimensions for Sita. Importantly the two spaces, being distant drums, sound sweeter to her at a distance. However, at the interface closer proximity, she experiences a strong repulsion over their grotesquerie. The novelist skillfully presents the conflict in their relationship by making the references to the phenomenal differences in the social milieu of the mainland and the island. The city life adapts to the new changes at social and industrial levels in comparison to the slow adaptation by the rural society at the island. Sita visualizes the island as a place of magic only to discover later that it has shadows too. The city of Bombay, where Raman wants to live, presents a rational way of living whereas the island¯Sita's fantasy realm¯stands for a sort of primitivism. Another critic Rani observers: "Being unable to accept the cruelty and violence of the world around, she withdrew to magic Island of Manori" (32). However as Sita experiences the difficulties of living on the edge(s), the realization engulfs her with the passage of time. Hence, at the end of the novel she leaves the island "…with relief, worn out by the dreams of Manori, longing for the same, the routine ridden mainland as for a rest in a sanatorium" (Desai100).

The very beginning of the novel mirrors the conflict-thematicity between Raman and Sita. The text presents "…her [Sita's] overwrought mental condition as the cumulative outcome of a stressful marriage" (Chakravarty 86). Interestingly, both of them come from a different stratum of society thereby signifying dissimilar social, financial and existential perspectives in the world. Desai comments about their married life, "...all through their married life they had preferred to avoid confrontation. All that they had done, he [Raman] now saw, was to pile on the fury till now when it exploded" (Desai 33). Childhood impressions and the socio-cultural environment in which human beings grow-up, inflate the existential self-conception of an individual followed by a relentless objection to the intrusion of new ideas. Viewed in this context, Sita is completely fed up

with her married life at the mainland and also with the fact of her fifth pregnancy. Consider the following textual quote highlighting the conflict dimension between Raman and Sita:

> Her husband was puzzled, therefore, when the fifth time she told him she was pregnant, she did so with a quite paranoiac show of *rage, fear, and revolt*. He *stared* at her with a distaste that told her it did not become her¯a woman now in her forties, greying, aging, to behave with such a total lack of control. Control was an accomplishment which had slipped out of her hold, without his noticing it, and so she wept and flung herself…. 'I'm [Sita] not pleased, I'm frightened'…'It's not easier. It's harder¯harder. It's unbearable. (Desai 29, emphasis added)

Importantly, the above textual quote from part one of the novel, lays bare the dichotomous and conflictual dimensions between Sita (the self) and Raman (the Other). The fifth child deepens the existential gulf and ripens the latent conflict in the narrative. It is important to stress that what is easy for Raman, is unbearable for Sita. In this context, Sita refuses to be an object that the Other can appropriate and use as an instrument. Secondly, she is able to realize Raman taking a perspective on the unborn child and thus it induces an 'internal haemorrhage' in her perspective towards the fifth pregnancy. Thirdly, she experiences the returning *look* of Raman who is judging her at the moment and thus feels her own objectness signifying her inauthentic being-for-others. Raman¯a true representative of the Heideggerian One[1] who always exhibits the technological[2] attitude¯feels that it is a temporal emotion in Sita and would soon fade out. He feels that she, "…would fill again into that comfortable frame of large, placid joy, of glazed satisfaction, of totally inturned pride and regard, as she did usually" (Desai 29) and tells her, "…not much to go now, Sita, it'll soon be over" (Desai 30). On the other hand, Sita experiences herself as being the 'Other-as-object' by such a detached attitude of her husband who fails miserably to measure her anguish even slightly. It results in the existential storm in their relationship. Resultantly, Sita opts to challenge the four walls of the house, including the mainland (the doctor, the hospital and the telephone), with a radical intent to transcend her facticity and the returning look of Raman (the Other)¯though in bad faith. She declares, "…I don't want to have the baby" (Desai 30) and thus shocks Raman. Desai tells us that "…they stared, uncomprehendingly, at each other, more divided than they had been on that day¯she fighting, the other laughing" (Desai31). Nonetheless, Raman fails to understand what Sita means by saying that she does not want to have the baby. Her declaration makes Raman to become angry and therefore he calls her mad. Raman feels astonished to hear that she is

not happy to give birth to another baby though she was always pleased about the earlier babies. This constitutes the basis of a conflict of ideas between Raman and Sita. On knowing Sita's decision not to deliver the baby, Raman deduces that she wants an abortion. He advises her against this because the pregnancy has advanced considerably. On a defiant note, she is thinking of something awkward. Astonishingly, she carries an irrational desire not to deliver the baby. She is not willing to bring her baby into a world where the creative impulse has no existence and there exists an overpowering desire to only destroy. She presents a sensibility which defies all the norms, knowing well that it is not a logical possibility as well. She wants the expected baby to remain in her womb. Such a wish-pattern manifests her search for peace in life. She asserts, "I mean I want to keep it¯I don't want it to be born" (Desai 32). In this regard for Rao, "Anita Desai dramatizes the conflict between two irreconcilable temperaments of the diametrically opposed attitude towards life" (51). Another important dimension of the stance relates to Sita revealing an intriguing sense of sensitivity for life. She displays an instinct to preserve life¯the life of her imagination. She feels that this universe is like a cycle of experience in which suffering and violence are inevitable and this also constitutes a reason for her desire to not deliver the baby. To complicate matters, the news of war in Vietnam, the Rhodesian Jail, the perfidy of Pakistan are other events which add fuel to Sita's combustible attitude towards the world. She feels:

> By giving birth to the child now so safely contained, would she be performing an act of creation or, by releasing it in a violent, pain-wracked blood-bath, would she only be destroying what was, at the moment, safely contained and perfect? More and more she lost all feminine, all maternal belief in the childbirth, all faith in it, and began to fear it as yet one more act of violence and murder in a world that had more of them in it than she could take. (Desai 56)

However, there is a reason to substantiate this point further especially in the context of the critique of the present chapter. Sita has been subjected to experience her objectness by the Other(s) and thus she fails to find authenticity in the hostile relationships. Consider Raman's take on this:

> He never hesitated¯everything was so clear to him, and simple: life must be continued, and all its business¯Menaka's admission to the medical college gained, wife led to hospital, new child safely brought forth, the children reared, the factory seen to, a salary earned, a salary spent. There was courage, she admitted to herself in *shame*, in getting on with such matters from which

> she herself squirmed away, dodged and ran. It took courage. That was why the children turned to him, sensing him to be *superior* in courage, in leadership. (Desai 138, emphasis added)

As a response, she cultivates an ambivalent attitude towards the unborn Other. Probably, she does not want the unborn Other to be part of the hostile world and therefore she desires—though in bad faith—to keep the baby in her womb only. Her body offers a sort of space where the returning look of the Other is not possible. Hence, she cherishes a fantasy for the purpose of maintaining her privileged subjective freedom signifying a different kind of defiance towards the Other(s) at the same time. It is her way of equaling Garcin's declaration, i.e., "Hell is other people". Secondly, it is also an act of regaining control of (her) self. And for this purpose, it is necessary that Sita must defy the Other and thus create the looking/looked at dichotomous duality. By way of such a stance, Sita opts for the second attitude towards others by being indifferent to Raman and her children. Sartre says:

> In this state of blindness I concurrently ignore the Other's absolute subjectivity as the foundation of my being-in-the-world and being-for-others. In a sense I am reassured, I am self-confident: that is, I am in no way conscious of the fact that the Other's Look can fix my potentialities and my Body. (381)

Sita displays the hatred paradigm towards Raman (the Other) whereby she wants to flee from the judgment of the Other, signifying her alienation and distantiation from Raman. However, speaking dialectically, it is bound to fail. Maya says, "What I am doing is trying to escape from the madness here, escape to a place where it might be possible to be sane again" (Desai 32). Now, she treasures a desire to go away from her husband. Gupta points out, "…the title of the novel, *Where Shall We Go This Summer*? is highly suggestive. The interrogative feature of the title is symbolic of the uncertain state of the heroine's mind, of her awareness, and of her indeterminate fate" (116). Her act of leaving her husband just because she does not want to give birth to a baby reveals her bad faith. This bad faith also inculcates the idea to escape from all responsibilities of her situatedness. However, her defiance comes as a reaction to the neatly arranged order of the Other(s) which clashes with her idea of her authentic existence. She considers Raman a living complex always holding an antithetical stance to her being-in-the-world and lacking the passion and feelings to understand her—the Other. He represents the typical conformity towards the Heideggerian One and is incapable of self-introspection and thus fails to understand the ethos of we-relationship.

What seems commonplace and ordinary to Raman is something extraordinary and unusual for Sita. The incident where crows attack a

wounded eagle that is, "Too young to fly" (Desai 38) is a major occurrence for her. She tries to scare away the crows with Karan's gun but does not succeed. It appears as if she sees her own plight in that of the eagle. On the other hand, her husband declares the death of the eagle as a triumph. Raman considers the crows victorious because they have killed a bigger creature. Sita considers that crows were selfish creatures that could not match the flight of the eagle and they ganged up to kill it. Sharma in her book *Symbolism in Anita Desai's Novels* states that "…the crows are the symbol of civilization, particularly of the city people" (82). Further, she finds "…civilization torn between the reality of cruelty and the illusion of compassion embodied respectively in the images of the crow and the eagle" (Sivaramkrishna 22). Hence, this incident shows the gulf that exists between the two. Elucidating the difference motif in the relationship of Raman and Sita, another critic Sharma in a book titled *Anita Desai* observes: "They accuse each other of madness because they look at reality from different perspectives" (98).

A noteworthy point for the declining husband-wife relationship is that Sita is highly individualized and, as such, refuses to compromise with the social norms. She does not want to say 'yes' any more. She is the person who would now see, judge and consider before saying no. Interestingly, he who "...refuses does not repent, should he be asked again. He would say no again yet that No¯crushes him for the rest of his life" (Desai 37). Sita exhibits different habits and conceptual thoughts which act as hindrances in her adjusting to new situations and persons. Rao observes that the cause of her unhappiness originates from "…her constitutional inability to accept the values and the attitudes of the [the others]" (51). Having failed to have an authentic relationship with the Other, she refuses to accept the harsh realities of life which most people, including her husband, submit to very easily. She equates her condition to that of a jellyfish "…washed up by the waves stranded on there the sandbar" (Desai 149). Not only this, she never adjusts according to the circumstances. When she used to live with her in-laws, she never tries to adjust to the family environment. The "…family members of her husband's house frighten and appall her" (Dash 31). At her in-laws, where people always talked of food, she considered its oddity because at the Island, "…nobody gave a moment's thought to food" (Desai 49). She finds their colourless and soulless existences as a provocation and threat to her own existence. So, Raman moves to a flat in Bombay but there too the people "…were acceptable to her" (Desai 49) and she "…took their singularity and complacence as well as the aggression and violence of others as affronts upon her own wing" (Desai 49-50). Dutt writes, "*Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is about two journeys; one undertaken to escape from immediate surroundings, another to move towards something

in the future created out of illusions" (67). The question "Are you waiting for someone?" (Desai 54) put to her by others suggests that she is sick with the kind of life she is leading and anxiously waits for the day that would replace such exigencies/ambiguities of existence. Further, the undercurrents of suspicion and doubt lie at the core of the Raman-Sita relationship. When they meet a man near the Ajanta caves, she likes/ praises the man whereas Raman exhibits his radically different perspective/ reservations thereto and says, "…he was a fool¯he did not know which side of the road to wait on" (Desai 52). Raman goes to the extent of suspecting Sita, and regards that her admiration for and interest in the hitchhiker was practically "…an act of infidelity" (Desai 33) adding to the existential woes of the protagonist. This incident conveys the rupture between the two, at the same time it indicates how Sita identifies herself with the aspect of irrationality which also marks her own quest for a "…life of primitive reality" (Desai 152). The incident speaks volumes about their opposed world-views that make them accuse each other of *madness*. Such madness inflicts verbal assaults and scratches the shallow existence of Sita.

Another reason for the brewing of disharmony between Sita and Raman is their conflicting perspectives on reality. She lives in the world of fantasy and miracles. For her, Manori is the real world and it is pitted against the world of Bombay where struggles and sufferings are the result of human apathy towards nature and real human deeds. She does not like the ways of her children because they appear to be indulging in acts of violence, such as the boys acting out film scenes from the films, her daughter, Menaka's tearing of all the drawings, or even the quarrels between the ayahs. She feels that to live in this world is like living in an uncivilized place full of noise and disorder. She does not like the manner in which her children play, nor does she like other human beings because for her, "...they are nothing¯nothing but appetite and sex and money matter and animals" (Desai 47). The average human beings do not attract her. Prasad writes, "She fails to adapt herself to society at large and boldly finds faults in dehumanizing norms and values that have a stronghold on its members and have relegated them to the state of animals" (56). On the contrary, Raman has a different perspective on reality. For him the mainland is the real world which provides all the modern facilities to all of them. There are schools and colleges for the children to study, hospitals and doctors for the new baby and the factory for one's professional earning. Raman's vision of life is contrastingly different to Sita's who feels depressed while encountering the new world as she "…had expected from duties and from responsibilities, from order and routine, from life of the city to the unlivable island" (Desai 139). Sita feels that her existence is futile in this world because she belongs to a world

which is entirely different from that of her life partner. Raman feels, "...life seemed complete, full, without her, there was no reason for her to exist" (Desai 84). The tediousness, disinterest and the growing tilt towards commercialization make her crave for the non-threatening life of the island. The dearth of compatibility with her husband is the prime reason for her to take this decision. Raman "…mocks at her, so you're running away¯like the bored runaway wife in a film" (Desai 33). Sita hates selfishness, greed, craving for money and other materialistic pleasures, and she questions the credibility of these things. Therefore, she strenuously strives to free herself from such materialistic chains. Since the Other represents an insensitive world, the conflict between Sita and her husband is consequent upon the dialectics of the self and the Other. This compels Sita to withdraw into her own protective shell and to choose a new world of her imagination. She experiences an existential void. However, she presents an instinct for authenticity. In this sense Sita appears to take a Neitzschean resolve, i.e. "…the secret of harvesting from existence the fruitfulness is¯to *live dangerously* (Nietzsche 228, emphasis original).

Hence Sita resolves to go to the Manori island¯the land of miracles. Notably, it is from this strange island, peopled with worshipping followers of her father, that Sita has imbibed an intense imagination and idealism. Unable to negotiate the duality of her existence, she feels that her anguish can be healed with magic. Consider the following textual extract in this regard:

> The island had been buried beneath her consciousness deliberately, for years. Its black magic, its subtle glamour had grown too huge, had engulfed her at a time when she was still very young and quite alone….She would turn, go back and find the island once more. (Desai 52)

Sita's second visit to the island manifests her insistent search for peace, tranquility and harmony. She yearns to rediscover the magic of Manori to protect the unborn baby according to her (delusional) wish-pattern. Sita is living a romantic dream. Interestingly, the façade of the island soon begins to reveal its hollowness and concavity. Desai writes, "The island on which they had arrived seemed flat, toneless, related to the muddy monsoon sea rather than to the sky and cloudscape" (19) and later the Manori village was "…an evil mass of overflowing drains, gaping thatched roofs and mud huts all battered and awry" (Desai 21). It is a place where darkness is all pervasive. Rao comments, "It's a story of illusions melting away in the cold light of the everyday and the commonplace" (57). The desire for glory and magic is occasioned with a perplexing fiasco. Further the look of Moses, Miriam and others leave a destabilizing and debilitating effect on Sita. They *look* at her with a sense

of unease and wonder if she was the mistress of the house at the island. Importantly she is compared to her fabled father and is thus signified as "…the unworthy offspring of the illustrious and well-remembered father" (Desai 25). Viewed in this perspective her escape to the island lays bare its emptiness and paves the way for her subsequent existential despair. In the register of existentialism, despair refers to the impending collapse of an imagined utopia. Sita also cherishes such utopian (dystopian) desire and, therefore she yearns to protect the unborn child in her womb forever. As discussed earlier, this is her reason to be at the magical island. However, such an illusion is existentially very delicate. It shapes Sita's ambivalent sensibility and signifies her hopelessness. The silent awareness of losing out the temporal coherence of being excavates her despair and highpoints the fragility of her existence.

When Sita reaches the island along with her children, the Other gets further solidified. Now she finds herself in conflict with the children, Karan and Menaka, who refuse to adjust to the primitive life of the island. They replace Raman and subject Sita to their look and thus corroborate her anguish. When city bred children express their surprises and discomfort over the absence of proper electricity, she tries to calmly satisfy them and says, "…you can see the sky lit-up' (Desai 25). It also explicates the idea that motherly instincts fail Sita. Since they inhabit dissimilar worldviews, her kids fail to share intimacy with her. As a result, they identify more with their father. Having failed to understand the real cause of her monotonous existence, her cold understanding of the Other(s) alienates her further. She experiences the duality of significance and insignificance. In such circumstances, she *chooses* to eulogize the bullock cart as a symbol of simple and rural life. Importantly, nature is used as a potent tool to present the motif of the existential duality in the novel. It also mirrors her ambivalent moods vis-à-vis the duality of her mental states. It is worth considering that in the beginning of the novel, nature at Manori is presented in terms of its harshness and severity *yet* it also offers solace to the alienated Sita. After being rejected by own children, she finds nature as the only friend on this remote island. She reflects: "She never felt alone, she felt surrounded by presences¯the presences of the island itself, of the sea around it and of the palm trees that spoke to each other, sometimes, even to her. They were so alive" (Desai 92). On the other hand, the urbanite nature is full of tensions and anxieties and induces Sita to perceive this world as an asylum of mad men. This apparent contradiction embodies her inner conflict. In spite of her well-nurtured defense mechanism, she fails to respond to the look of the children and "…every time she caught their eyes, the accusation in them, made her turn abruptly away, having no answers for them" (Desai 27). As a result, she relies on the world of smoke (cigarettes) as if it equals her existential

fog vis-à-vis the dialectics of the self and the Other. Coming to Manori is her step towards seeking solace from the dull life of the city. But her decision soon refracts its cracks as her children start keeping a distance from her. It is worth considering that the role of the children is quite important as they complicate the dialectical play of the self and the Other. It is in this sense that the children are counterpointed to Sita during her second sojourn to the island. Importantly, her desired recluse in the magical past is strongly opposed by the children. They hoist the flag of the *present* at the island and hence bruise Sita. The desired solace stands challenged by the Other. Sita designates the island as the land of wonder and magic, but contrariwise, it is perspectivized as the land of ill weather, sadness and melancholy by the children.

Menaka is a thorough foil to Sita and manifests a compelling challenge to her mother's swollen subjectivity. Being a flat tongued girl, she values staunch scientific temperament and thus she stands opposite to Sita¯an individual with artistic and creative inclinations though she is incapable of any artistic creation. Menaka's strong identification with the father expands Sita's anguish. It is in this sense that Sita experiences a deepened sense of anguish at the face of this murderous world. She feels that all are violent upon and treat her (as) Other-as-object only. She feels, "…the creative impulse had no chance against overpowering desire to destroy" (Desai 30). Later, when Sita and Menaka discuss about science and art, Sita says, "Science can't be satisfactory… . It leads you to dead-end. There are no dead-ends, no, in art. That is something spontaneous, Meneka, and alive, and creative … ." (Desai 108) but for Menaka, "…art is nonsense" (Desai 108). However, Menaka is the one who is able to see through Sita's delusional world and declares that "…there is no light" (Desai 23) there. It objectifies Sita's magical island. Importantly, "No one offended her [Sita] so much by violence as Menaka in her carelessness" (Desai 41). Notably, Menaka has grown out to be one of the most self-possessed of her children and she accepts of life naturally. She aspires to be a doctor and does not experience any pain at the sight of dissection of a mouse. Rather she displays "…intense and dispassionate curiosity that sickened and inflamed her mother" (Desai 101). Sita is unable to make sense of Menaka as she cultivates a calm scientific attitude towards her mother. Menaka's "…disapproval" (Desai 101) distresses her acutely. In addition to this, Menaka hates Sita's proclivity for drama and feels most disgusted and hurt by it. Menaka is the one who writes a letter to her father and requests him to take them (the children) away from the world of her mother and thus she substantiates their distantiation from her mother.

Menaka's intense hatred paradigm towards her mother makes Sita realize her own objectness by the returning look of the Other. Arguably,

Sita's lacerated existence is devoid of the love of her mother (being a motherless daughter herself) and daughter as well. Viewed in this context, she is a solitary existent who is struggling against the ferocious assaults of existence. Bande remarks: "To the world she appears crazy. Her attitude, her outburst of anger, her appearance… ." (114). The strained husband-wife relationship shows its visible mark on the minds of the children who exhibit a conspicuous impression in their actions and attitude towards their mother. Karan does not express any interest in life on the island and does not enjoy playing there. While sailing across the sea, he is scared of it. On a condensing note, Sita's futile attempts to impose her interests on the children are occasioned with their incessant disapprovals.

Now it is vital to assess Sita's weird childhood as well as her relationship with the father at *Jeevan Ashram*¯"…*the Home of the Soul*" (Desai 57emphasis added)¯so as to decode the finer nuances of the duality of the self and the Other in the novel. Particularly, Sita's father is far different from Maya's father. This is a relationship which lacks love and implies an exhaustive neglect of Sita. The father, being "…a political celebrity" (Raizada 41), has no time for the children. He represents a larger than life public figure eulogized by the public at large. Bande supports the stance: "He [the father] is immersed in his self-glorification and he regards Jivan and Sita just as he considers his sycophant *chelas* and devotees" (107, original emphasis). Seen thus, there exists a massive abyss between Sita and her father.

In the very first chapter of the novel Sita remembers her childhood at Manori being marked with an atmosphere of neglect, hypocrisy and partiality. For having changed the place into a miraculous island, the father is considered to be an extraordinary figure here. In this context, even Sita perceives "…the island as a piece of magic…[though] it took her some time to notice that this magic, too, cast shadows" (Desai 59). He impresses the rustic people by performing miraculous deeds for them. He sits in the midst of the inhabitants and meditates with closed eyes while festival atmosphere and sounds around grow louder in the praise of this living legend. The inhabitants perceive him as a saint and the island belongs to him. He is the one who decides not to have tubewell at the island and prefers to dig a well for water which later turns out to be a symbol of sweet and magical water for the people on the island. It is believed that this water contains magical powers and can cure "…boils" (Desai 64). The father, better known as Babaji by virtue of his magical powers, can disinfect the bite of the scorpion also. Phoolmaya gets a son after ten long years of her marriage. The ladies on the island hold a strong belief that the father "…knows magic" (Desai 72). Accordingly, the father is treated as living legend with some superhuman prowess by the islanders. Sita stands as a witness to all such magical aura of her father and maintains

strong curiosity for the same. Interestingly the distanced father evokes a strange curiosity in Sita and, she yearns to explore the clandestine aspects of his magical world. She cherishes a sort of liking for the magical realm of the father. Notably, her exploration relates to understand the Other (the father) as he represents another pole of her existence. Such a curiosity compels Sita to keep a constant look at the Other (the father). However, the magical realm of the father soon extends repulsion to Sita. As she comes to know that the father mixes powder to cure people's tumour and boils, she realizes that the father does not have any superhuman powers. She realizes that the father adopts such tactics so as to sustain his larger than life role at the island. In addition, her father's obstinacy for maintaining a primitive life also suggests his tactical strategy for living like a legend amongst the village folks at the island. It is in this sense that he prefers a well over a tubewell.

Sita is also suspicious of an illicit relationship between her father and elder sister Rekha as she "…caught an exchange of that heavy lidded *look* between father and daughter, or his arm in its fine white sleeve lie fondling across her round shoulders" (Desai 79 emphasis added). Her father's "…unusual tenderness towards [Rekha] confuses her with strong internal questions" (Meitei 33). It shocks Sita when she comes to know that Rekha is not her real sister. It drops on her "…skin like an acid" (Desai 79). Sita is also suspicious of another illicit relationship between her father and Phoolmaya who gets a son after ten years of marriage. Her father's mysteriousness is further strengthened by the narrative clue that Sita's mother did not die but ran away to Benaras which implies the chord of a strained relationship between the father and the mother. Importantly we never "…learn Sita's mother's assessment of her husband. It is one of the potentially disruptive and destructive silences in the novel" (Bhatnagar 109). Seen thus, Sita is a discarded, unwanted and worthless daughter living in a hostile world which emits absurdity and anguish. However she is not a hypocrite and, hence withdrawal/alienation is the only possibility. The Other intimidates and thus treats her as being-in-itself only. None is trying to reach out to her in an authentic manner. The relations lack mutual reciprocity and constitutive otherness and add to the oscillation of master-slave dialectic leading to the conflictual, dichotomous dynamics of the self and the Other in the novel. Therefore after the death of the father, the family disintegrates in spur of a moment. Rekha does not care to shed tears on the demise of the father and decodes it as "…a moment of release from the old man's love" (Desai 99). Sita's brother Jivan too disappears after a couple of days from the island leaving Sita to hold on to her discolored existence till Raman comes to the island to take her back to mainland (Bombay)¯signifying a new hope for the wretched Sita. Such incidents cause a heavy and visible damage to Sita's

innocent mind and she feels like "…an island on the island" (Ram 74). The preceding discussion reveals that Sita's childhood and her relationships with her father, Rekha and Jivan are devoid of authenticity and thus add to her existential aberration vis-à-vis her being-for-others.

The foregone discussion throws ample light on Sita's saying 'No' to the Other and thus foregrounds her defiance thereto. It is a 'No' to the meaningless and hollow relationship with the Other. The Other does not appear to transcend its subject position so as to alleviate the in-betweenness existing between the self and the Other. However Sita displays a quality distinct from Maya in terms of transcending her facticity and dialectically moving closer to the Other and thus she manifests a yearning for establishing 'We-relationship'/'I-Thou' relationship towards the end of the novel. Expanding the critique to wider denominations, it is important to point out here that Sartre in his later work *Notebooks for an Ethics* holds that it is possible for a consciousness to experience a meaningful relation with the Other whereby both of the participants can remain subjects. He labels this sort of relationship as authentic social relation or 'we-relation'. Sartre opines that for creating such authentic we-relation, the subjects need to undergo the process of conversion[3] whereby each consciousness alters its reflective understanding towards the Other leading to understand that: 1) the Other is also free subject with an independent and non-threatening being; and 2) it is through the objectification of the Other's look that one becomes aware of the objective facticity and a disclosure of its own being is made possible. Seen thus, Sita confirms that, "…self is not a constant, stable entity. On the contrary, it is something one becomes, one constructs" (Nehamas 7). Sartre in his key essay "Existentialism is a Humanism" also maintains a similar stance: "There is no human nature, because there is no God to have a concept of it. Man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills… . Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself" (349). Sita endorses to such a converted consciousness towards the end of the novel. The third part of the novel aptly contains the metaphor of monsoon and thus it makes a strong suggestion of Sita's converted consciousness. It grants her an existential autonomy to redefine her defiance against the Other.

Further, the duality of yes and no runs parallel to the dichotomy of the self and the Other. Towards the end of the novel, Sita tells Raman that she did not desert them and states: "No, no¯desertion, that's cowardly. I wasn't doing anything cowardly…I was saying 'No' but positively, *positively* saying No" (Desai 135 emphasis original). Such positivity on Sita's part connotes an invocation to the Other to look at her in the framework of the we-relationship. It allows her an existential space to live

in an authentic manner. This marks the quiet note with which the novel ends highlighting a 'perception of maturity' achieved through the ordeal of self-tormenting tendencies. Bande notes: "Sita shifts from compliance to rebellion and then to withdrawal, again coming back to compliance" (106). And here, the waiting metaphor needs a bit of discussion. As a matter of fact, 'wait' is a vibrant metaphor in the novel. The metaphor highlights the possibility for 'I-Thou' relationship with the Other and this is the driving force behind the dialectical existential movement of Sita in the novel. Sita's assertion for positivity coincides with her waiting to see the clear light of the day in the context of her interpersonal relations. Towards the end of the novel, she starts interpreting the island differently. Consider the following textual extract:

> Sita felt a spasm of fear at her bravado, her wild words, her impulsive actions that had flung [her] alone onto this island surrounded by wild seas. It was no place in which to give birth. There was no magic here – *the magic was gone*. (Desai 104 emphasis added)

Hence she highlights dynamism for constructiveness seeking self-direction and authenticity of her being-for-others. And now, "The thought of [Raman's] adult, quiet and critical company gave her a sharp sense of pleasure" (Desai 118) and later when Raman reaches the island, she feels, "…comfort, security [realizing that] it was the second time he had come to fetch her from the island [and now] nodded and waited for him to say more" (Desai 121-121). Now Sita displays an existential transcendence aimed at cultivating we-relationship with the Other. She aims at what Gadamer calls 'fusion of horizons'. Gadamer holds that understanding is a matter of negotiation between oneself and the Other in the hermeneutical dialogue. Such understanding can be seen as a matter of coming to an 'agreement' about the crux of the matter. Such mutual agreement establishes a shared 'horizon'. Hence, Gadamer considers this understanding to be a process of the 'fusion of horizons'. In view of such phenomenological expansion of Sita's being, she starts comprehending Raman's suffering during the weeks she has been away including his worry and anxiety about her, the unborn children, Menaka and Karan living alone amidst the wilderness of the island. She realizes that she has escaped from her duties and responsibilities. Understanding from this perspective, Sita's duality appears to embrace the point of an existential negotiation/synthesis. Human beings are dynamic entities. They keep on changing according to maturity of perception by assimilating the varied existential undercurrents. Sita's return from the island is due to the fact that she begins to realize the difficulties the Other(s) must be facing on account of her withdrawal. Sita feels her stay the island as "…she had

actually been playing the part here of an actress in a theatrical performance and was now to return to a life of retirement off-stage" (Desai 153). Sita is able to make sense of the irrational/absurdity of life and feels, "…life has no periods, no stretches. It simply swirled around, muddling and confusing, leading nowhere" (Desai 155). It is important to note that Sita's retreat to the mainland is skillfully left open-ended by the novelist. Hence, it may be interpreted as a dialectical resolution of Sita's existential woes. Her return "…to the mainland signifies her return to life" (Anand 100). However, after return to Bombay, the text speaks nothing about her later life.

The analysis of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* lays bare the dialectical manifestation of the dynamics of the self and the Other. Notably, the present critique establishes that the manifestation of such existential dualism of Sita. Whereas Maya fails to negotiate the duality of the self and the Other, Sita embraces¯silently though¯the notion of existential possibilities and thus negotiates the contradictory pulls of her existence by preferring mainland over the island towards the end of the novel. Notably, Sita lives similar pangs of duality in the major part of the narrative. However, she is able to negotiate such dualistic/existential cacophony by co-opting the Sartrean converted consciousness so as to cultivate the 'we-relationship' with Raman (the Other). Importantly, conversion means a "…rejection of alienation" (Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics* 470). Such a decision grants her existential autonomy to synthesize the dualistic pattern of her existence and paves the way for an "…authentic way of being which transcends the dialectic of bad faith" (Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics* 473). On a condensing note, the Sartrean framework of being-for-itself, being-for-others and we-relationship adds a new dimension to the evaluated novel and hence it makes a value addition in the existing corpus of critical studies on Anita Desai.

(Footnotes)

1 This Heideggerian term refers to accepted social attitude towards various things of the everyday world to which a common individual approximates to. It's the embodiment of an individual's world. The One performs a *normative function* and creates an environment in which an individual can and must act. For example, the One allows being a police officer but does not accept witchcraft as a profession.

2 The term technology, in Heideggerian context, denotes treating everything having no value independent from the value one gives to it. Everything is treated as a *stock* under this attitude.

3 Conversion, for Sartre, refers to a new relation with myself and others, namely, a relation of solidarity; in relinquishing my desire to appropriate myself or others, I 'will' a new relation of solidarity in myself, or 'being with', that will solicit a new relation with others as I seek to promote rather than limit their freedom.

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