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A Green Reading of Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

SAMEERA K. I.

Introduction

Nature and literature goes hand in hand. The world of literature throngs with works dealing with beauty and power of nature. However, the concern for ecology and the threat that the continuous misuse of our environment poses on humanity has only recently caught the attention of the writers. This sense of concern has given rise to a new branch of literary theory, namely ecocriticism. The word ecocriticism first appeared in William Ruekert's essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in 1978. Yet it remained inactive in critical vocabulary. Literary criticism examines the relations between writers, texts and the world. The world is synonymous with society. Ecocriticism expands the idea of the world to include the entire ecosphere. Ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary criticism.

Simply defined, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of

modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies.

Despite the broad scope of inquiry and disparate levels of sophistication, all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artefacts: language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman.

The Hungry Tide is a novel of adventure and romance, set in the exotic Sundarbans, the archipelago in the Bengal Bay, at the mouth of the Ganges, partially belonging to India and partially to Bangladesh, where the fresh river water mixes with the salt water from the ocean. The tides make the Sundarbans a difficult place to live for humans, but at the same time, a unique habitat for fauna and flora. The mangrove swamps are dominant, and they provide the shelter for many species of animals, which are specific to the region or very rare in other areas. The isolated inhabitants live in fear of drowning tides and man-eating tigers.

Human and Natural Environment: An Interaction

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is set in the Sundarbans (the lower region of the Ganges delta, which extends over 250 km from the Hugli River in West Bengal, India, to the banks of the Meghna River in Bangladesh). It is a very contemporary story of adventure and unlikely love, identity and history, set in

one of the most fascinating regions on the earth. Off the easternmost coast of India, in the Bay of Bengal, lies the immense labyrinth of tiny islands known as the Sundarbans. For settlers here, life is extremely precarious. Attacks by deadly tigers are common. Unrest and eviction are constant threats. Without warning, at any time, tidal floods rise and surge over the land, leaving devastation in their wake.

Amitav Ghosh, in *The Hungry Tide*, constructs nature by using interweaving legends, experience, myths and history to reveal human interaction with the non-human world. The work is purely of both natural and human environment. The Tide country that is Sundarbans to which the whole of the work is devoted is not only a far-flung land of intimidating physical environment but also a place of dealings among an assortment of communities—ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural etc. These are islands where inhabitants live in fear of drowning tides and man-eating animals.

It is an environmentally oriented book getting its physical environment set to suggest that human history is caught up in natural history. It also presents the pen picture of wildlife versus human suffering. The novel explores the plight of displaced people, the struggle for land and survival in an endangered ecosystem. While drawing our attention to an episode from Indian history such as Morichjhapi incident, 1979, Ghosh discovers simultaneously two provinces—an endangered ecosystem where men live and fight with animals and tides; and a region in human heart.

The inhabitants of the islands treat nature both as a bountiful mother and as a hostile force. They consider storms and tigers as the forms in which nature expresses

its hostility towards human beings. Piya, the cetologist from America is averse to the inhabitants avenging the cruelty of these forces. Her strong reaction to the incident when a trapped tiger is being tortured by people from an island who had earlier lost many men and livestock to the beast shows Piya, the environmentalist at her forceful best. But the inhabitants prevail and even the author seems to sympathize with them. The gentler aspects of nature are represented by the river dolphins which Kusum names for her son as 'God's Messengers'. A change in the dolphin's behaviour and its appearance in and out of the water indicates even the slightest change in river waters or big threats like cyclones.

The protagonist Kanai, a professional interpreter and translator, reveals the history behind the nomenclature of the Sundarbans through his uncle's explicative notes. Even the mythological allusion as to the origin of the watery labyrinth bears the picture of an unruly and untamed aquatic habitat.

Nature stands as a representative in erasing all divisions and effects of generations, which is a preoccupation in almost all of Ghosh's works. Nirmal tells Kanai about S. Daniel's vision and why he chose the particular part of Bengal: "The speciality of the mangrove is that they do not merely recolonize land; they erase time. Every generation creates its own population of ghosts".

Fokir in the novel is a forest guide who accompanies hunters and woodcutters on their expedition to the forest. The hunters and woodcutters are so superstitious that they will not venture into the forest unaccompanied by a fakir. 'Fakir' is the anglicized form of 'Fokir', the

forest guide. Fokir guides Piya and Kanai through the waterways. He loses his life in the process of steering the outsiders safely through the forests. He fits the archetype of the hapless and illiterate native, exposed to man-eating tigers, sharks, crocodiles and snakes inhabiting the tide country and also to bribe taking officials of the state who are a constant threat to his survival. Ghosh empowers him in his familiarity with the tide country, and its creatures and the legacy of centuries old oral traditions he inherits. Despite the technological advancements and educational background the outsiders depend on a fakir to navigate the waters. Ghosh portrays fakir as the epitome of an ecological pioneer.

Balancing Technology and Nature

In many of the current discourses on both economic development and environmental conservation, technology and nature are viewed in diametric opposition. Humanity has used technology throughout its existence, beginning with the simplest stone tools of the Paleolithic. In Ursula Le Guin's essay "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction," the protagonist is a nurturing prehistoric mother who seeks a sling to carry her infant and a bag for collecting oats, and the author herself espouses the carrier bag as a literary construct (150). Containers and carriers are all forms of technology, simple as they might be. If technology has a place in Le Guin's feminine, nurturing, earth-centric life, then somewhere there must exist a point where humanity can place its fulcrum to balance technology on one side and nature on the other. The seaside community described in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* offers a case study in balancing technology and nature.

Technology, in the form of weapons, tools, boats, houses and protective earthworks, is crucial for human survival. Yet the technology must fit the landscape, or else conflicts arise. Rajender Kaur reminds us that postcolonial nations like India have had extreme difficulty in establishing equilibrium between their environments and new economic development (133). In the Sundarbans, the consequences of imbalance are drastic. Time and again the Tide Country dictates which of humanity's creations it will tolerate, and which it will obliterate.

While the story of Port Canning illustrates nature's displeasure with imbalanced technology, another story within *The Hungry Tide* illustrates some of the villagers' displeasure with lives entrenched too deeply in technology. As a girl, Kusum grew up in the Tide Country, but when her mother is sold into prostitution, Kusum goes to the mining centre of Dhanbad in search of her. In Dhanbad, Kusum meets Rajen, who, like her, came from the Tide Country. Despite being crippled, Rajen cares for Kusum and the two eventually marry. Rajen sells food in the railway station and aboard the trains, and lives in a shack right beside the railway line. Almost nothing about Rajen's and Kusum's new environment is natural; they are surrounded by technology and dream of returning to their homeland by the sea.

Eventually, technology claims Rajen's life. While running to get money from an unpaid customer, he stumbles and falls under the wheels of a moving train. Not long afterwards, Kusum and their young son migrate back to the Tide Country.

While Ghosh is quick to warn his readers of the danger and folly of technology that is not balanced with nature, he does not advocate a lifestyle completely devoid of technology. Rather, Ghosh suggests that the ideal way of living strikes a balance between the two, although that balance often lies closer to nature than the present governments of India and the West seem to think. While India has rejected its colonial history, it unfortunately did not learn from the British's failed attempt at developing Port Canning. Kaur writes that the Indian leaders

unreflexively embraced models of economic development that marginalized the local and subaltern in favour of the metropolitan, a top down perspective on development that was patronizing at best and ruthlessly exploitative at worst. (133)

From both Ghosh's and Kaur's perspectives, the fisherfolk of the Sundarbans offer a far better ideal.

Boats are present throughout *The Hungry Tide*, and while every boat is some form of technology, the protagonists' reactions to the various levels of technology employed provide another insight to Ghosh's idea of balance. On one end of the spectrum, the diesel-powered boats are mockingly called bhot-bhotis for the chugging sounds that make. Piya longs to escape her government-hired bhot-bhoti for the far simpler, oar-powered fishing boat of Fokir, a local village. The locals tolerate bhot-bhotis to a limited degree; the diesel boats are useful as ferries for carrying large numbers of people and goods. Piya later acquiesces to using a locally hired bhot-bhoti for her research on river dolphins, but only when it is accompanied by Fokir's rowboat, which allows for more intimate studies.

While the main characters in *The Hungry Tide* prefer simpler forms of boat technology in their daily lives, they are not opposed to certain forms of more advanced technology. Modern Doppler radar and weather alert systems provide early warning of approaching storms, allowing the villagers to seek shelter before the weather turns rough in the novel's climactic ending.

The advocates of both technology and nature have long depicted the two as being at odds with each other. Such antagonism is destructive, as some form of technology is necessary for human survival on almost the entire planet. Establishing the proper balance is both difficult and essential: while some technology can enable humanity's existence, too much will ensure our destruction.

Conclusion

The work is purely of both natural and human environment. The Tide country that is Sundarbans to which the whole of the work is devoted is not only a far-flung land of intimidating physical environment but also a place of dealings among an assortment of communities—ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural etc. These are islands where inhabitants live in fear of drowning tides and man-eating animals. The setting of the novel in the very heart of nature, lends predominance to the ecological perspective. This concern with the ecology of the geographical location makes it an ecological novel. Nature is shown as a hostile factor for human-beings, in the beginning of the novel, when Ghosh describes the Mangrove forests and the lurking dangers of tigers.

Nature can be considered as the chief protagonist of the novel. The novel, besides other concerns, is quite eloquent about the ecological concerns of the Sundarbans. He pictures the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans which are denuded of its biodiversity. The seriously threatened ecological balance of the place can be understood from this description. The concern for the ecological balance is visible throughout the novel.

The ecocritics considers technology as an antagonist force. Technology and nature are viewed in diametric opposition. Technology is a human creation and like any man-made things it can be used both for destructive and constructive ends.

Technology facilitates human labour. It reduces cost of production and saves time. Humanity has used technology throughout its existence. Technology has a place in nature-centred life and humanity must be able to balance technology on one side and nature on the other. The Sundarban community described in *The Hungry Tide* offers a case study in balancing technology and nature.

Ghosh portrays both the destructive and constructive sides of technology. He warns the readers of the defects and dangers that an imbalanced technology can cause. Technology is necessary for human existence, but too much technology may lead to our destruction. Even though, it is difficult to establish a proper balance between nature and technology, man's victory lies in establishing the proper balance.

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Relocating Gender Studies: Interrogating the Representation of Men as a Monolithic Formation

SYAM SUDHAKAR

The conventional gender studies focusing only on the female body and identity should be questioned for its idea of identifying masculine identities as the main instigator of creating a patriarchal domain in the society. It is now the time to interrogate the agenda behind the creation of a patriarchal aura around all the male beings by various theoretical discourses. Some feminists (some anti-feminists too) instigated a propaganda that the basic masculine nature is violence, brutal strength and the insatiable thirst for power and the need to subjugate the other—the female. The paper provides a retrospect towards all these kinds of categorization of males, as there are a variety of masculine identities in relation with each context. The basic notion of masculinity was different in each culture: thus, we cannot identify a universal masculinity, but masculinities.

In *The Myth of Male Power*, Warren Farrell, a progressive masculinist, argues that if the ideology of feminism is against gender discrimination, studies of masculinity can be supposedly identified as a complementary movement to feminism. The

mythopoetic notion about the empowerment of the male being in a society and the arguments of the men's liberation activists state that men are equally oppressed as gender is a socially constructed idea. By taking this into consideration, the very concept of oppression and its socio-political derivations and dimensions should be questioned. The mythopoetic men's movement proposes a victimized model by following the same methodology of subordination and domination of the gender-being. The very utterance of the word oppression suggests the power relations existent in a hegemonic social order. If it is said that one gender is oppressed, there will be an invisible presence of the other as an erasure. In that case, if it is said that the male gender is oppressed, it is clear that the oppressor would be the female gender. Thus it is theoretically impossible to consider both the radical feminists' and mythopoetic masculinists' claims about being oppressed. If it is taken in collective terms, it is true that the male gender was enjoying the privilege of becoming an oppressor for centuries. But, in the past few decades, women also began to take part in the hegemonic power manipulations of gender identities in a society through a counter-balanced resistance called 'Feminism'.

The 70s and 80s saw the emergence of many Men's organisations namely the Men's Rights Incorporated (1977) and the Coalition of Free Men (1980). In the 1980s, many Men's organisations merged to form the National Congress for Men. The publication of *Brother: A Male Liberation Newspaper* in 1971 can be identified as a landmark in the rise of the anti-feminists men's rights movement. Parallel to the conservative forums for men against feminism and sexism, Betty Frieden and Warren Farrell showed interest in more liberal movements of

men. The publication of *Unbecoming Men* can be considered as a product of pro-feminists men's consciousness. They claimed to be followers of the feminist dictum, 'personal is political'. These radical pro-feminist men were questioned by the women feminists of the 70s for 'becoming' feminists without understanding the female emotions. Jack Litewka's article, "The Socialized Penis" published in 1977 analyses how boys and men acquire the notions of patriarchy from the television screens (pornography) and from homosocial inhabitations.

A few critics have pointed out that the methodology of masculinity studies is the same as that of feminism. Lenny Segel criticizes masculinity studies in her well-acknowledged book *Why Feminism?* (2000) as an 'other' of feminist studies which is still dependent on the framework and track of feminism. For Segal, the study of masculinity is also based on the victimization model in spite of the hegemonic space that men occupy in a society (160). Feminist critic Susan Faludi also identifies masculinity studies with the same methodology of feminism. For Faludi, men should act according to the victimization model that the feminists employed earlier. She is of the opinion that men do not stop women from rising up. As she puts it: "[Men can] learn to wage a battle against no enemy, to own a frontier to human liberty, to act in the service of a brotherhood that includes us all" (607). The theoretical convalescence that masculinity studies brought to the realm of gender studies in academies opened an innovative dimension to women studies as well. Feminists like Tania Modleski attempt to define masculinity studies within the framework of feminism but with a non-essentialist

epistemological structure and with a “sense of solidarity, commonality, and community” (17).

Judith Halberstam’s speculations can be considered as a counter-argument to these critics, as she tries to separate the concept of masculinity from its “natural” association with man. In her essay, “The Good, The Bad and The Ugly,” Halberstam problematizes the issue of the missing discourse of masculinity in women from the present studies. She discusses the issue of how women began to get opportunities in the contemporary job market in the post industrial world. Essays such as “Men in the Third World” by Robert Morrell and Sandra Swart, “Masculinities in Latin America” by Matthew G. Gutmann and Mara Viveros Vigoya, “East Asian Masculinities” by Futoshi Taga are worth mentioning. All these essays try to extend and problematize the issue of masculinity in regional cultural spaces. Robert Morrell and Sandra Swart bring out different perspectives of masculinity from the third world or, as the World Bank categorises, “the less developed regions” (90) with a postcolonial outlook. The authors expose the fact that though the men in postcolonial nations (the focus is on Africa) undergo a variety of challenges like poverty, violence and diseases like AIDS, they could still find a harmonious communal living with their dependency on their social environment and indigenous knowledge. The essay identifies globalization and its development sectors as an important space that contributes to shape new forms of masculinity. Gutmann and Vigoya shed light on the different dimensions of masculinity that work among the ethnic groups, social sectors and socio-cultural conduct of Latin America. They go deep into the complexity of sexual behaviours and gender identities—fatherhood in

Brazil, the machismo nature in Mexico; masculinity among different classes, ethnic groups and regions are discussed. Futoshi Taga traces the origin, development and construction of various masculinities of East Asian countries, from the time of modernism, after the Second World War and post-industrial period to the present globalised context. Such studies can be identified as a deconstruction of the so-called masculinity that was western. By discussing the regional masculinities, these authors try to provide some alternative notion of masculinities by standing on a non-western platform.

As Shahin Geramai opines, the involvement of the media is a crucial point in the discussion of masculinity. Through various types of news and advertisements, it is clear that the media holds a hidden agenda to propagate masculinity in a conventional way to avoid offending the traditional men. In addition, the popular Indian film industries, Bollywood or regional, very rarely attempt to disturb the traditional balance of the concept of masculinity. The heroes of contemporary Mollywood movies such as *Action Hero Biju* starring Nivin Pauly, *Bhasker the Rascal* starring Mammootty and *Seventh Day* starring Prithviraj show their masculinity through the exhibitionism of their muscular body. The physical strength and violence of the male body is exhibited on the screen. These masculine images were created to satisfy the traditional heteronormative notions regarding a typical male body in the popular minds. This will also lead the public to settle within such a framework. There is less scope for female masculinity in Indian movies. Popular movies in India never dare to bring out the image of a masculine woman with a “hairy and scary” appearance (Halberstam 358).

Participation of women in sports can be identified as a paradigm shift towards the concept of masculine woman as it has become popular in India in the last 20 years. Movies such as *Chake De India* can be considered as a wonderful strike against the conventional design that only men could participate in sports. In other words, the term masculinity is not limited to the mere study of the anatomy of man, but highly socio-cultural in character. Tarun Mansukhani's *Dostana*, another Bollywood movie starring Abishek Bachchan and John Abraham, problematizes the issue of gay relationships and how society perceives it. In the movie, the central characters enjoy benefits and at the same time suffer as (they pretend to be) they are gay. Madhur Bhandarkar's movie *Fashion* plays a vital role in the study of masculinity as it showcases several images of the twenty first century masculine bodies with glittering clothes and a 'feminine' dress code; but very few attempts have been made to perceive the 'masculine woman' in the Indian movies.

Different modes of masculinities are dependent on the cultural background. Says Trudier Harris, to 'castrate' a black man, one should "put him in female position of the sexual act" and thereby his "manhood" would be "stripped" from him (109). This idea of castration, by giving the man the position of the female, comes from the traditional notion that the masculine body should dominate in the society. Since the position and space that a man occupies in one society is different from another, there is no universality in the idea of this castration. The dress codes of new generations who live not only in the metropolitan cities of India but even in semi-urban areas and villages have changed tremendously from 'rough and tough' to 'soft and

glittering'. In other words, the basic idea of traditional masculinity is gradually changing in almost all the sectors of society. Thus, the idea of castrating a man by just giving him a female position is not possible. In that sense, there is no escape from the traditional and cultural burdens of being a man or becoming masculine. It is a culturally loaded situation. In that way the biological or physical notion of gender is in a way parallel to the culturally loaded gender-being.

During the 60s and 70s, a number of alternative men's groups evolved from different parts of the world. The negation of traditional notions of essentialism and the problematicity of functionalism by the second wave feminists gave way to locate new trajectories to find issues about gender relationships in a broader sense and men and masculinity in specific. These men's groups opened up several vibrant discourses about different identities of men, the hegemonic structure of masculinity and the crisis men face. Along with them, some traditional or rather conservative groups like the Promise Keepers in the United States also joined the 'anti-revolution' because of the fear of losing their conventional space, power and role in the society. The number of divorces occurring in the society was high, because of the individual freedom and liberation women demanded from a family, and some conventionalists were not happy about this. In a parallel way, they tried to create an archetypal image of the conventional masculine identities in the socio-cultural realms. Books like *Iron Man*, one of the best sellers of the 90s by Robert Bly propagated the image of the strong masculine man. This kind of heteronormative notions of male identities did not directly give back the power to

men, but created a mythical notion about the normative men in the popular minds.

Early feminists questioned men's association of themselves with rationalism and essential humanity. The term misogyny or the cultural damnation of women by early philosophers and thinkers has been interrogated. Feminists' encounter with Aristotle's notorious statement about the teeth of a woman and the identification of men as the being of reason were widely discussed. Questions were often asked, as to why such an attempt to subjugate women was made through history, religion and literature. As a reaction to this, early feminists claimed their equality and sometimes superiority over men. They took images from history and literature to prove that women are rational, heroic and superior. To question the conventional notions that men are the embodiment of rationality they took instances from the same and highlighted the irrationality of men. They deconstruct the traditional notions of considering men as the caretakers and protectors of women. They consider each action of a man as a deliberate attempt to subjugate the female being that was going on for centuries. They tried to portray man as an embodiment of tyranny and viciousness. Abigail Adams' letter to her husband John Adams is worth citing. She wrote, "Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could" (876).

Soon after the publication of the path breaking book, *The Second Sex*, women discovered themselves as the 'Other' and an object of desire. The book 'reveals' the crude and disguised nature of men and how they fulfill their desires by pretending to be liberators, donors and

agents of humanity. Her direct attacks on men, masculinities and such kind of myths help to decentralize the power of an androcentric society. Portraying man as an arrogant villain toward women, Simone de Beauvoir tried to liberate the female body and identity from the 'virility' of the male being. Rosi Braidotti in her essay "Cyberfeminism with a difference" suggests that "the price men pay for representing the universal is disembodiment, or loss of gendered specificity into the abstractions of phallic masculinity" (355). Since the term 'Man' has come to represent humankind as a whole, men have lost a specific gender based identity. Thus, 'Man' has become a universal term which cannot claim any kind of identity but abstractions. This point is so crucial in both feminist studies and masculinity studies because both these theories continuously interrogate and retrospect on the gender based identity.

The national organisation for women and liberal feminists like Betty Friedan tried to extend and popularize the notion of a new woman through proper education. Their movements can be considered to be against the conventional orders of patriarchy, male dominations and gender discriminations. They advocated the equality of boys and girls in a school and encouraged the ideas of female liberation. Their aim can be identified as the construction of a new generation who would respect and admire the female and feminine qualities. As a result, the job market and other organisations, which were hitherto male dominated, welcomed women employees and candidates. This helped to provide economic independence to women who worked in private and public sectors and they thereby gained a major role in the family construction.

Earlier, man was considered the sole breadwinner of the family; now, due to this economic independence, the woman takes part in decision-makings, not only in domestic realms but in public as well. In such a society, the study of female identities with the victimization methodology should be recontextualised and relocated.

Representations of a particular gender with the socially accepted features of the other gender, has become a fashion of late. The performance of each gender is being determined by a convention of culture in the popular minds. Movies such as the *Varalaru* (Tamil) directed by K. S. Ravikumar and *Chandupottu* (Malayalam) by Lal Jose are good examples for this kind of representation. The heroes of these movies—Ajit and Dileep who are popularly hailed as highly masculine in their other movies, are portrayed as men with feminine qualities. Both the movies portray the heroes as dancers. Both the movies were widely accepted by the masses of the two corresponding states. The examples taken from Kollywood and Mollywood exemplify the shift in the cultural paradigm of the two states in South India. These two states are good examples for preserving their deep-rooted heteronormative gender practices and their hesitation to break tradition. It is noticeable that such societies have begun to accept the notions of transformation of gender identities and practices.

Contemporary Masculinity studies do not always support the traditional notions of male bodies and identities. The feminist notions about the phallogocentric world can be identified as an immediate response to Freudian discourses. According to Freudian discourse, the male sex organ stands for power. According to them the female body always feels a lack,

because of its ‘incompleteness’. So in their unconscious mind, they always have a tendency to envy the phallus and so women feel the urge to complete their body. Feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva and others frequently interrogate these concepts and argue that the traditional notions of gender are highly phallocentric in nature and sound ridiculous. The contemporary masculinity studies seem to disagree with these Freudian discourses. A few of them like Drucilla Cornell extend the Lacanian theories saying that there is always a fear of castration in the male psyche because of the fact that masculinity is attached to the male body by the society and culture. So, each time when the male body encounters a problem, it always has a feeling of being castrated and thereby losing its masculinity. The female body does not have this fear of castration and is thereby more liberated from cultural fears. Cornell argues, “this fantasy leaves him in a constant state of anxiety and terror that what makes him a man can always be taken away from him” why only men have such fantasies should be problematized. The feminist discourses cannot be blamed to have created such fantasies in the male psyche but the traditional notions of normative masculinity have created such an aura or rather fantasies. Thus it can be well argued that it is not only the female subjects who were manipulated by the traditional masculine discourses but men are victims as well.

In his famous book, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud showcases the connection between the human psyche, its unconscious and how it is related to the society around it and in a broader sense, a civilization. According to Freud, the basic drives inside the human psyche of each of being determines the nature of the

civilization—that includes inter/intra personal relationships, families, the socio-economic systems, art, religion and politics. In such an interdependent society, the role of aggressiveness is mentionable in this context as the raw aggressive nature of men in a society was being discussed. He points out that men are:

... gentle creatures in need of love, at most able to defend themselves if attacked; on the contrary, they can count a powerful share of aggression among their instinctual endowments. Hence, their neighbour is not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to take out their aggression on him, to exploit his labour without recompense, to use him sexually without his consent, to take possession of his goods, to humiliate him and cause him pain, to torture and kill him. (60-61)

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The feminist critics to prove that by nature man is aggressive contextualized such Freudian arguments. Some feminists even seem to forget that Freud proposes a sociological theory and man according to Freud is not the man with male sex organs but the man who created and manipulated by the society. Creating a history about patriarchy, focusing on the aggressive nature of man, should be for the liberal and democratic existence of gender but not to place one over the other.

One of the basic problems of Freudian discourses is that it is based on certain assumptions on the essential differences between a male body and a female body. Acquiring the knowledge that it is a separate individual during the time of its mirror stage, the child's psyche will begin to understand its individuality. Later, when the oedipal identification begins, the child becomes conscious of his gender, sexuality and the instincts thereof. If this argument is extended in the light of

perceiving it through the spectrum of power structures, this gender positioning will become sociological and cultural in its character. In this context, the feminist critics always tend to look at the suppressed roles of women in a family.

According to feminists, the position of the male gender in a society is always superior to the female. They fail to look at the burden attributed to the role of each sex by the society. The social expressions and expectations of these two genders are different in their characters. The behaviour of a soldier and a merchant and an official is different. The soldier (mostly male) is supposed to be tough and strong and his success is counted by the society or a nation by assessing his 'tough' masculinity. He is expected to protect his nation even to death. His death is then celebrated by the nation by giving him the Param Vir Chakra or some such high honour. This would motivate other soldiers to follow his example. This attitude can be identified as an example of the construction of masculinity for a nation or an institution. The social institutions like family, community, media, religion, etc always seem to demand a kind of protection from the male being, and thereby boys in during their primary and secondary education period suffer a pressure to satisfy these institutional needs. On analyzing these social pressures over the male body, one could easily locate the male being in a victimized position created by a social order. Richard Howson in his *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity* observes that "gender is no longer viewed as two autonomously homogenous categories but, rather, as configurations of practice within social relations that operate not just between men, but also between men and women and between women and women at any one

historical moment” (57). In other words, gender cannot stand by itself except in relation to similar identities, nor can it develop interests and identities on its own.

Since it is known that gender is a socially constructed idea, there is no escape from that. In the Indian context, between the ages of 20 and 25, a woman is expected to get married and procreate. It is the burden implemented by the society over her or rather one can say, over the feminine gender. Similarly, during that age, boys are expected to find employment, become economically independent and begin to take responsibility for their families. They are considered as failures if they don't meet these conditions set by society. So there is no point in blaming the heteronormative patriarchal system and pointing the accusing finger only at the male ideologies. Though they seem to gain the power in the hegemonic structure of the social order, one cannot forget that they too work under the broader institution called culture.

In the technocratic area, the differences between men and women seem to be solely based on gender as the organizational structures that they are a part of are also gender based. This is because, each organization aim to define and manipulate bodies for their own convenience. If the amount of work done by each gender is different, there will be a segregation of sorts in workforces. If there is a difference in workforce, the nature of hiring, nature of work and wages will be unequal. In that case, one can say that the gender of an individual is not purely based on what one's sex is, but what one's performance is and how one performs.

The paper so far discussed the manner in which genders studies engages with the issues of men and masculinity with an interrogation with feminist studies.

It could be concluded that gender is not an idea solely constructed by a patriarchal society which is dominated by a few men and they constructed it only for their own material benefits. Each gender has its specific problems to face, because they are created and manipulated by the culture they live in. The manner in which masculinity has been recognized as a singular formation should be interrogated, more dynamic formations of masculinities should be perceived and analyzed, and thereby open up innovative theoretical platforms which can include, elaborate and elucidate the issues of gender according to each contexts.

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Humour: Forms and Roles in Metafiction

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The paper “Humour: Forms and Roles in Metafiction” focuses on the understanding of metafiction, various facets of humour in metafiction and analyses its different roles and explores the purpose of employing them textually and beyond the text.

Metafiction is a form of fiction that self-consciously presents itself as fiction. Critics and theorists say that it is a “fiction about fiction” (Lodge 206), “fictional writing that self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (Waugh 2), “it takes as its main subject writers, writing, and anything else which has to do with the way books and stories are written (Mc Caffrey 183). John Barth, Italo Calvino, William H. Gass, Kurt Vonnegut Jr. and John Fowles are some of the prominent novelists who employ metafictional element in their writings. The following lines from Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759–67) can be taken as a typical example of metafiction:

But now I am talking of beginning a book, and have long had a thing upon my mind to be imparted to the reader, which if not imparted now, can never

be imparted to him as long as I live (whereas the Comparison may be imparted to him any hour in the day)—I'll just mention it, and begin in good earnest.

The thing is this.

That of all the several ways of beginning a book which are now in practice throughout the known world, I am confident my own way of doing it is the best—I'm sure it is the most religious—for I begin with writing the first sentence—and trusting to Almighty God for the second. (490)

The quoted example conveys that metafiction is a technique of fiction and this is one of the chief reasons for the other elements in it for becoming unnoticed. Thus, the present paper, retaining its perspective of metafiction as a technique, discusses humour and its various forms and roles in metafiction.

The concept of humour is dynamic and has undergone various phases of evolution throughout the history of literature and has emerged into various forms. Tracing its origin, Milan Kundera quotes Octovia Paz's claim, "Humour is the great invention of the modern spirit" and claims the humour's birth with that of the novel in Rabelais and Cervantes is absolutely fundamental..." (qtd. in Weeks 130). With the publication of Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605), the birth of humour is coincidental with the birth of metafiction in novel.

Humour, in metafiction is implicit and has not been employed as in the conventional realistic novels through the portrayal of humorous characters, events or incidents but operates more in style and structure, content. It cannot be identified separately but interspersed and coexists along with the metafictional

tendency of the text. Thus, the various facets of humour such as satire, parody and irony have been explained briefly with John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargossa Sea* (1966), and Gore Vidal's *Myra Breckinridge* (1968) respectively as illustration for respective facet of humour.

Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is satirical of the conventional novel tradition. Set in the mid-Victorian age, the structure of this novel defies every aspect of the conventional novel especially deconstructing the concept of omniscient author-narrator. He says:

The novelist is still a god, since he creates (and not even the most aleatory avant-garde modern novel has managed to extirpate its author completely); what has changed is that we are no longer the gods of the Victorian image, omniscient and decreeing; but in the new theological image, with freedom our first principle, not authority. (97)

The satirical structure is further elevated by insertion of multiple endings, excerpts from the works written in the Victorian era as footnotes and epigraphs, and by doing so, he subverts every aspect in which the form of the novel was stereotyped during this age.

Gore Vidal's *Myra Breckinridge* (1968) ironically brings out the relationship between sex and writing through metafiction. In an interview, answering about the relation between sex and writing, Vidal says:

I think one is triggered to the other. I found that writing can often get one into a highly erotic state though the other way round probably doesn't work. I think that a great deal of sex at all times is a very good idea. You have so much seed in the bank and you're

gathering interest. Every once in a while you invest it and nine months later you get a baby who will be a replica of yourself and continue you for all time and you must never waste your capital. (Wylie 88)

This connection has been ironically brought out through the central character called Myra in *Myra Breckinridge*. Myra admits that the novel is dead, so, there is no point in writing made up stories and opines that she cannot create one-dimension of fictional character like the average readers. But, she immediately brushes off her shortcomings as a writer and says that she intends to create a literary masterpiece in a similar way through which she created herself. Myra connects herself with the literary master piece that she inclines to create. The uniqueness of Myra is that she is neither a complete man nor a complete woman. She has undergone transformation from Myron to Myra through a sex operation and considers herself a masterpiece of creation because of the bisexual tendency in her. Talking about her writing, Myra is particular that she would not begin at the beginning since there is no beginning, only the middle into which the fortunate reader just strayed. But, ironically it refers to herself. She is not a born woman but made into a woman so she does not have beginning as a woman but only the middle. When she says, in the course of our common voyage to her interior, it actually refers to her own sexuality and the journey into her bisexual interior.

“Parody is distinguished as a mode of imitation in a subversive form (Burden 135)” and Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargossa Sea* is an apt example for this mode of imitation. It is a parody of Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*. *Wide Sargossa Sea* subverts all the aspects that *Jane Eyre*

represented. The most predominant subverted feature is narration. In *Jane Eyre*, the narrator was Eyre herself whereas in *Wide Sargossa Sea*, there are three different narrators—Antoinette, a parody of Jane Eyre herself, the nameless narrator, a parody of Mr. Rochester and Grace Poole, who took care of the mad Mrs. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*. A few words from the narration of Grace:

And I am not certain that the situation will suit me, Madam. First when I answered your advertisement you said that the person I had to look after was not a young girl, I asked if she was an old woman and you said no. Now that I see her I don't know what to think. She sits shivering and she is so thin. If she dies on my hands who will get the blame? Wait, Grace, she said. (Rhys 115)

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Having discussed the illustrations of humour, it should be noted that they play pivotal roles from the textual perspective. Metafictional humour provides subtle yet refined entertainment to the readers as they have not been employed in a bitter, sharp, critical way but in a gentle and symbolic manner. Since it is indirect and symbolic, it is intricate to comprehend the meaning of the humour and the reader has to examine it deeply to understand. From the novelist's perspective, the facets of humour have been employed in such a way as an instrument for the novelists to be at his/her liberty in writing the text. The freedom that it offers can be extended by discussing beyond the literary significance and it seems to play a significant role beyond the text.

Elaborating the analysis beyond the textual significance, it should be noted that these texts were written in the period of Sixties. The Sixties was a period of rebellion and revolution. Change and Newness filled

the ambience of the Sixties. Politically, many countries became left. Several countries in Africa gained freedom from Britain. The Civil Rights Movement was passed and America's interference in the Vietnam War paved way for many protests in America. These protests led to many subsequent revolutions across the world such as May '68' Student Revolution, German Student Revolution. They revolted against any kind of authority and conservative attitude in life style. Freedom was the new spirit that the revolutionists supported and as a result they were experiments in all aspects of life such as fashion, music and food. It is to this period that the above discussed novels belong to. The spirit of the age, liberation from any kind of authority, has been brilliantly portrayed through these various facets of humour in these metafictional works. It has captured the essence of the age. The metafictional humour exhibits what the decade was in need of and they differ only in the various levels of freedom that these metafictionists portray.

The discussed examples are, in a way or the other, deconstruct the concept of authority in various ways such as dismantling the authority of the omniscient narrator (*The French Lieutenant's Woman*), subversion of the novel that occupies a prominent place in British literary tradition (*Wide Sargossa Sea*), breaking the gender and sexual authority that has been constructed by the societal norms (*Myra Breckinridge*). Thus, the dismantling of authority leads to the construction of freedom- freedom from the conventional constraints of writing a novel as in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, freedom of expanding and rewriting a text as in *Wide Sargossa Sea*, and freedom to choose their own sex and

from the constructed societal norms as in *Myra Breckinridge*.

Since, it is through self-conscious feature of metafiction that the freedom is highlighted, thus, it becomes particular in suggesting the freedom of self. Besides, freedom of any kind has an intimate connection with the freedom of self and it is fundamental to any kind of freedom. Here, the self does not refer to any ontological aspect of the individual but an ordinary human individual who confronts reality in everyday life. The freedom of the individual is a key for survival of the progressive society. The need for the individual freedom is very much relevant in contemporary age because in practical life, it is superficial for a common individual to pursue his/her goals and lead life free from the constraints of society and its constructed norms. The individual freedom has been offered the least priority and suppressed. Hence, it encounters repression. Metafiction aptly reflects this repressed state of self and is brought out through the repressed state of novel itself. The self-conscious element that the fiction displays is a state of how novel was repressed its own self due to stereotypes and this has caused the novel itself to burst out of repression and began to narrate about its own self. The postmodern world, with its emphasis on plurality and mass production, has very much distorted the presence of individual and hence it is high time to think about and reinstate individual freedom for the society of humanity.

Thus, metafiction is not only limited to a mere fictional technique that has a mere rambling narration, tendency to blur the real and fiction but like many other schools of thought that stressed the importance of

individual and his/her freedom, metafictional humour through its self-conscious feature explicitly lays its emphasis on the importance of individual freedom from the conventionally constructed norms. Emphasis on the freedom of individual does not negate the presence of society. For the human society to exist, an individual is necessary and the number of individuals constitute human society and not the vice versa. Every individual is a base for the human society to develop. Hence, priority should be given to his/her personal freedom, choice and growth and a proper balance should be maintained between individual and society as it is mandatory for the humanity to move towards progress. Endre Szécsényi, citing Addison's idea of humour, says:

He insists that "Absurd, inconsistent ideas", "monstrous conceits", and pure "nonsense" in general are not humour yet, because "humour should always be under the check of Reason," and it requires the direction of the nicest judgment, by so much more as it indulges itself in the most boundless freedoms (1:133). "True Humour" is a member of the family that consists of truth, good sense, and humour's parents: wit and mirth; while false humour's relatives are falsehood, nonsense, frenzy, and laughter. (qtd. in Szécsényi 83)

Metafictional humour fulfils Addison's idea of humour and exhibits multiple roles textually and beyond the text. With the significant role that it plays beyond the text, metafictional humour enters into a new dimension of being a state of thinking and attitude in the contemporary world. Thus, humour is an instrument for the metafictionists to bring out the importance of individual freedom.

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John Ashbery: The “Outsider” among New York Poets

SANIL RAJ J.

The New York School of Poetry was an innovative group of poets living and writing in and around New York City in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Their poetry was experimental, philosophical, staunchly anti-establishment and anti-academic though their works were dissimilar in style. But they share specific affinities: geographical setting, cosmopolitanism of spirit, the influence of action painting, French Surrealism and European avant-gardism. Donald Allen’s anthology *The New American Poetry* (1960) first categorized them as a group of emerging writers and it included the poets John Ashbery and Frank O’Hara. Allen found these writers as “urban, sophisticated and concerned with the moment” (MacGowan 23). *An Anthology of New York Poets* (1970) edited by Ronald Padgett and David Simpson acknowledged them as leading voices in American poetic scenario. Other than the poets mentioned above, its contributors included Kenneth Koch, James Schulyer and Ted Berrigan.

The genuine efforts of John Bernard Myers, the director of the Tibor de Nagy Gallery in New York to link the abstract expressionist painters with the then emerging poets in New York ultimately led to the

coining of the term New York School of Poets. The free shapes of their poems partially derive from their proximity with the techniques of Jackson Pollocks, Willem de Kooning and Larry Rivers. O' Hara and Ashbery worked for *Art News* and their contributions on aesthetic relatedness between poetry and visual arts are noteworthy. These poets in general showed an absurdist reality expressed in marked cryptic statements. Often, both the groups collaborated on projects and shared common views on art, politics and philosophy. The poets possessed anti traditionalist and experimental views and they strove for artistic change by declaring poetry as a process and a mere product. New York poets, strictly speaking, "wrote in language that was illogical and often meaningless, O'Hara's particular tone was surrealist, Ashbery's was philosophical, and Koch was comic" (Gooch 224).

John Ashbery is one among the most influential poets of late 20th century America and he is a prominent member associated with New York School. Ashbery is indebted to disparate sources for his poetry which include poets such as W H Auden, Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop and the movements—French Surrealism and American Abstract Expressionism. From such a pioneering background, Ashbery developed his poetics that is "challenging and disarming, formal and casual, meaningful and accidental" (Kimmelman 24). At the same time, his works have influenced a wide range of poets from those in New Formalism to members of Language School since his poetry comprises of experimental and investigative poetry as well as formal and nostalgic concerns. Ashbery in his lectures on Riding reveals how one should read or misread his own poems.

What then are we to do with a body of poetry whose author warns us that we have very little chance of understanding it, and who believes that poetry itself is a lie? Why, misread it of course ... All poetry is written this understanding on the part of the poet and reader; if it can't stand the test of what Harold Bloom names 'misprision', then we leave it to pass on to something else. (*Other* 102)

That is, his poetry invites such a sort of active as well as participatory readings and misreadings. Ashbery's first collection of poems *Turandot and Other Poems* was published in 1953. It was followed by *Some Trees* (1956), *The Tennis Court Oath* (1962), *Rivers and Mountains* (1966), *Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1975), *A Wave* (1984), *Flow Chart* (1991), *Chinese Whispers* (2000) and *A Worldly Country* (2007).

Ashbery first met the fellow New York poet Frank O'Hara at Harvard for the first time and when O'Hara moved to Manhattan in 1951, they met regularly. Ashbery recalls, "American painting seemed the most exciting art around and most of my feeling for Rothko and Pollock came through Frank" (Gray 620). Both the poets shared the same enthusiasm and this spirit is a unifying factor for their poetic creations. In the poem "One Thing That Can Save America" Ashbery admits: "I know that I braid too much my own / Snapped-off perceptions as they come to me". He has often remarked that his poems are about the experience of experience. During one of his moments of elucidation, he commented,

... and the particular experience is of lesser interest to me than the way it filters through me. I believe this is the way in which it happens with most people and I'm trying to record a kind of generalized transcript of

what's really going on in our minds all day long.
(Gray 620)

From these assumptions, we can conclude that when a poem represents a verbal graph of the conscious self, then the author transforms himself as a transparent medium through which the finer experiences move and it also comprises the notations or symbols that cease to function as experiences they signify and the moment of consciousness that acted as signifier.

Among the post war writers, Ashbery appears to be less autobiographical and his poems have not much to do with the intricacies of his life and thus he is on the other side of the spectrum as compared to O'Hara or Schulyer. In his interview with Rose Labrie, he says: "My own biography never interested me very much as a material for literature". Ashbery has many a time reemphasized that his celebrated poem "Soonest Mended" is a kind of narrative that could accommodate anybody's autobiography.

These then were some of the hazards of the course,
Yet though we knew the course was hazards and
nothing else
It was still a shock when, almost a quarter of a century
later,
The clarity of the rules dawned on you for the first
time.

Here the poet has elevated the level of autobiography to that of an allegory. The words attain meaning in a metaphorical imaginative manner. The poet successfully introduces an experience and it is not at all a description of an experience. The lines reinforce a dream experience with twists and complexities and anyone can undertake

the role of the dreamer. In “More Pleasant Experiences” Ashbery writes,

Heck, it's anybody's story,
A sentimental journey – gonna take a sentimental
journey
And we do, but you wake up under the table of a
dream
You are that dream, and it is the seventh layer of you.
You haven't moved an inch, and everything has
changed. (Lehman 95)

Ashbery never believed in explaining his poems for he was under the notion that his explanation will finally get appended to his work. Many were misguided as he once commented about Abstract Expressionism as his major influences, even though it was one aspect of his influences and thus often he tends to be misinterpreted. His poem “A Poem of Unrest” in *Can You Hear the Word* (1995) exemplifies such a theme of misunderstanding. The poem begins with a sordid tone: “Men truly understand the river of life / Misconstruing it”. Here, it is the use of the adverb ‘truly’ that offers a complete meaning to the theme of the poem. The theme of ‘misunderstanding’ which is deliberate or inadvertent is much implicit in the acts of composition of the poem.

Wallace Stevens, known for his philosophical arguments in an elliptical manner, is famous for his poetic leaps and bounds. Ashbery's poetic career is formulated in such a lead in addition to the prose styles of Henry James and Marcel Proust for their use of grammar. An Ashbery poem is difficult since the poetic language is complicated and it doesn't follow a circular progression. His poem “My Philosophy of Life” (1995)

almost follows such a principle. The poet introduces an argument about the title of the poem: “Living the way philosophers live, / According to a set of principle”. The argument is not straight forward and embedded with digressions. But when the poem goes further, the argument never gets undermined, but widely deepened.

I thought I'd stumbled into, as a stranger
 accidentally presses against a panel and a bookcase
 slides
 back,
 revealing a winding staircase with greenish light
 somewhere down below, and he automatically steps
 inside
 and the bookcase slides shut, as is customary on such
 occasions. (Lehman 103)

Such is the transformation which occurs when ideas are translated into words and images. In a way, this poem is an extension of Ashbery's position stated in “Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror”:

... Each person
 Has one big theory to explain the universe
 But it doesn't tell the story
 And in the end it is what is outside him
 That matters, to him and especially to us
 Who have been given no help whatever
 In decoding our own man-sized quotient and must
 rely
 On second-hand knowledge. Yet I know
 That no one else's taste is going to be
 Any help, and might as well be ignored.

(Selected Poems 202–03)

Ashbery's poems are the negotiations of his heart's desire and they should never be interpreted as the expressions of his noble ideas and ideals. Several of his

earlier poems can be categorized under this label. The experience the poet tries to convey is so powerful and the poet finds it difficult to identify whether he is awake or in a mood of slumber. In “The Instruction Manual”, the poet explicitly reveals his dreams:

As I sit looking out of a window of the building
 I wish I did not have to write the instruction manual
 on the uses
 of a new metal.
 I look down into the street and see people, each
 walking with an
 inner peace,
 And envy them-they are so far away from me!
(*Selected Poems* 5)

In the poem “And You Know” also, the poet re-establishes the same pattern. The transcendent vision carries forward the poet to a distant land that he aspires to visit. The poet draws our attention to the globe spinning in the teacher’s desk which awakens the students’ desire to travel.

On the globe, with moist fingertip, and surely, the
 globe stops;
 We are pointing to England, to Africa, to Nigeria;
 And we shall visit these places, you and I, and other
 places,
 Including heavenly Naples, queen of the sea, where I
 shall be king and
 you will be queen,
 And all the places around Naples. (*Selected Poems* 22)

In this context, the teacher himself experiences the pangs of separation: “And so they have left us feeling tired and old / They never cared for school anyway” (22). Redemption from such a pathetic situation

becomes rather impossible as “they have left us with the things pinned on the bulletin board” (22).

Ashbery expresses his mood of confusion in his poem “Wakefulness.” It arises as a sort interrogation and the poet makes an inquiry to know whether there a reasonable answer:

An immodest little white wine, some scattered
seraphs,
recollections of the Fall – tell me,
has anyone made a spongier representation, chased
fewer demons out of the parking lot
where we all held hands? (Lehman 55)

The poet is in a mood of languor and the ‘wakefulness’ evoked misperception in his mind and gradually he retains his consciousness. He says: “Little by little the idea of the true way returned to me.” Everything that has occurred to him appeared as if it has happened in the distant past and now his vision is blurred as “A gavotte of dust motes came to replace my seeing”. Then comes the revelation which is so shocking and he feels it would have been good provided it was a dream:

The client leaves. History matters on,
rolling distractedly on these shores. Each day, dawn
condenses like a very large star, bakes no bread,
shoes the faithless. How convenient it it’s a dream.
(Lehman 55)

The poet manages to pick out something out of his agonizing thoughts but life has lost its charm and the reality is that man is incapable of altering his fate and he laments:

A kindly gnome
of fear perched on my dashboard once, but we had all
been instructed

to ignore the conditions of the chase. Here, it
seems to grow lighter with each passing century. No
matter how you
twist it,
life stays frozen in the headlights.
Funny, none of us heard the roar. (Lehman 55)

Allen Ginsberg portrayed America through the eyes of *Time Magazine* in his brilliant, angry, at the same time funny poem “America”. The poet vehemently (*Selected Poems* 202–03) criticizes America against its foreign policy and also its mode of inhumanity towards its citizens whereas Ashbery presented a fragmentary nation through his poem “America”. This poem, written in Paris, leaves the reader in a totally disoriented state where fragments look forward to other fragments to attain a kind of logical link with one another:

Piling upward
the fact the stars
In America the office hid
archives in his
stall ...
Enormous stars on them
The cold anarchist standing
in his hat. (Lehman 161)

From such disintegrations, Ashbery emerges as a great poet with his mature poems beginning with “Skaters” to a great many poems with his poetic career that has extended to more than thirty years.

A casual reader may find Ashbery’s poems difficult and obtuse, but the superficial difficulty will vanish if the reader can identify the transitory visions and the fluctuating mental settings of his poems. His tone varies

from poem to poem—that is from mere conversational style to mythic proportions and from self-effacing renderings to eloquent observations. The speakers rather lack self will and seem to be unstable and such lack of stability often constitute the theme of his poems. His poem “The Instruction Manual” clearly reveals the wanderings of the mind of a confused author and this poem is different as it clearly depicts the poet’s drifting mind setup within a stable framework. Critics like Harold Bloom have placed Ashbery’s poetry within the romantic tradition and he understands Ashbery’s poetry as following and expanding on the literary tradition of Auden and Stevens. Some others, however, place him within a more exploratory tradition of writers which include Gertrude Stein and Laura Riding and surrealist writers such as Raymond Roussel. Ashbery finds himself among these other traditions but his own personal assessments often appear to be merely temporary opinions. He also continues with the great tradition of poets who have influenced him namely John Wheelwright, Riding and David Schubert—the American poets and John Clare and Thomas Lowell the British and Rousseau—the French.

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Retelling Myths and Writing Back to Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*: A Reading of Hiromi Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms*

ARCHANA V.

Hiromi Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994) is about the cultural conflict experienced by three generations of Japanese Canadian (JC) women. The novel is also considered to be a "writing back" (Beauregard 47) to Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, the novel that pioneered JC fiction in Canada and deals with the World War II internment of JCs in Canada. Naoe, her daughter Keiko/Kay, and Keiko's daughter Muriel/Murasaki, live in the town of Nanton in Alberta, where Keiko is hell bent on assimilating the family to Canadian ways of living, which Naoe, who has spent most of her years in Japan, is unable to entertain. Murasaki is confused about her identity and is forced to serve as a link between the two warring women. The paper analyses how Goto retells Japanese myths and writes back to *Obasan* to assert the changing identities of Japanese Canadians in Canada.

The *Chorus of Mushrooms* (CM) is structured as a tale within a tale. The novel begins as Murasaki tells her Japanese lover, tales of her life with her grandmother, which in turn incorporates narration of tales by Naoe herself. There are three narratives in CM—one by

Naoe, another by Murasaki, and yet another by a third person narrator. Naoe's and Murasaki's narratives intermingle and collapse so much that it becomes difficult to identify who is narrating the story. Murasaki, the primary narrator in the novel, reminds her listeners that her stories don't claim any authenticity and is a "making up of truth" (12) and that; it is the narration that matters, not the narrator.

Goto observes that minority culture has been manipulated by the white Canadians as fixed and unchanging. Goto tries to refute this claim by retelling Biblical and Japanese myths. While retelling myths, she also subverts stories and situations from *Obasan*, the first JC fiction, considered authentic in its portrayal of Japanese culture, because of its use of biblical narratives that gave legitimacy and acceptance to its narration. Goto refutes this recurring allusion to Biblical stories through Naoe who tells Murasaki:

Forget the Greeks! And don't quote Bible verses to me, child. There were stories long before Eve tasted fruit fit for women. Yes, stories in each blade of grass, flesh of worm, drop of dung. They linger and grow and only women to reap them. Let the stories suckle your breast, they'll ease the ache within you. (Goto 18)

Goto also satirises the epigraph of *Obasan* that starts with a Bible quote from the New Testament book of Revelations that says, "To him that overcometh / will I give to eat / of the hidden manna / and will give him / a white stone / and in the stone / a new name written. . . ." which is a promise to Christians who overcome adversity. Naoe says, "Nothing like a good folk legend to warm up one's belly and fill the emptiness inside you.

Why a good folk tale can keep you going for at least a month, none of this manna talk and birds falling out of the sky” (203), pointing out how she would prefer telling folk legends to biblical verses.

Naoe thus recounts the tale of Issun-Boshi that is quite similar to the story of Momotaro in *Obasan* and also to the first English fairy tale in print, “Tom Thumb”. In *Obasan* Kogawa talks about how an old couple wait for their son Momotaro, who has left home to earn a name. “There are no tears and no touch” as he leaves because, the parents do not want to “weight his package with their sorrow” and all that the couple wants is for “Momotaro to behave with honour” (56). Here Kogawa stresses the qualities of the *Issei* in Canada, who never talked of their pain of evacuation and dispersal, for the sake of their children for them to respect the country they were born into and by being model citizens bring honour to the community. If Momotaro is the story of a legend who brought honour to his family, the tale of Issun-Boshi narrated by Goto in *Chorus of Mushrooms* is the story of a hero’s downfall. A childless couple prays to god for a child. The woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to a child, the size of her fingertip. They raise the child with affection and care. When he becomes a young man he wishes to travel down the river and his parents send him off armed with a needle, a bowl for a boat and a pair of chopsticks for steering. He finds work with a noble family, where Miwa, the daughter of the household, is particularly fond of him. Once, Issun-Boshi rescues Miwa from two *oni* (Demons). One *oni* drops his magical millet with which Miwa makes him normal sized and they marry. Issun-Boshi becomes a great samurai but becomes conceited and ignores his wife and turns violent towards

her. He even refuses to recognize his parents, seeing which Miwa picks up the magic millet and transforms him again to his initial self. She lifts her foot and crushes him beneath her heel, leaving no trace of him but a tiny stain.

Murasaki and Naoe can be seen attempting at revisionist myth making: revisiting old myths to retell it from a feminist perspective. They recreate the story to suit their identity and attempt to break down the treatment of women as passive victims. In story books and internet sites, there are versions of Issun-Boshi's story that ends happily with Miwa marrying him. Although variants of the story are available, none tell about a version where he was crushed to death by his wife. Even the Momotaro story has variants that say that when the old woman gets the peach, she eats a piece of it and turns young. Her husband returns home and gets to know from his wife about what happened and turns young after eating another piece. A boy is born after they passionately make love that night. With western cultural influence Japanese became sensitive of sexuality and restrained use of carnal scenes in stories and thus it is believed that Momotaro was made into a story known for piety and God's benevolence. But Goto tries to point out the hidden hypocrisy that affects the telling of a story that tries to adhere to the norm of a happy ending.

Obasan's 'Chapter Ten' starts with the statement "MUKASHI MUKASHI O-O MUKASHI," the literal translation provided immediately as "in ancient times, in ancient times, in very very ancient times" (54) and Naomi point outs how *Obasan* is the old woman in Japanese legends, waiting "for the honour that is an old person's reward" (54). Naoe subverts this story of an old

woman waiting for honour as reward, with the story “Uba-Sute Yama”, that starts with “Mukashi, Mukashi, O Mukashi...” (Goto 64) and talks of a legend years ago when in a poor village a custom was introduced to abandon people who reached their sixtieth birthday, in the mountain owing to poverty. A grandmother who was to be sixty soon decides to have a “nice home perm” (64) before she is abandoned. She goes to her younger sister’s house far away and asks her to give her a nice home perm. She says she traded the home perm set, for food. The older sister urges her to go out with her and have fun. The younger one elaborates on her daily duties and says that she will not be able to come. The elder sister asks her when she had fun the last time. She replies that it has been over fifty years. “Then it’s time to have fun” (65), says the elder one and the two set out and collect pines for curlers and pulls out half a package of “Mild sevens, a lighter, and a Meiji chocolate bar” and have fun (67). When the younger sister asks the elder one whether she is afraid to be sixty, she replies, “It’s a place where people are abandoned. It’s a place of abandonment” (68). Subverting the story in *Obasan* where an old woman waits alone for the reward of honour before death, Goto stresses on how having fun is important in life too, especially for women who have no life outside their daily chores. When people murmur that the grandmother is frightened to be sixty and that is why she is running away, she doesn’t even stop to correct them. For her having fun with her sister is more important than retaining honour. The younger one who at first just thinks of duty and honour, says at last “I think I’m beginning to see” (68). Vision has been endowed to her by the elder sister who breaks tradition. Naoe here remains a foil to *Obasan* and reiterates that

looking after one's need and enjoying life is not a selfish act. The over attachment to the virtue of 'honour' upheld by the Japanese culture is satirized here. After narrating this story, Naoe too leaves her chair to have fun outside her home. As Muller puts it,

For Murasaki's Obachan, who in the eyes of their social environment probably is (or should be) approaching her own 'ritual place of abandonment', the telling of this legend foreshadows—perhaps even enables—what is to come. (47)

Having related this story, Naoe leaves her chair that had confined her and moves out of the comfort of her home.

Once Naoe steps out into the snowy Alberta prairies, she moves on to alter the tale of Yuki-Onna, the snow woman of Japanese folklore. In Japanese legends she is a popular vampire figure, inhumanly pale and so blends with the snowy landscape and is ruthless in killing unsuspecting humans who wander in the snow. She is portrayed as extremely wicked, trapping tired travellers and parents searching for their lost children and blowing her icy breath to leave them frosted. Naoe rejects this image of Yuki-Onna as a seductress and victimizer and humanizes her, "Yuki-Onna. Woman of the snow. Locked in your story of beauty and death. Let me release you....The snow is soft and you must be tired, all those years trapped in a story not of your creation" (Goto 82). This statement is pertinent in pointing out how the minority subjects are kept away from creating stories about themselves, thus getting trapped in the identities created for them by the mainstream.

After retelling Japanese stories, deconstructing the patriarchal notions in it, Goto turns to rewrite and criticize Biblical myths. Naoe criticizes the Western

insistence on not turning back to one's past by referring to the Biblical story of Lot's wife, who was turned into a pillar of salt for looking back at Sodom, the city that she had lived in and was leaving by the orders of the angels. She subverts this idea by looking back at her house in Nanton and visiting the mushroom farm as she leaves Nanton, "Turn back, woman turn back. There are no pillars of salt in my culture. I will see before I leave" (Goto 82). Naoe rejects this culture of being forbidden to look back and assess one's past. Naoe here stresses the importance of revisiting the past and remembering it to strengthen the future.

Creation myths are myths that inform how the world began and how people came to inhabit it. Considered a very essential part of a culture it provides information regarding the basis of one's existence. In *Chorus of Mushrooms*, Murasaki sets out to subvert the creation myth in Japan also touching upon the Biblical creation myth so as to change patriarchal notions about creation. According to the traditional Japanese creation myth, Izanagi and Izanami were siblings. Standing on the floating bridge of heaven Izanagi with his phallic spear churned the ocean and created the first island of Japan. Izanagi and Izanami eventually wished to marry and to mate. During the marriage ceremony Izanami greeted Izanagi and he reciprocated. They made love but had a deformed child from the union. They went to Heaven to know from the other gods why they had a deformed child and realises that Izanami being a female was not supposed to speak first during the ceremony. So they repeat the ceremony where Izanagi speaks first. From their union were born eight islands of Japan.

Murasaki subverts this whole myth. If in the original myth, Izanami was ordered not to speak first, in Goto's retelling Izanami is the one who guides Izanagi and makes him aware that they are gods and they have the power to create. She is the one who gives instructions and sanctions Izanagi's wishes. She makes the water reflect the colour of the sky and creates an island with genko trees. The only wish Izanagi makes is "Let there be light!" (Goto 31) echoing the biblical creation myth where on the first day of creation God created light. Izanami criticizes his choice and is unhappy that he made a choice not of "good taste and understated beauty" and states that the "sickly bright light" (31) has made her creations look sickly and dull and asks him to take back his wish. Beauregard points out that while in Piggott's version, to which Goto refers to in her text, Izanagi uses his phallic spear to create islands, here Izanami uses her fingers deftly to create islands (Beauregard 50). Thus the power invested in the male phallus is undermined in the retelling.

Unlike the biblical version where Adam and Eve are forced out of Eden for eating the forbidden fruit, Izanami and Izanagi after 'creation', collect the 'fallen' genko fruit, roast the inner nuts in a fire and pick them up, "burning their fingertips and tongues in their eagerness to eat them" (Goto 32), which reminds of another scene in the text where Naoe and her brother Shige, eats the hot genko nuts (50). Thus Naoe connects stories to her personal experiences and observes how the stories are not static and are intimately connected to one's identity.

Naoe further recounts the story of a mountain demoness, Yamanba, through which she subverts the

concept of white supremacy. Yamanba creates millions of soft skinned people from squeezing maggots from her breasts and tells them that they are weak, but soon their skin will bake to “lovely shades of brown” (Goto 118). She warns that some, who won’t turn brown, should be taken care of. This is an inversion of the notion of the superiority of the white skinned over the dark skinned and also of the role of females in ‘creation’. The story establishes that the whites are weak and have to be taken care of by the dark ones.

Naoe and Murasaki confront the “facts” created for them by challenging it with their storytelling, where facts are reinterpreted and retold from different perspectives. Thus the old woman finds a new dimension to abandonment, the Yamanba story stresses on the supremacy of the dark skinned over the white skinned, Izanagi & Izanami story showcases female creativity and the story of Issun-Boshi, a woman’s protest against subjugation and refusal to be the victim of a hero. The stories choose to disagree with patriarchal and ethnocentric norms established through Japanese myths that are always used by the white Canadians as the reference points to Japanese culture and identity and thereby to stereotype JCs in Canada. The novel talks of fluid identities and the necessity to look self critically at one’s cultural myths and to retell the myths to show that cultural identity is not static but bound to change through self-criticism and revisionist myth making.

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Performing Girlhood: Celebrating Female Identity in Indian English Children's Literature

ANTO THOMAS C.

A critical exploration into female identity in Indian English Children's Literature reminds me of an anecdote. When I distributed the brochures of the 2008 international conference of the Children's Literature Association of India (CLAI) on the topic "Politics & Polemics in Children's Literature" to an auspicious gathering of creative writers and storytellers in New Delhi during the 2007 International Festival of Storytelling organized by Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC/Indian IBBY), a noted young male children's writer from India came up to me and asked: "POLITICS & POLEMICS? Is there so much to talk about in our children's literature?" That author's concept of Indian children's literature did not augment from the common opinion Indian experts in children's literature often share with one another: children's literature consists of a few simple, didactic tales narrated to children solely for their moral edification. Is there not a politics involved in sustaining children's literature as simple and naïve? Traditionally, children's literature is considered as simple, innocent and trivial—not 'real literature'. Canonical mainstream

literary conventions take the political stance that children's literature has to remain merely as a medium by adult society for edification and entertainment of children. However, a greater political motivation is involved in diverting from the common perception of children and their literature, altering children's literature, designing a revolution in the genre. Speaking of this transformation in contemporary Indian children's literature written in English it has to be acknowledged that the majority of these Indian writers for children are women and their adult audience vastly constitute of the English-educated upper middle-class Indian women who now form a considerable population that influence the preferences for buying books for children. It is then natural that their liberal worldview that includes their progressive gender attitudes is reflected in literature too. Before dealing with this sea change occurring in Indian children's fiction in English a brief review of the traditional traits of children's literature in India is deemed necessary.

Popular and traditional Indian children's literature is a mode of writing frozen into the stereotypical, religious, folk and mythological stories that frame it quintessentially to a narrow space, whatever be the efforts of contemporary authors and other specialists of children's literature in breaking these walls of limitations. On the one hand, the rich tradition of narrating tales to children is a great oral force in India, and on the other hand, a systematic written body of literary works meant for children and a criticism of such writings are not a part of Indian literary tradition. In her essay "Fictions of Difference: Contemporary Indian Stories for Children" Rajeswari Sunder Rajan states: "Imaginative literature intended specifically for children

is not part of Indian literary tradition” (100). Many do not pay attention to the oral tales as instrumental in sustaining patriarchal traditions as they are often wearing religious halos that sustain their perpetuity. Although great works like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, *King Vikram* and the *Riddles of the Vetala* and other mythological tales of India are also published as essentially fantasy literature for children their quintessential male dominated perspective perhaps constrains the empowerment of female children in contemporary India, at least to a great extent. These traditional fantasies and the contemporary children’s literature modelled on them portray girls as fragile little creatures bound by the rules of the hegemonic male world keeping the girl characters under the veil of a number of limits. There are no central girl-child characters in many of these children’s stories in English in India; even in many a fiction addressed to the adult audience there are no representative works that present a liberated female child as the protagonist. Too early in their lives the girl-characters in many Indian English fiction are forced to take up the roles of persecuted wives, pathetic widows, suffering daughters-in-law, or, tragic mothers. Traditional children’s literature in India too eliminates focusing the girl child as the protagonists. The space allotted to them is small, and their circle of acquaintance limited. Within that limited space they must contain all of themselves—all their thoughts, all their pain, and all their ideas. Girls are either silenced or portrayed as celestial princesses of the Paradise of Limits* in traditional Indian fantasies. However,

* I borrow this idea from my Canadian friend Michelle Superle who has a doctoral degree in contemporary Indian children’s literature from the Newcastle University in England. She is a pioneering Western scholar

contemporary stories for children in India, especially by women writers, now portray their heroines as breaking these paradises of limits. These stories portray girls as the saviours. They offer fresh outlook and alternative perspective into their female self and thus stories lead the reader to a better reality as performing girlhood is celebrated in these stories. These girls express their feminine identity and eradicate the evil around their world. My paper will make a study of this new sub-genre of writing in India and I will particularly focus on a collection of stories of contemporary Indian children's writer Deepa Agarwal entitled *Not Just Girls* (2004), keeping in milieu Judith Butler's theories of gender performativity that may have influenced this radical perspective in writing for children, hitherto not much experimented in children's literature in India.

According to Butler, the coherence we traditionally attribute to sex, gender, and sexuality, as natural behaviour requires reconsiderations. Subverting the common acceptance of categorization of gender as natural, she argues that gender is a culturally constructed one. It is through a repetition of stylised acts in time that we now perceive them as natural. Butler questions our traditional belief regarding gender that ascribes certain gendered behaviours as natural. Instead, she argues that our learned gendered behaviour that we attribute generally as femininity and masculinity is an act of performance, one that is imposed upon us by diverse socio-political pressures that control our being like the patriarchal hegemony or the pressures of performing heterosexuality. Thus, Butler enlightens us

exploring into the aspects of nation building, identity development, and female empowerment in Indian children's fiction in English.

to the essential performative nature of gender. In other words, our concepts of stereotyped gender behaviour such as virile and active masculine gender, submissiveness and silent passivity as feminine, or our notion of finding the natural heterosexual desire in male bodies are culturally constructed through acts of stylised repetition in history. Butler characterizes gender as the effect of reiterated acting—that produces the effect of a static or normal gender while obscuring the contradiction and instability of any single person's gender action. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Butler rejects the traditional notion of gender identity and prefers to consider gender as free-floating and fluid rather than fixed. She explains:

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one. (6)

Butler's notion of performance opens the door to a richer understanding of agency within the historical and cultural constraints of our gender norms. Gender, according to Butler, is not as we commonly perceive as compartmentalized, strictly confining to material, bodily facts but is a social construction. Gender then is a fiction and is vulnerable to undergo transformation, as it is open to change and contestation.

What has Butler to do with our children's literature, you may ask. Can such sturdy theories have anything to do with the frail topic, Indian children's literature? Can we talk of the political implications of Butlerian theory on our writings for children? Can we make an analysis of

a work in Indian children's literature foregrounded by Butler's theory? In this paper I explore the performances of girlhood identity in Deepa Agarwal's collection of stories *Not Just Girls* (2004). The performances of the girls in these stories will be analyzed using Judith Butler's theories of gender as performance, examining the ways that characters both conform to the female norms of gender binaries and possibly subvert those norms through their own struggles to achieve identities. Butler's theory of performativity offers a framework for examining the ways that fiction reflects, produces, and reproduces gender for readers. Through her stories, Deepa Agarwal is making a deliberate attempt to focus on the particular condition of female alienation in contemporary society. She questions the continuing colonization of female identity and she refuses to accept the restrictions set by patriarchal hegemony. Following Butler's interpretation of gender performance we can assume that rather than having stable, constant, fixed and natural gender identity, children are either made to conform to or initiated to perform their identities through reiterated actions, within the constraints of cultural norms of gender identity Indian society permits. Indian children 'enact' their gender every day and the process of their conforming to or performing constructively male or female identity in comprehensible ways, in accordance with male/female gender norms, is a continuous part of the social and narrative worlds of young people. How do girls learn to perform girlhood? How do they learn to perform their female identities? In addition to the many sources of input from magazines, television, websites, and other media, girls also learn the traits of girlhood from realistic fiction featuring female characters. It will be interesting to see that a study of

this sort can evolve later into what Catherine Driscoll, an Australian scholar, has attempted to picture in Western culture as “a genealogy of girlhood”. Driscoll’s study, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (2002), analyses the concept of girlhood in western history and culture and considers “how girls have functioned as an index of broad cultural changes and continuities” (3). A genealogy of girlhood in India needs to be attempted in the backdrop of contemporary children’s fiction.

While examining the portrayal of the female child in literature in India I realize that there is a great vacuum: neither in fiction addressed to adults nor in stories for children girl-characters play significant roles. This may indicate, as N. Sharada Iyer, a scholar in Indian writing in English, observes as a literary symbol that reflects the “social reality” that negate the feminine and limit the appearance of the girl child so well. According to Iyer, the representations of Indian girls in children’s fiction are “patterned on submission and subordination” (87). She concludes that Indian girlhood is “an invisible silent presence” that gains no space in Indian literature to celebrate the limitless joys of childhood experiences for them. Despite the fact that the construction of ideal femininity in Indian literature is romanticised into the mystified Krishna-Radha relationship the actual experience of females is often reduced to a depiction of their sufferings. This stereotyped construction of girlhood quickly transformed to a womanhood of enduring sufferings gestures the negation of a happy girlhood in Indian stories. Often Indian authors hesitate to linger on girlhood; seldom do we find an Indian girl portrayed as wild, naughty, mischievous, playing games, roaming about freely with their untidy limbs and

unkempt hair, enjoying to be performing their childhood. Instead, they are presented as happy in their “Paradise of Limitations” of their long skirts, anklets, and bracelets, the trinkets that confine them to their future submissive roles as obedient wives, pathetic widows and suffering mothers. Female child’s gender identity is then constructed to suit the male politics. Gender roles are conserved to perpetuate patriarchal values. Then, the traditional gender construction of the female child to suit male flair for domination exposes the polemics that gender is not biological but a social and cultural construct. Revolting against these stereotyped gender roles contemporary women children’s writers in India have begun to question this gender politics by tracing a quest for self-definition of the feminine identity.

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Contemporary theoreticians agree that our language determines our identity and our worldview. Then, the books we read determine our self to a great extent, especially the books we are provided with as children and young adults. Traditionally, an Indian girl is expected to grow up to be meek and mild, fragile, submissive, obedient and docile to her male counterpart. Her lot is to be a caged bird, a victim of much oppression, and a slave to male, patriarchal hierarchy. As our hegemonic male dominated society does not want to grant ‘subjectivity’/centrality/voice to children (as well as to women), we do not take (female) children seriously and by implication trivialize children’s literature as sub-literary moral tales. Perhaps, in the future we can have scholarly explorations in this area undertaking an engaging and enlightening study that offers provocative new insights into the institutional underpinning of our children’s literature. Through her writings for children,

Deepa Agarwal, has offered a cultural resistance to the intrinsic value of childhood expressed through sentimental, condescending and moralizing tales that form and sustain submissive identity in children. Many of her books treat male and female children as equal and at times she pictures some girl characters as more intelligent, more adventurous and better talented than their male counterparts. Beginning with the character Sheela that appears in one of her early books *Ashok's New Friends* (1990) who is portrayed as equal with the boys in the story, continuing up to Shanti in *Shanti's Friend* (2007) we find that girl characters are adventurous, courageous, and intelligent. They master their troubles, solve their problems, and ultimately discover their true identity as females. By portraying characters who have broken our traditional concepts of gender behaviour Deepa Agarwal seems to stress the performative nature of gender and as the comments on the back flap of *Not Just Girls* states, "In these wonderful stories, through some extra-ordinary incidents, girls discover that they are 'not just girls'!"

How performativity is different from performance in the ordinary sense has perturbed the critical world. According to Butler, the "reduction of performativity to performance would be a mistake" (*Bodies That Matter* 234). The applications of performativity in children's literature imply the performance of characters even when Butler's argument would ideally keep performativity theoretically different from performance. John Stephens in his essay "Performativity and the Child who May not be a Child" (2006) identifies three forms of performances of characters in fiction as performative. He applies Butlerian theory into children's literature and says:

If Butler's declaration is extended to apply to works of fiction, it might well be argued that performativity should normally be kept conceptually separate from performance, except when it is projected through performance in one of at least three forms. First, characters are represented in performance when depicted as engaged in overt role-playing, as in embedded theatrical performance or in roles entailing disguise, such as cross-dressing . . . Second, characters are represented in performance when depicted as engaged in sporting events or other forms of structured competition . . . Third, characters are represented in performance when they are shown as self-consciously conforming to behaviour protocols other than those which readers come to recognize as their habitual mode of behaviour. (5)

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Performativity in fiction is then different from performance. But, as Stephens notes above, in exceptional cases, characters indulging in performance are treated as performative as they highlight that performativity is a social construction rather than an essence inherent in gender. All these subtle and metaphorical senses of performativity in fiction may not operate in an Indian context as the societal norms vary. However, the marginalized and repressed female identities subversively express their gender identity through performativity, as the following examples explicate.

Deepa Agarwal portrays characters that succeed in their quest for identity by employing various strategies. Examining how she has altered our traditional gender perceptions in these simple tales, it can be argued that traditional male writers' strategies to formulate a positive identity in the male children are here consciously employed by the female writer and these

girl-characters are envisioned to focus upon their female identity. One such traditional methodology in our children's literature is to perceive the male child as heroic. The Child as the Liberator is a common theme to form positive child identity through children's literature. Deepa Agarwal helps female children to form a positive female identity by incorporating the theme of female child as the emancipator from troubles/evil in the world (and it is often evil fabricated by the male/cruel world) into which the female becomes a prey but resurrect from the death traps often set by the male world. The female child's performance as messiah liberates the (female) child reader and assists to gain positive female identity. In "Delivery Girl", the opening story in this anthology, Radha, a twelve year old bright but economically poor girl, is trapped by the wicked male world to be a carrier of drugs. With her sharp intelligence, Radha realizes her mistakes and decides to expose what true courage is. Assisted by Mamta didi the ideal woman/human being who assist her like a modern fairy godmother to save Radha from the mess she has unknowingly been put into. Subverting the patriarchal norms of identifying the messiah as male, a female social worker is pictured as an ideal *savoir come* to offer a more positive female identity to Radha—and traditionally Radha has been very submissive to her male lover in our venerable mythological framework. But, here as Radha proves her mettle with the assistance of the ideal woman we can notice a dichotomy set by the male gender behaviour as binary to the female one. All the male characters in this story—wicked, beastly, dominating and cruel Santo dada, Rakesh who assists Santo, and the father and brother of Radha, low ranked police, etc. are to some degree or the other presented as

undesirable human beings. While Santo dada exploits and traps a girl to criminal deeds, other males are accomplices in this nexus to subjugate and colonize women. Radha's moment of realization that she has been working as a tool in the male world, an agent to distribute drugs is significant in the story. Another female character, Laxmi, brings in this epiphany. Suresh, the victim of drugs, (obviously a male), dies of excess intake of drugs. When the stark truth stares her in her face Radha does not waver. Assisted by Mamta didi we find that the twelve-year-old Radha becomes a saviour by helping to imprison Santo dada and eliminating the dangers of the threats of evil beset on her world.

The settings of these stories construct an imaginary ideal society that value individual fulfilment and promote the individual pursuit of happiness. Here girl characters are expressing their ego as well as creating ideal communities as models for imitation. Deepa Agarwal portrays characters capable of acting independently as well as interdependently. These girls are simultaneously capable of altering their communities for the betterment of the society and at the same time they are portrayed as being influenced by other women models. Girl characters in these stories create an ideal society different from the one that promotes traditional male values. These perfect communities are presented as the desirable alternative to present state of chaos. In "Goat Bells", another story in this book, Tanvi, an eleven-year-old girl, along with her new friend Paruli, another girl of the same age, expose the chaotic criminal deeds of the male gang that steals the butterfly collection of Mr. Bose the lepidopterist. In "Do You Want to Play Football" Monica leads other girl characters to engage in football, a sporting event

stereotyped as male activity. The Principal's stubborn authoritative voice forbids female initiation into playing football that gain support from traditional societal attitudes. Often girls are asked to sit idle at home and indulge in soft skills like knitting, exactly as Sumit the male peer does tell Monica and her friends in the story. Monica overcomes these hurdles to lead her friends to a deviant performative act by being like Jess in *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002). For Deepa Agarwal, Monica and her team's revolt to learn to play football is not just a performative act that affirms equality for the feminine sex. This performance has a liberating power as illustrated in the girls' success in catching the thief who has snatched the purse of a travelling lady. The merits of playing football include the provision of robust health to the weaker sex; but what is more important is that evil in the society is conquered through the affirmation of these performances.

The celebration of performances in the stories discussed here leads to positive self-identity. In another story, Madhuli conquers her doubts and learns that she is capable of doing much more than what is expected of a female figure. As the story progresses we have a distinct binary relationship that separates the societal expectations from traditional male performance and the possible omission of female acts from such spheres of action. However, as the story progresses we read that Haria the brother has been not able to do much where as Madhuli acts confidently to take her sick grandma to the hospital as she suffers from severe stomach ache. Madhuli's timely intervention to speak up and tell her elders what to do saves the grandma's life as she has a successful operation. If traditional female children are not expected to face troubles they are often portrayed as

disappointed fragile creatures easily giving up, whereas Madhuli is steadfast to the core encouraging female readers to emulate her actions: “She wouldn’t have to wait till Haria came. Madhuli could manage too! (*Not Just Girls* 85). Deepa Agarwal explores the crux of the matter in poor self-image and notes that if a person is succumbed to doubts and fears it will naturally lead to a poor self-esteem. “Double Vision” is a story that pictures the worries and uncertainties symbolically represented through the double vision that Neeti has. Initially she has a poor self image that is wonderfully communicated through her looking at her own self in the mirror to recognize her negatives that lead her to a strange feeling of disappointment and scare and the injured feeling of being left out. Her confusion is increasing, as there is a mixed feeling of relief that torments her all the more. What is reflected in the mirror is personified in the image of Shreya her classmate—“a girl she didn’t like at all, a girl with a mean pugnacious face, who had the habit of saying the nastiest things” (*Not Just Girls* 45). Two distinct performances redeem Neeti in the story. First, she assists Shreya by getting a spider out from Shreya’s arms. Shreya appreciates this action as she hates spiders enormously and when she thanks Neeti for this kind gesture estrangement melts to tamed happiness. However, performativity has a more psychological implication in the second act of performance. Neeti’s relationship with her mother is mended as her mother falls ill with a terrible headache and Neeti performs cooking along with her father who assists her. Affirmation of a male figure collaborating with the female in cooking food is usually unacknowledged in public in the Indian social contexts that pigeonhole

cooking as an activity of women. The child-reader has drawn her father out from such sterile customs that label cooking to an activity of feminine gender. Thus, reading these stories and imbibing these ideas, the child-reader too develops agency and can be instrumental in achieving gender equality. Finally, as Neeti is able to glance at herself in the mirror with more confidence and joy, the female child-reader too engages in a participatory performance of this self-confidence and more positive self-identity. Here performativity is merged with the mirror technique in this story for children and a better self-image is the emergent result.

The stories of Deepa Agarwal discussed here seem to pose a different view of gender identity that enables Indian girlhood to break their silences of non-representation. Gender then is seen as fluid, and variable. The ways we behave at different times and in different situations determine our identity. From these stories we may conclude that Deepa Agarwal agrees with Butler's view of gender as performative. Gender is not a core aspect of our identity but rather a performance. Gender identity is determined by how we behave at different times. These stories subvert ideas of gender norms, challenging the "constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusion of identity" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 148). Such a perception of identity blurs the boundaries of gender labelling. Our traditional views of gender roles may be the root-causes of inequality of the sexes. What these stories ultimately aim is to deconstruct the way society views gender roles and thus lead to changes responsible for an improved attitude towards the feminine. Similar stories may gradually change the patriarchal society that affirms stereotyped gender roles

and improve the lot of women in society. Applying Butler's performative theory Deepa Agarwal's set of stories open up possibilities for the readers to form and choose their own individual identity.

Reading Deepa Agarwal's stories we feel that finally an Indian writer is making a significant contribution to contemporary Indian children's literature as these stories portray girls with positive identity. This identity construction result into emerging a new self-consciousness for the female readers, as is evident in stories like "Never Talk to Strangers". This story twists and plays upon the stale adult advice: "Never talk to strangers, girls have to be careful . . ." (*Not Just Girls* 105). In the story, Porruva, an adolescent girl, learns the importance of discretion to distinguish between strangers and possible friends. "Fire", another story presents the readers distinctions in empathetic class-consciousness essential for an Indian girl reader of stories in English. The story presents three girls: Puja, Mitu and Paruli. While Puja and Mitu are girls of the upper middle class, Paruli comes from the working class. Puja and Mitu play the game of fire creating fire in their imagination. Paruli suggests bringing real fire. Their dangerous performance of playing with fire leads to a physical outbreak of fire as well as an estrangement in relationships among the girls. When a fire breaks out while the girls play together, Paruli tells a lie to escape from the blame of being accused as the agent of a near destruction. Puja cannot tolerate this insincerity on the part of a friend like Paruli. She refuses to befriend Paruli again. She comes to understand Paruli's family circumstances that prompted her to tell lies only too late. She has no more opportunities to have her childhood games with Paruli. But, Paruli who is led to a

married life early is silenced soon after her marriage: "Getting married seemed to have thrown her into a permanent state of embarrassment" (*Not Just Girls* 102). Negotiating their complicated construction of self-identity by performing their particularities of gender these girl characters struggle to understand self, society, culture and gender-identity.

Feminine identity has been much suppressed in the Indian society. In his article "Children's Literature as Women's Writing" Perry Nodelman argues that children's literature is a subversive form of art that expresses the suppressed voices of women and children treated as culturally invisible in the past. Contemporary Indian children's literature that augment a positive identify for women should be investigated in the context of Perry Nodelman's thesis that children's literature is essentially a typical form of women's writing that responds bravely to a heavy repression experienced in the past and we have to view these writings as an alternative way of representing reality. When we examine Deepa Agarwal's stories that portray girls who are different, and female characters who discover true bravery and conquer their doubts to learn that they are capable of doing much more than they believe, these stories formulate a new genre of writing in contemporary India that portray girls and women with a positive image of themselves. This significant contribution to Indian children's literature should be discussed in the light of contemporary theories as they have enhanced to a significant body of work. Critics have now started to recognise such a shift in focus in contemporary Indian children's literature that helps to construct a positive image of women. As Manorama Jafa,

a contemporary Indian children's writer, notes in "Women in Children's Literature in India" (1995),

the change in the image of women in Indian literature for children has taken place largely in English books. Books in other Indian languages still largely portray the old traditional image of women. They do almost everything that the boys do. They go to school with the boys, gain knowledge and skills, take up professions, and embark on an independent career of their own. (5)

Indian English fiction has, then, a specific mission to achieve for female child-readers in the country.

Mohini Rao, a contemporary Indian critic, explains the reasons for this current shift in focus and according to her this metamorphosis has a social connotation. It reflects a change in the social structure in India. A new society much influenced by the liberated Western social attitudes is emerging and this has changed the social perception of women. The tempestuous clarion call for change in Indian society in general gets a performative expression in contemporary children's literature too. Mohini Rao elucidates:

Women, for instance, had acquired new status. Their equal rights were being recognized. The laws were being re-written. A new, emancipated Indian woman was emerging fast. It was important to have this 'new woman' in children's books too. Stories upholding the old image of the obsequious woman were now rejected by more enlightened people. (68)

Researchers in children's literature in India now need to focus their studies on the implications of these social changes and explore more into the role of females in Indian English children's literature.

The stories of Deepa Agarwal in *Not Just Girls* prove that the new context in writing that Manorama Jafa and Mohini Rao mention has stably established itself. In this context, these stories empower readers to imagine girls as assertive, emancipative, and revolutionary. They are harbingers of a social change too. Performativity shifts the literary focus from traditional male perspective. The stories of Deepa Agarwal empower readers to imagine girls as assertive, individualistic, courageous, interdependent and as persons of increased self-esteem. Through these stories girls are brought to the focus place in children's stories and readers can model on these girl characters who think independently to question, accept or reject traditional values of the society. The performances of these characters dynamically break away from patriarchal expectations and accelerate self-empowerment.

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Role of ‘Reflective Teaching’ in Professional Development

THOMAS KOKKAT

Every teacher aspires to be the best one in the college/university/country. But how is this to be achieved in the modern world of cut throat competition? The task is not easy. There is a tacit agreement among the scholars that a great author/writer is both born and made. His/her inborn talents are to be perfected through constant practice. This is very true in the case of teachers too. A great teacher is both born and made. Unless one perfects the innate talents, none can be successful in teaching career. Some may have the gift of the gab. But even for others there are many ways to refine oneself and excel in teaching field. Reflective teaching is an important means in his/her ongoing endeavour.

What is reflective teaching?

Julie Tice defines reflective teaching as “looking at what you do in the classroom, thinking about why you do it, and thinking about if it works in a process of self-observation and self-evaluation”. In fact reflection involves a regular pattern of collecting, analyzing and evaluating information on what goes on in the classroom. Tice further elaborates:

Reflective teaching therefore implies a more systematic process of collecting, recording and analyzing our thoughts and observation, as well as those of our students, and then going into making changes. If a lesson went well we can describe it and think about why it was successful; if the students didn't understand a language point we introduced we need to think about what we did and why it may have been unclear; if students were misbehaving—what they were doing, when and why?

Similar considerations seem to be observed in the perceptions of Calderhand and Gates (1993). These scholars associate reflective teaching with a set of abilities and skills that they think a teacher should possess. They identify reflective teaching as being “largely a list of abilities set in the context of teaching and gaining empowerment. They include teacher's abilities to discuss their own practice, appraise ethical and moral issues in teaching, take greater responsibility for their own development and develop personal theories of educational practice”. Atkins and Murphy (cited in Moon 1999) too underline the same skills and categorize them into three: self-awareness, description of the experience verbally or in writing and self-evaluation that leads to self-correction.

According to Baily (1997) “the term reflective teaching has come to signify a movement in teacher education, in which student teachers or working teachers analyze their own practice and its underlying basis, and then consider alternative means for achieving their ends...”

Nunan and Lamb (1996), as cited in Baily (1997), are of opinion that “reflecting on one's teaching, and in the process, developing knowledge and theories of teaching,

is essential component in the life long process of professional growth". They further add that reflective teachers "are capable of monitoring, critiquing and defending their actions in planning, implementing and evaluating language programs" (120).

Thompson, et. al (2001) provide a section on reflection as significant component of their discussion on evaluation of teaching. They base their discussion of the concept on two of the reflection process authored by Donald Schön (1987): *Reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. Reflection-in-action, according to their citation, takes place while lessons are going on. An effective teacher is required to make quick assessment of the situation and adjust the lessons accordingly. He/she may be prepared to act differently, if situation demands. Reflection-on action happens if one reflects before or after the event or action. This is what some educators call to be reflection "outside the action". Both the reflection on the planning of the lesson and a pondering over it afterwards are equally important. A post mortem examination can sometimes solve many problems.

For Gibbs and Habeshaw (1971) reflective teaching is a way of learning by doing. Reflection or self-evaluation can give a revived experience to the teacher concerned which is very educative. And thereby they claim that there are four elements in a teacher's life in a cyclical sequence: experiencing, reflecting, thinking and planning.

Need of reflection on/in teaching

According to Posner (2005) experience alone cannot lead to growth. He emphasizes that it should be coupled

with reflection. Hence his equation is Experience + Reflection = Growth. He writes:

as this equation suggests (and as John Dewey has argued) we do not actually learn from experience as much as we learn from reflecting on experience. Reflection on an experience means, to put it most simply, to think about the experience, what the experience means, how it felt, where it might lead, what to do about it. (21)

In the same context he provides the meaning of reflective thinking by owning the origin of the word to the educational philosopher John Dewey. He quotes Dewey's thought that reflective thinking means "turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration . . . in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each outcome in turn leans back on, or refers to its predecessors..." Dewey further says, according to Posner (2005), that reflective teaching enables us to act in "deliberate and intentional fashion" to achieve better results (21). These insights from Dewey seem to have good impacts on Posner who goes on to distinguish between non-reflective teachers and the reflective ones. He states that the non reflective

rely on routine behaviour and are regarded more by impulse, tradition and authority than by reflection. They simplify their professional lives by uncritically accepting everyday reality in schools. On the contrary, he describes reflective teachers as [who] actively and persistently, and carefully consider and reconsider beliefs and practices in the light of the grounds that support them and the further consequences to which they lead. (21)

Reflective thinking is an alternate way that Posner strongly advises for beginner teachers as well. He says that it saves the reflector from falling back on tradition and encourages him “to act in a deliberate and intentional way and devise new ways of teaching” (22). His description goes on to advise reflection as providers of meaning and workable conclusions to experience. One who gains experience, according to Posner, should also reflect for experience is ‘shallow and at best leading to superficial knowledge’. He succinctly puts his position in the following words:

if you merely ‘do’ your field experience without thinking deeply about it, if you merely allow your experience to wash over you without savouring and examining them for their significance, then your growth will be greatly limited. (22)

Most of the insights that scholars obtained from Dewey are far reaching and could be seen in almost all writers treating the issue of reflection. Just as Posner has referred to Dewey, Zeichner and Liston (1996) also make a clear reference to the philosopher as well. In this book they capture his thoughts of reflective action as an “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or practise in the light of the reasons that support it and the further consequence to which it leads” (7). Other significant authors who supported Dewey’s views, as cited in Zeichner and Liston (1996), are Mackay and Marland (1978) who refer to reflection as a “process of interactive thoughts on past experiences in the classroom” (8). Shevelson and Stern (1981) also defined reflection as “assessing plans and accomplishments and revising them for the future” (8). Zeichner and Liston (1996) further argue that not all teaching necessarily constitutes reflective teaching. They believe that

if a teacher never questions the goals and the values that guide his work, the context in which he or she teaches, or never examines his or her assumptions, then this individual is not engaged in reflective teaching. (8)

These scholars have also identified a set of characteristics with which a reflective teacher is associated. They state that for a teacher to be reflective, he/ she must:

- Examine, frame, and attempt to solve the dilemmas of classroom practice;
- Be aware of and question the assumptions and values he/she brings to teaching;
- Be attentive to the institutional and cultural context in which he/she teaches;
- Take part in curriculum development and is involved in school change efforts;
- Take responsibility for his/her own professional development. (Zeichner and Liston 6)

Pollard and Triggs (1997) have also built on Dewey's notion of 'reflective action' and identified six key characteristics about reflective teaching. These are:

1. Reflective teaching implies an active concern with aims and consequences, as well as means and technical efficiency.
2. Reflective teaching is applied in a cyclical or spiralling process, in which teachers monitor, evaluate and revise their own practise continuously.
3. Reflective teaching requires competence in methods of class room enquiry, to support the development of teaching competence.
4. Reflective teaching requires attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness.

5. Reflective teaching is based on teacher judgement, which is informed partly by self-reflection and partly by insights from educational disciplines.
6. In reflective teaching, personal and professional fulfilment is enhanced through collaboration and dialogue with colleagues. (6)

Wandberg and Rohwer (2003) cite Campbell, et. al (1995) to explicitly put the marks of a reflective teacher. They state:

A good teacher is one who matches instruction to the needs of students. This teacher spends much time evaluating the implications of one's teaching decisions in the classroom. This is the mark of a reflective practitioner. Such reflection leads to greater knowledge about the students, about the subject being taught, and about the act of teaching. (12)

From this citation they define teachers as “reflective practitioners who continually evaluate the effects of their choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seek opportunities to grow professionally” (12).

For these writers reflection is an inalienable part of teachers' professional development. In the following words they clearly state this:

Reflection is deemed an important component of the teaching profession . . . Reflecting on classroom practices encourages growth. Learning to teach well is a result of reflective practice. As teachers engage in instruction and then reflect on it, the process offers insights into various dimensions of teaching and learning that can lead to better teaching. As teachers engage in reflection, they become more thoughtful

about their practice and, consequently, more effective teachers. (14)

Wandberg and Rohwer (2003) have also acknowledged characteristics and abilities essential to developing effective techniques from Ross, Bondy and Kyle (1993). They listed these in terms of what the teacher must do (15). According to them, the teacher must:

1. Demonstrate introspection, responsibility and open-mindedness,
2. See things from multiple perspectives,
3. Use adequate evidence to support or assess decisions,
4. Use educational, ethical, and practical criteria.

Reflection, as the descriptions by the above writers show, is a tool with which a teacher or teacher educator can take responsibility for his/her professional development. For a teacher who regularly reflects and who doesn't offer 'lack of time' as an excuse for not doing it, reflection guarantees 'ownership in their professional development' (15). They further explain:

To become the successful, effective educator we all aspire to be, you must become the habitual reflector. To become a good teacher, you must take time each day to reflect on your practice while sponging feedback from one or more colleagues. (15)

Peer observation and mutual help, especially among the beginners/youngsters, are strongly recommended for professional development.

Every good teacher should cultivate the habit of spending a few minutes after every class or at the end of the day if he/she wants to further improve professionally. Wandberg and Rohwer simplify the routine of a reflective teacher and advice:

Take fifteen minutes at the end of your day to relax and think about how the day went. Consider what worked well and what did not. Think about your feelings throughout your day. Finally, record your impressions. Over time, a pattern will emerge to guide you in setting for your professional development. Pattern will emerge, problems and their potential solutions will come clear, and a focus on student learning will continue. Reflection is a critical piece in becoming a skilful teacher. (16)

A successful teacher should cultivate the habit of reflection-in-teaching too. Only then he/she can adjust himself/herself to changing situations. Human beings are dynamic and our students are ever active, posing new challenges every day. To be successful in such situations, one needs to be innovative and reflective during the process of teaching. Later on he/she can reflect and find out whether the innovation succeeded or not, and seek better methods for the future.

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Theatre formation from Bharata Muni's *Natyasastra* to the Modern Indian Theatre

ROSHNI R.

The basic ideas of the science of theatre formation were first brought into light by Bharata Muni, the author of famous *Natyasastra* which has influenced the theatres from time immemorial to the contemporary theatre. The introduction of computer technologies right from the formation of theatre space to the effects of sound and light has increased the level of understanding of the audience and critics, who dealt with the subject. These revolutionary changes started in 1980s in European theatre and the technological base was improved with the interactive knowledge derived from, in depth study of the theatre in Eastern countries, particularly in India. The extent of academic influence of *Natyasastra* of Bharata Muni has enlightened the audience in East and West. While looking at the horizons of change in the future, the blend of the basics of *Natyasastra* and computer applications will make a sea change in the years to come in the field of theatre arts. Those who work in the contemporary theatre will have to critically analyse the art of presentation with the view to depict the relation between the individual space and the given society.

India's richest traditions in theatre dates back to 5000 years with the emergence of Puranas after Vedic literature. The Bharata Muni's *Natyasastra*, the earliest and a most elaborate treatise on dramaturgy rests on divine origin, attributing it to the *Natyaveda* by Lord Brahma. The consolidation and codification of various traditions in dance, mime and drama done by Bharata Muni, are based on ten classifications of drama ranging from one act to ten acts. There is no parallel, in the history of dramaturgy regarding the treatment of this subject dealt in Bharata Muni's *Natyasastra*, which address to the playwright, the director and the actor, for the formation of the play combining Opera, ballet and drama.

The two types of productions conceived by the ancient theorists Lokadharmi (realistic), which contains reproductions of human behaviour on the stage and the natural presentation of the objects, while the other Natyadharmi (conventional) which is the presentation in the forms of stylish gestures and symbolism, which are considered more artistic than realistic. The integral element of Indian theatre started with narrative form, recitation, singing and dancing, which encompass all other forms of literature and fine arts into their physical presentation, literature, mime, music, dance, movements, painting, sculpture and the architecture—all mixed into one and being called 'Natya' or the theatre in India.

The first development of the theatre started during 1500 to 1000 BC; but no traces of evidence are seen, even though the dance and music forms existed in the earliest phase of drama activities. During AD 1000, Sanskrit theatre was almost based on entirely on the

rules and regulations laid down in the *Natyasastra*. *Sariputraprakarna* by Asvagosha (AD 78 to AD 144) in which a courtesan forms the central figure of the play that is humorous in tone exposes Buddhist teachings. Bhasa who came soon after took his themes from different sources like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and semi historical plays, giving preponderance to the characters like Dhuryodhana and Karna. In Shudraka's plays deviating from the paths of his predecessors, the element of conflicts introduced in them. Besides hero and heroines villain also played a prominent role. Kalidasa's of 5th century is most widely known of the entire Sanskrit dramatists and his drama *Malavikagnimitra*, *Vikarmorvasi* and *Shakuntalam* are considered classic works. Bhavabhuti (AD 700) wrote *Uttara-Rama-charita* and *Mahavira-charita*, Visakhadatta's *Mudarakshasa* are some of the outstanding Sanskrit plays.

Shudraka, Harsha, Vishakadatta, Bhasa, Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti were, undoubtedly the six greatest Sanskrit playwrights of all times who have contributed in a great measure through their own dramatic style in Sanskrit plays. Sanskrit plays are mainly said to be of ten types: *Nataka*, *Prakarna*, *Anka*, *Vyayoga*, *Bhana*, *Samvakara*, *Vithi*, *Prabasana*, *Dima* and *Ithamgra*. The *Natyasastra* focus on only two types: one is *Nataka* and another one is *Prakarna*. *Swapanavasavadatta*, *Uttara-Rama-charita* and *Shakuntalam* fall into the category of the *Nataka*. These plays deal with the exploits of a hero, either a royal saga or king, who is always successful in the end. The dominant sentiment is love and heroism. The plays range between five and seven acts. Plays falling into the category of *Prakarna* narrate stories that were invented

by their authors. The hero is a Brahmin, Minister or Merchant while the heroine is a courtesan. Love is the predominant sentiment. *Anka* (act) involves a change in the hero's basic situation as the plot develops. It is made up of a series of incidents that relate to the major character. Certain events are never depicted in an *Anka*, like a battle, marriage, death, loss of the kingdom and the pronouncement of a curse.

The Sanskrit plays were limited by certain conventions. Tragedy was taboo and the end was always happy. There was no place for plays that raised controversies. The basic plot in most Sanskrit plays centre around the hero who struggles for the object of his desire. The realisation of this goal is closely entwined with the three ends of Hindu life—duty, pleasure and wealth. Thus, there was an opening, progression, development, pause and conclusion. Unlike French and German neo-classical plays, both time and place were flexible. Within these parameters however, it appears that most playwrights found enough space for exerting their individualistic creative expression.

Sanskrit theatre was characterised by its high degree of refinement in performance technique. It followed well-articulated, aesthetic principles, usually those laid out in the ancient dramatic texts. It depended on a high degree of audience knowledge and expertise, i.e., only the refined sensibility could appreciate it. Religion played an important role in drama as certain rituals accompanied most plays, and even the stage was consecrated before a performance. Thus the Sanskrit drama could be called an amalgamation of the religious, educational and entertaining elements.

The works of the dramatics of yore are subjected to the dramatic forms duly amended in Kathakali, Kudiyaattom and Chakyarkooth by contemporary play writers which are mainly played in Natyagriha of the temple, as a part of the festivals address to the limited audience. The digitized records of these dramas are widely circulated through media to have a wider appreciation among the lovers of theatre. Even though the personal experiences enjoyed by the individual audience are the direct outcome of this stage act, the technological intervention of digitalising the same resulted in the wider appreciation from different sections of society.

The development of modern theatre in India may be attributed to a change in the political set up in India. Over 200 years of British rule brought Indian theatre into direct contact with western theatre. The seeds of modern theatre were sown in the late 18th century, with the consolidation of British power in Bengal, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. It was thriving in the metropolises of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras and they first introduced their brand of theatre, based on London models. The initial purpose of the British, while introducing modern theatre in India was to provide entertainment for the British soldiers and citizens trying to acclimatize themselves to a foreign country. Initially, most dramatic works were composed in English, Bengali, Tamil and Marathi.

In the middle of the 19th century Indian theatre influenced not only the western literature, but also the feelings of nationalism and pride of the glorious past of the country. In January 1953, the most influential arts organizations, the Sangeet Nataka Akademi, started a

new chapter of Indian theatre. Then the National School of Drama under the directorship of Ebrahim Alkazi did much for the growth and promotion of modern theatre.

In the 1960s, mixing of suitable various styles and techniques from Sanskrit, medieval folk and western theatre, the modern Indian theatre was given a new, versatile and broader approach at every level of creativity. Among other pioneers of the dramatic revival are Ranchhodbal and Nanalla Kavi in Gujarat, Versalingam Guruzada Appa Rao and Ballary Raghavachari in Telugu, Santakavi Varadachari and Kailasam in Kannada, Laxminath Bezharu in Assamese, Kerala Varma Thampuran and C. V. Raman Pillai in Malayalam, Ramshankar Rai and Kalicharan Patnaik in Oriya and P. Sambandha Mudaliar in Tamil.

The year of 1972 turned out to be a landmark for the Indian vernacular theatre when Vijay Tendulkar's Marathi plays *Ghashiram Kotwal* made waves by its brilliant use of traditional folk forms in modern contemporary theatre. This led to the birth of a new breed of directors like B. V. Karanth, Habib Tanvir, Bansi Kaul and Rattan Thiyam. Feroz Khan is another accomplished playwright who has to his credit several outstanding plays like *Tumhari Amrita*, *Mahatama vs. Gandhi* and *Salesman Ramlal*. The last play is an Hindi adaptation of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

In 1998 India produced talented playwrights who had chosen English as their medium. Manjula Padmanabhan was the first Indian to earn international acclaim with her play *Bitter Harvest*, a futuristic play that dealt with the exploitation of the human body. Another talented playwright was Mahesh Dattani who had

produced thirteen plays, which included the play called *Do the Needful* for the BBC. He touched upon the sensitive issue of communalism in his play *Final Solutions*, which won him the Sahitya Akademi Award.

The modern theatre also reached the other states in South India at the beginning of the 19th century. Ramashankar Roy, Basanta Kumar Mahapatra were the pioneers of the Odisha theatre. In Tamil Nadu, the early exponents of the theatre were Prof. Sundaram Pillai, Sankardas Swamigal, Sabananda Mudaliar. In the recent times Sri V. Gopalakrishnan won the respect and admiration of the audience for his talent. Along with Sujatha Reddy and Thambi Kadambavanam, Gopi had started the Madras Players troupe in 1952 under the auspices of the British Council and had acted in quite a few English plays. He also founded the Gopi theatres in 1971, which staged nearly 30 plays, which included *Nittham oru yuddam*.

Ochira Velukutty, Thoppil Bhasi and N. N. Pillai are the most important contributors to Malayalam theatre in Kerala. Manipuri theatre has benefited a lot by the traditional folk drama and modern theatrical techniques of Ratan Tiyaam. In the present times, the dynamic duo of Crazy Mohan and Madhu Balaji has produced several comedy plays under the banner of Crazy Creation. Some of their plays are *Aladdin and 100 Watts Bulb*, *Krishkinda Kaandam*, *Marriage made in Saloon*, *Return of Crazy Thieves*, *Beware of Maadhu*, *Middle Class Murder*, *Madhil Mel Maadhu*, *Oru Babyude Diary Kurippu* and *Maadhu MLA*.

Although the emergence of cinema had given an elbow jerk to the popularity of theatre as the main medium of popular entertainment, several film

personalities themselves had contributed to the growth and promotion of theatre. They include Arvind Deshpande, Vijaya Mehta, Jabbar Patel, Satyadev Dube, Vaman Kendre, Dr Shriram Lagoo, Girish Karnad, Pearl Padamsee, Amol Palekar, Shashi Kapoor, Satish Kaushik, Farooq Shaikh, Naseeruddin Shah, Jaya Bacchan (*Dr. Mukta Ma Retire Hoti Hai*), Shabana Azmi (*Tumhari Amarta, Waiting Room*), Kavalam Narayana Paniker, Bharath Gopi, KPAC Lalitha and Mohan Lal.

The All India Radio was also instrumental in popularizing drama for a long time through its national and regional broadcasts. The Television also provided the much needed succour to the theatre artistes by way of Tele-Serials and Mega-Serials and soap Operas. However, today there are relatively few commercial theatre companies in India. Calcutta is said to have the most, approximately 3,000 registered amateur groups, Mumbai has around 500, and Chennai has 50 while Delhi has got hardly a dozen. Some serious theatre groups like the Indian National theatre, the Prithvi Theatre, Chingari and others are contributing greatly to popularize theatre. Some of these companies, like the Prithvi Theatre have gone online making themselves known globally utilizing the explosion in the information technology. Technological interventions of theatre are also seen in mobile. Mobile theatres are a kind of popular theatre form that exists only in Assam. For staging their plays, theatre groups travel different places with their casts, singers, musicians, dancers and the entire crew. Even the tent and chairs for the audience are carried with them. Mobile theatre was first staged on 2 October 1963 in Pathshala, Assam. Achyut Lahkar is known as the father of mobile theatre.

The common feature in theatrical art and traditional rituals and folk forms of art, is the element of spectacle which in the last instance is 'situation specific'. But, even in this respect, a good deal of divergence in the methodology of exposition, performance in the design of structures cannot go unnoticed. The structure and performance of the spectacle in a ritual or a folk form have their roots running deeper into the depths of social myths upon which they are based. And these myths are mixed up with the life pattern of the ancient communities and their specific interrelationship between the social formations of the period in which they lived with their productive relations and the existing productive forces. All these primary factors are dialectically related with their elemental sensibilities, their concept of Gods and Goddesses, their codes of virtue and vice, their awareness of truth and beauty and their interaction with nature and the cosmos as it were. The spectacle of a particular ritual and folk performance in a particular social-cultural matrix has ethos of its own, its elemental colour and social necessity. Moreover, to those who practice these forms, the performances become a meaningful social activity and the seasonal enactments aim at the full and absolute participation of the village communities concerned. It is to them, the inevitable observance of certain vital principles of the structure of their collective life.

The argument that theatrical performance can never evince the above mentioned collective characteristics of the ritualistic and folk performance, has to be scrutinized scientifically if one attempts to chart out the historical evolution of Malayalam theatre. Moreover, the methodological scaffolding for such an analysis has to shape itself and develop from the structure of collective

feelings and societal dimension of the elemental theatrical features of rituals and folk performances.

The Futuristic action plan for the revival and restoration of the theatre are on the agenda of the administration with the due participation of artists, social workers and politicians. The effect of the same can be seen in the funding characteristic of the administration working through the cultural department and the NGOs in the field. The technological interventions in the IT field have caused the globalization effect and consequently the revival pattern, rewards to artists and emergence of entities are seen. The ultimate aim of the art is the realization of individual scale within, resulting in synergy between the various groups existing in the system.

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The road map for the changes to be effected in the horizon of the future has to come from the joint efforts of the writers, artists, technicians and the audience. The extent of the moral and financial support from the Department of culture of Government entities will have a significant effect in this regard. The road map should include the proper analysis of theatre performance in the past and the vistas of knowledge and techniques available in computer science and technologies. The need for such an action plan is absolutely necessary to preserve the ancient forms of art which even today make significant influence on the appreciation level of public and critic. Many institutions have come forth with the support of the administration to have a calendar of activities ensuring the participation of artist, social workers and politicians. The cultural exchange programmes evolved in the process of interaction with

other countries and also within the state have resulted in better products of arts and culture.

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Relevance of Ecocriticism in Green Politics

C. G. SHYAMALA

The inherent changes in the ecosystem are inconclusive. Man's relationship with the planet remains inconceivable because of the destruction of the environment. Though ancient civilizations and native tribes thrived on natural resources, the destructive nature of humankind for a certain period of time has adversely affected the earth. The twenty-first century probably witnesses a crisis of a certain magnitude that proves detrimental in terms of political issues in relation to the planet. In this connection, many within movements related to the environment and green politics have adopted what they presume to be an ecocentric outlook. The focus of this paper is to explicate and analyse this ecocentric perception with respect to the scientist James Lovelock's particular reference to Gaia theory and formulate the reason why the proponents of ecocentrism attach significance to it. Ecocentrism is a complex and varied concept, therefore concentrating on one specific theory makes the task easier to comprehend, clarify, analyse, critique and explain the tenets of the theory. The importance of ecocentrism would be deciphered from the approach taken.

Ecocentrism invites innumerable definitions and it would be recognized as a world outlook where humankind is one of the inhabitants of the ecosystem. Feminist sociobiologists critique biological determinism, suggesting that traditional interpretations of evolutionary theory are patriarchal and erroneously lean on biological arguments to force females into roles of passive and nurturing mothers (Hrady xiv). Deep ecology cultivates an expanded ecological and personal consciousness that promotes the emergence of an 'ecological-Self' whose intimate connection with the more-than-human environment permits an individual to acknowledge the 'intrinsic value' of all life (Næss, *Ecology, Community* 11). Social ecology seeks the creation of ecologically benign societies that function on decentralized libertarian ideals and works towards building "rounded human communities" that prioritize the resolution of deep-seated social problems while also addressing the ecological future of the planet (Bookchin 354).

Where ecology illuminates the relationships between organisms "out there," psychology explores dysfunctions of the mind "in here" which when combined through "ecopsychology unifies this outer or inner division" and argues that nature critically determines human physical, mental and emotional wellbeing (Roszak 4). Inclusionality theory views all living and non-living entities as "dynamic inclusions" by observing the complex "couplings between inner individuals and outer collectives" through reciprocal perceptions of the self that is embedded in nature (Rayner 10). General systems theory juxtaposes open, interpenetrating and self-regulating dynamic systems against "entropically rigid closed systems," using physics to prove that living

systems are “adaptively self-organizing and therefore contradict the second law of thermodynamics” (Von Bertalanffy 23). Each of these disciplines formulates unique insights into the relationship between man and nature.

Gaia theory offers a scientific study of the interactions between the atmosphere, lithosphere and hydrosphere, noting that “cybernetic geophysiological macro-systems are comprised of tightly coupled subsystems, which enable the Earth to function as a single self-regulating organism” (Lovelock 180). The planet should be recognized a living being. Gaia theory also substantiates “cryptic and anthropomorphic agitations of the mainstream” by using scientifically valid evidence to suggest that assaults upon the planet’s ecological integrity can be replaced with a reverence for the “Earth’s unique emergent properties” (Sahtouris 21). Man’s place and role in the ecosystem is subject to scrutiny so far as his sustenance is concerned. Gaining from Lovelock, the genesis of the idea is from his language and scientific method of understanding. The Gaia hypothesis constructs such an ecocentric perception. It brings about an intimate resonance that ceases to exist when recognising the earth to be the place where they subsist but as an existing entity. The propositions of Gaia theory are succinctly meant to be a way of reformulating the way humans regard things such as nature.

Lovelock reiterates that humankind must shed the thought that the humanist perception should be severed from nature and from *Gaia*. He notes: “The human species is as much a part of Gaia as any other species” (182). This viewpoint can be presented considering the

scientific and philosophical viewpoints. Lovelock asserts that Gaia is a scientific fact and through this a philosophy and world view can be created. It cannot be regarded as merely a case of acknowledging a fact, but adapting to this and comprehending the importance of its implications.

The perceived centrality of humankind has to be rejected as a scientific falsehood and an inappropriate world view. Humans should be viewed as making up one of the numerous species of *Gaia* and not the pivotal or significant component. It is this denial of the humanist centrality or anthropocentrism that determines insights into green thinking as ecocentric and “humans are only a part of *Gaia* and are subject to her laws” (Lovelock 181). Such a view tends to escape in the face of central understandings of humanity in particular regarding control and importance. Ecocentrism is thus clearly anti-humanist as it does not accept the centrality of humankind to life on earth.

Such a view is often critiqued as misanthropic and along with “*Neo-Malthusian* tendencies within the green movement can be seen as being reactionary to a certain extent” (Pepper 44). In the opinion of Pepper, there is the apparent form of misanthropy found in the works of Lovelock and others, which is personified through “a seething distaste of urban humanity” (148). Pepper and the other critics observe that in their anti-humanist approach, the ecocentrics tend to overlook the immense diversities and inequalities that exist among human beings. Humanity is viewed as one of its kind and no attempt is made to point out the variations or differences among the peoples of the world. Such an ecocentric view can be seen as simplistic in its

understanding of relations among human beings. This stands as a genuine cause when one is seeking to understand the relationship people have with their environment. It would be unjust and foolish to arrive at the supposition that all people can be judged in a similar manner when dealing with the destruction of the ecology. Some thinkers in the green movement have noted such ideas and interpreted that ecology could assume diverse interpretations from people depending on geography, social status and gender.

In being ecocentric, one must reject humanist ideologies but the extent to which one understands inequalities amongst humankind varies. Lovelock's observed misanthropy could be seen as being a scientific realist approach as opposed to an actual aversion for humankind. Within the writings of Lovelock, there seems to be little implied regarding an actual hatred of humankind and he takes little amusement in the ecological situation it has generated.

Lovelock expresses the importance of not infringing upon *Gaia* as being relevant as far as the preservation of the civilization is concerned. He notes: "I see the Earth's declining health as our most important concern, our very lives depending upon a healthy Earth" (*The Revenge* 2). This view is only misanthropic in acknowledging humankind's shortcomings in relation to the environment. It is certainly not taking pleasure in it. One can still claim this distrust as misanthropic but the point to be noted is to distinguish Lovelock from other schools within the green movement such as the Deep Ecology movement whose views can be less scientific and less and more spiritual (Næss, *Ecology of Wisdom* 121). Lovelock is predominantly a scientist and his ideas

are based around a scientific understanding of the planet rather than which is devoid of any specific spiritual relationship humans should maintain with it. It is a realist understanding of humankind and its position in relation to *Gaia*. It is this association and its implications that is the fundamental support system of Lovelock's ecocentrism. The argument of the paper therefore takes the stand that while Lovelock's ecocentrism is anti-humanist. It is one borne out of a scientific reality rather than spiritual and mystical ideas regarding the planet.

The importance of ecocentrism can be viewed from two interrelated ideas; one in the ingenuity of the approach and the second is through this the insinuation it has for an understanding it has for the planet. The significance of ecocentrism lies with what many in the green movement would claim is the originality of its approach. While all the other ideologies see humans as central and are thus anthropocentric. As Dobson mentions: "What sets ecologism apart from other political ideologies is its focus on the relationship between human beings and the non-human world" (28). Though Dobson applies different terminology here, employing it is clear that Lovelock's ecocentrism is part of such a world view. A starting point would be the emphasis of other ideologies such as Liberalism and Marxism. Liberalism emphasizes the centrality of the individual and Marxism explains the class structure in the society. In this regard, both are anthropocentric in their analyses and approaches. These approaches are global ideologies restricted to a human sense and not opening up to an ecological sense. They are primarily concerned with humankind, not nature. The two movements do not claim to see humans as anything other than central to their concerns and outlook on life.

Marxism does not advocate and is little committed to the emancipation of nature but the working classes. Liberalism is less concerned about individual rights of nature but of people. The importance of this would be central to any ecocentric viewpoint and many would as Dobson does claim, its significance is principal for any understanding of green politics. One can assert the claim that ecocentrism is original in its relation to a world view, but the real magnitude of ecocentrism lies in the benefits of viewing the world in such a way.

Lovelock explicitly states that *Gaia* has little in relation to consciousness or meaning in how it operates. There are no definite or finite goals to her actions (*The Revenge* 16). It does seem to have the unconscious aim of controlling the climate of the planet and develops tactics to the comfort of man's survival. The discovery of this is in itself a major stride in relation to scientific understandings of the earth, but more important are the implications it has for human life.

Ecocentrism could be claimed, is not the first outlook or philosophy to advocate any anti-humanity approach. Nineteenth century theorists and philosophers as well as some modern thinkers have dealt with the topic. Its importance is seen by many within green politics as massive in relation to the preservation of humankind on the planet. Lovelock proposes the future of human civilization. In continuing with the mass use of fossil fuels and population growth, man is threatening the future of humankind. In this regard, Lovelock observes: "In the end, as always, Gaia will do the culling and eliminate those that break her rules" (*The Revenge* 19).

It is easy to see why some see a strain of misanthropy in Lovelock's work, however, if one analyses it carefully, it is clear to see that the importance of ecocentrism is paramount of humankind's own survival. By privileging *Gaia* over humanist centrality, one effectively secures the immediate future. This is the most important aspect to Lovelock's ideas and is at heart of its importance for green politics.

The practicalities are debatable because questions regarding applications of *Gaia* in a human-centred world are not possible. Critics of ecocentrism highlight such issues which have to be given due importance and credibility. The practical elements remain open to debates, specifically regarding population and nuclear energy with regard to Lovelock. He has been excluded within the green movement for his news on nuclear energy. He believes that population reduction must be voluntary, which again could be viewed as being important given the magnitude of the problem.

With this in thought, ecocentrism is concerned with *Gaia's* welfare as a means of maintaining the existence of the individual; in essence, it is a case of looking at the magnitude of the problem. Ecological devastation could narrow down the inequalities among humankind, thereby making *Gaia* conclusive for human habitation. Gray mentions: "Humans are like any other plague animal. They cannot destroy the earth, but they can easily wreck the environment that sustains them (12). This proves what ecocentrics would see as the dilemma facing human existence. It is the case of accepting human insignificance in relation to *Gaia's* future but accepting that human actions could lead to the destruction of the planet that man inhabits.

Ecocentrism plays a pivotal role for green politics given the implications in the modern ecological scenario. The practice of ecocentrism would be the decisive step to avoiding annihilation of the diverse species of the biosphere. This approach is not only relevant to green politics but also the prioritized political issue of the near future.

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Silent, Savage Love: The Metaphysics of Violence in Kim Ki-duk

DIVYA KRISHNA

“The cinema is not an art which films life: the cinema is something between art and life. Unlike painting and literature, the cinema both gives to life and takes from it...”, as Jean Luc Godard puts it, cinema, the youngest of arts extends towards life a bit more than other art forms. Cinema today has crossed borders and become the art of the global village. Low budget films produced in Asian countries proceed to pull together more viewership than in Hollywood do. Among such movies that have attained enormous international success, a few come from the eccentricities of the controversial South-Korean filmmaker Kim Ki-duk. This maverick moviemaker has been noted worldwide for his image-oriented storyline, nonconforming narrative strategies and bizarre plots. This study tries to examine the patterning and nuances between his chief directorial tools, violence, silence and love.

The radical dramatist Jean Genet reflects that violence is a calm that disturbs you and Kim yet another revolutionary in the field, seems to be substantiating it. Kim discusses the controversial cruelty in his earlier films, "Those kinds of cruel acts are metaphors meant to contrast my meaning and question of what is life. In

terms of historical development of films it is necessary to have violence in films.” His films are often categorized as harsh and violent films that generate considerable controversy. Hewison thinks that in Kim’s films “there are exclamation marks of brutality that gives his work a striking, visceral impact alongside poetically constructed beauty.” Kim seeks to attain a transgressing edge by emphasizing perverse sexuality combined with explicit violence. Like the Japanese new wave “eros and massacre” directors of the early 1960s, Kim’s films try to imagine what the world looks like when repression reaches an unbearable limit. When desire finally emerges, it does so through rape, murder and mutilation. One can find different kinds of violence in his movies ranging from extremely explicit violence to subtle violations. Many of his films like *Crocodile* (1996), *The Isle* (2000), *Breath* (2007) and *Dream* (2008) include violent images that involve sharp instruments like fishhooks, knives, needles etc. Kim is also capable of portraying violence in its subtlest forms yet shoving the viewers’ psyche into a jolt. But his violence treads into a realm that is unusual. There appears to be a necessity of violence as there is of love, a violence that can alter itself to love.

This paper attempts to comprehend the psychodynamics of his imagery one needs to trace his passage through history, philosophy and psychology. The Korean War (1950–1953) left the two Koreas, the communist North Korea and the capitalist South Korea separated by the De-Militarized Zone, remaining technically at war through the Cold War to the present day. One of the reasons of his violent imagery can be traced to these historical happenings that definitely seem to have left a deep imprint on Kim’s mind. The lead

actress of the movie *The Isle* supports this view when she says: "Sometime in the future I hope he can rise above the anger and inner pain of South Korea and its people and society, and make a movie that is not extremely visceral. He's told me he'd like to."

The mental makeup should be yet another aspect to be studied in order to unearth the intricacies involved in visualizing violence. Violence is defined in psychology as "an act that causes injury or harm" which may range from "killing a person" to even "verbal abuse". Among the five theories of aggression namely biological, psychodynamic, learning theory, cognitive and social, it is that last one that helps us study the characters of Kim.

A sub-category of the social theory of aggression is the social process theory which says: socialization process through contact with institutions and social organizations steers the individual towards violence." Yet another sub theory, labelling theory puts forth the idea that an original deviant act (primary deviance) results in stigmatization and labelling, leading to hostility, alienation and resentment in the individual and further deviant behaviour (secondary deviancy). The question Kim tries to ask is similar: "why is it that though everyone is born the same, with equal rights and equal qualities, we are divided and categorized as we grow older. Why are we judged according to our looks and appearances? Why does it become important if we are good looking or ugly, if we have money or not? According to these standards, which are imposed after we are born and grown up, we become divided into ranks and social classes that don't get along with each other. I wanted to ask if it's really impossible for these classes to get along and for their worlds to merge". Kim

intends to track the roots of his characters' aggressive nature to such inequalities and discrepancies. The violence that his characters turn to, he says is a kind of body language. It is more of a physical expression rather than just negative violence. The violent acts of these characters go a step forward to a point where there seems to be a pleasure derived from the hurting.

"One must do violence to the object of one's desire; when it surrenders, the pleasure is greater," says Marquis de Sade. Freud adds that the sadomasochist generally desires that the pain be inflicted or received in love, not in abuse, for the pleasure of either one or both participants. This mutual pleasure may even be essential for the satisfaction of those involved. But psychology does not seem to be enough to draw a pattern of his use of violent images and one needs to turn to philosophy for an answer.

Unlike western philosophy that is stretched between the opposing poles of good and evil, darkness and light, god and satan, eastern philosophy advocates the merging of opposites. The concept of ardhanareswaram (the masculine and feminine being halves of one whole) is one such example found in Indian philosophy. Other eastern religions also offer principles of fusing the opposites. Kim's movies lie in close unison with eastern metaphysics. In Tao faith, life and death assumes cyclical nature and many of his plots follow this structure. Death is only an initiator into another phase of life and not an ultimate destructor. In his movie *Dream* (2008) the central characters transform into butterflies after death which hints at certain aspects of rebirth or the continuous nature of life. The well-known yin-yang

theory of Tao faith can be used to substantiate his workings of the imagery of violence.

Nei Ching states that “The entire universe is an oscillation of the forces Yin and Yang.” In Chinese philosophy, the concept of *yin-yang* is used to describe how polar or seemingly contrary forces are interconnected and interdependent in the natural world, and how they give rise to each other in turn. Many natural dualities—dark and light, female and male, low and high, cold and hot—are viewed in Chinese thought as manifestations of yin and yang (respectively). Yin-yang are complementary opposites within a greater whole. Everything has both yin and yang aspects. There is a perception that yin and yang correspond to good and evil. However, Taoist philosophy generally discounts good/bad distinctions as superficial labels, preferring to focus on the idea of balance.

In Taoist philosophy, yin and yang arise together from an initial quiescence or emptiness (*wuchi*, sometimes symbolized by an empty circle), and continue moving in tandem until quiescence is reached again. Whenever one quality reaches its peak it will naturally begin to transform into the opposite quality: grain that reaches its full height in summer (fully yang) will produce seeds and die back in winter (fully yin) in an endless cycle. Yin is usually characterized as slow, soft, insubstantial, diffuse, cold, wet, and tranquil. They are generally associated with femininity, birth and generation, and with the night. Yang, by contrast, is characterized as fast, hard, solid, dry, focused, hot, and aggressive. They are associated with masculinity and with the daytime.

Kim's unpolarized use of violence and silence/love appear to follow the yin-yang principles of co-existence, complementing each other akin to the outwardly disparate factors of the yin-yang. The body and mind are also seen as mutually exclusive and does not carry positive and negative traits attributed to them. Actress Park Ji-ah who plays the lead role in his movie *Breath* comments, "His films make some people sick. Some believe his movies heal sick people. But I feel thee characters of his films just enjoy pain." There is this simultaneous stinging and healing that one can find in a close reading of his movies as in the acupuncture treatment.

His works have a rare amalgamation of the peaceful and the violent. At rare instances it might seem to us that he intends to romanticize violence. Violence can be seen arising from and most other time leading to silence or love. The imagery of violence functions with silence/love at the other end of the spectrum keeping in parallel the yin-yang theory.

The pervasive presence of violence in Kim Ki-duk in varying forms points to the deeper and more complex sources of violence and his attempts to place it in his environment which is through and through Eastern with all its philosophical implications have made him a vital presence both in the western and eastern worlds which however painfully and uncomfortably live with the increasing awareness of the inadequacy of reason to understand if not tackle it. The strength of Kim Ki-duk's films lies in his uncompromising acceptance of this awareness.

In the films of Kim, violence is inextricably linked to love and silence. When we apply yin-yang to violence,

classifying violence as a yin, we have to find a yang for violence. But his films reveal that there are simultaneously two yangs for violence—silence and love. The common pattern that evolves has silence and violence working as yin-yang initially. Most of Kim's protagonists are silent. He explains that they are not dumb but prefer to keep quiet. He also adds that their silence is the result of pain. We realize that the characters were subjected to violence in their earlier life. Their means of reaction was opting to be mute. This silence is also a battle of resistance against society and its brutal norms. We find characters resolute about keeping their silence even if it costs them their lives. Aeschylus puts forth the same idea when he says, "Since long I've held silence a remedy for harm." Silence here also works as a safeguard against harm.

The silent person gives up his/her words and becomes devoid of the main source of expression and communication. In a sense he/she is freed from the shackles of words. Language is treated as incapable of conveying the nuances of human emotions and passions. Kim Ki-duk, like Cicero, believes that silence is perhaps the best form of communication. The silence in between his characters does not appear to be a chasm or an insular wall that hinders communication; instead it works as a conveyance of the inner thoughts of a person. Language can lie, be treacherous, mask the real emotion, but silence can only speak the intensely true. So these characters who opt to go mute, thus have to be deeply honest and sincere, with their souls fresh from purgatory. They don't feign in silence, but remain true to their inner selves.

Though silence is a mode of expression, it does not have a material realm to it, like the reality of words. It can be understood, but not recorded or given proof for. A result of this silencing is a new mode of expression, violence. These characters express their feelings through violence. It transforms into a sort of body language. Kim does not treat this violence as negative. In some instances one may even get the feeling that he romanticizes this violence that comes out of silence. As Samuel Johnson puts it, "You hesitate to stab me with a word and know not silence is the sharper sword." Here silence itself becomes a sharp sword hurting others and oneself and it can also give form to further expressions of violence. The nature of silence itself is dichotomous rather than ambiguous. It is endowed with the positivity of creating conversations and the negativity of being and giving rise to violence.

When we catalogue the imagery of violence in Kim Ki-duk it falls into several modes. There is physical violence which involves sexual harassment, manhandling, street fights and so on. We can see the use of torture instruments like hooks, daggers, sharp pieces of glass being forced into human flesh. There is intense mental agony in the characters' psyche. Intrusion into other's personal spaces can be repeatedly seen. Violence in wars which is bloody on a larger scale is also depicted in his films. Cruelty to animals is one aspect of his movies that has taken Kim to inglorious heights. But his movies have nothing gothic in nature. Violence is deeply etched into each scene. The bliss of love is deeply linked to the reality of violence.

Love is not a game that can be easily won. For Kim the path to love is strewn with difficulties and torture

instruments. No love story has an easy goal. All of his characters have to pass through the worst of trials and ordeals to consummate their love. In most of his movies it is only towards the end that love gets realized. The torture would involve both or just one character. It is like a process of purification which is necessary for treading into love. And the sexual aspect of love is also pictured unconventionally. Sex mostly involves violence in Kim. Sex is essentially linked to pain and rage in these films. Desire seeks to possess and incorporate its object, and the frustrations in attaining this end only serve to increase its sadistic ferocity. It's only when love is realized that sex is shown without violence. Even in the initial phase of love, physical intimacy is presented repulsively. In a sense love springs from violence on the soul and torture on the body or at least has to pass through this brutal phase.

Love and silence share a common yin and thus support each other at times. That is the reason why love and its words are communicated through silence, between lovers. It is only for the cause of love that his characters are seen violating their mute stature and being ready to utter words. Love and silence, compete for the place of the same yang and thus try to annihilate each other. That is why silence is broken by love.

The dualistic yin-yang is the foundation of most of Kim's movies. The gradation of the yin-yang is directly proportional to the gradation of violence. These movies have an intricate interplay of silence, violence and love. The yin-yang deconstructs the dominant accepted notion of binary opposites. A pattern evolves out this interplay of yin and yang; a pattern that creates a new disposition towards silence, violence and love. New

classifications arise both at the cinematic and the metaphysical levels. The interface between these three features leads to the design of an intricate labyrinth that endows the movies with an original internal logic. Kim focuses on the essential brutality of human nature:

I always ask myself one question: what is human? What does it mean to be human? Maybe people will consider my new films brutal again. But this violence is just a reflection of what they really are, of what is in each one of us to certain degree.

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