

Conspectus

VOLUME 10, 2016 *a journal of english studies*

CONSPECTUS

A JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Vol. 10. 2016

2016

Research Centre, Department of English
St. Thomas' College, Thrissur, Kerala, India



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a journal of english studies

Volume 10, 2016

This journal is published annually by the Research Centre & PG Department of English, St. Thomas' College, Thrissur, Kerala, India.

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Thrissur, Kerala, India, 680 001

Cover Design by Arjun Anand

Production and Layout by REDACT Editorial Services

Printed at Impressions Press, Bangalore, Karnataka

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Regn. KERENGO1731/11/1/2004-TC

ISSN 0973 0990

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***Thinai* as Paradigm: Contemporary Tamil and Malayalam *Puram* Poetry in Focus**

SYAM SUDHAKAR

The traditional Tamil concept of *Thinai* which appeared in *Porulatikaram*, the third part of *Tolkappiyam*, can be identified as an aesthetic practice beyond the dominance of a Western understanding of aesthetics. The concept of *Thinai* is highly dynamic in character, founded in cultural and spiritual views of nature, yet able to incorporate the personal and public domains of emotion and politics, outside of the anthropomorphic stance of much of Western philosophy. *Thinai*'s flexible parameters might be developed and expanded to make a valuable contribution to the study of aesthetics in relation to contemporary poetry and, looking ahead, to art forms which may arise out of new understandings and practices in time and space, primary elements incorporated into Dravidian philosophy and aesthetics.

The question is frequently posed: how could one use a critical tool which existed several centuries ago to analyze contemporary literature? According to the aesthetic practice of *Thinai*, the time and space described in a poem have a close association with the flora and fauna, socio-economic order, occupations, seasons and

even behavioural patterns of a region. The belief that the human being is not a separate entity from nature is represented through this classification, which is of course a universal concept. This classification can be deeply identified as both geographical and non-geographical, interior (personal) and exterior (political); and thus it has contemporary relevance. To substantiate this argument, the entire focus of the paper has been narrowed down to the analysis of contemporary Malayalam and Tamil *puram* (political, in a modern sense) poetry. Another reason for the selection of these two languages is that Tamil is the oldest of all the South Indian languages and perhaps one of the oldest 20 living languages in the world, while Malayalam, which developed as a language much later, is a mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit—a very young language compared to all the other major South Indian languages. By taking examples from both these extremes, it can be argued that the concept of *Thinai* can be applied in multiple realms.

Emotions (*Uri*) and symbols (*Karu*) are important not just in *Akam* poems, but *Puram* poems as well. Now we know that our personal cannot be separated from the political, political readings of poems should also be encouraged. The political reading of poems should be considered as a political practice just like writing a political poem. Most of the critics, including A. K. Ramanujan, tend to focus more on the criticism of *Akam* poems than on *Puram* poems perhaps in order to focus more on the inner feelings of human being in general and lovers in particular, but they failed to identify the importance of the ‘exterior’ in creating the ‘interior’. So there is a need of a revival of critics focusing on *Puram*,

just like they focus on *Akam*, in the contemporary academic scene.

The analysis of *Puram* poetry is different from that of *Akam* poetry. In a traditional sense, unlike *Akam* poetry, *Puram* poetry deals with the exterior issues, that is, body surfaces and extremities. It deals with non-kin affairs and the happenings of the house-yard and fields. While *Akam* deals with private issues, *Puram* talks about public issues like war. A. K. Ramanujan in *Poems of Love and War* points out that *Akam* and *Puram* offer a contrast to each other as in “inner/outer, self/other, nature/culture, [and] household/wilderness” (263). *Puram* poetry “does not necessarily relate to war”, but it consists of what may be called “panegyric” (Marr 15). A single example from Ramanujan’s readings of poems from *Puranānūru* appeared in *Poems of Love and War* would be enough to throw some light upon the exterior poetics. The theme of the poem is war.

With the festival hour close at hand,
his woman in labour,
a sun setting behind pouring rains,
the needle in the cobbler’s hand
is in a frenzy
stitching thongs for a cot:

Swifter, far swifter
were the tackles of our lord
wearing garlands of laburnum,
as he wrestled with the enemy
come all the way
to take the land. (1–12)

The space described in the poem is associated with a real place and time, or we could say, a historic event. The wrestling event between the Chola king, Perunar Killi

and Mūkkavanāttu Āmūr Mallan is the setting of the poem. The terms such as “festival hour”, “sun setting” and “pouring rains” are to denote the season and time. Cobbler, the downtrodden who appears in the poem, calls for a deep cultural reading as he is making a cot for his wife to lie on and give birth to a baby. The practice is much associated with culture, as according to the Tamil custom, a woman should give birth to her child on a cot. Scholars like Peraciriyar point out the relation between the actions and the anxiety of the cobbler and that of the Chola king. Regarding the *Puram* poems, Ramanujan says, “the whole society, beginning with the lowest born, is engaged in the action of the hero, contributes in a chain of works to the King’s success in war” (263). According to him, the cobbler is not a mere metaphor in this poem, but a powerful presence who represents the low-born community, who co-exists with the elite hero. There is a subversion of socio-political hierarchies by the aesthetic technique of comparing a king to a cobbler.

After reading critiques of *Akam* and *Puram* poetry, one would recognize that not only is the peripheral meaning problematized, but the deeper meaning as well, or the *Ullurai* also contributes much to the aesthetic experience. Since *Ullurai* talks about the suggestive meaning of a poem, critics have compared it with the Sanskrit theory of *Dhvani*. P. Marudanayagam’s readings of classical Tamil poetry in the light of the *Dhvani* theory and the concept of *Ullurai*, is a good example. Since the poetry is highly denotative, as well as connotative, the study of the language of poetry should be done attentively and with care. In *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology*,

Ramanujan points out that the language of the poetry is not only Tamil, but also the different modes of landscape, the speaker or personae, the feelings or *Uri*; all these function as a metaphysical language in the construction of the aesthetic experience (114).

The evolution of modern sensibility in Tamil poetry can be traced back to Na. Pichamurthy's experiments with minimalism of words, sound patterns without prosody and vibrant modern images that contributed much to modernism in Tamil literature. Modernism in Malayalam literature came much later, probably in the 60s through the poems of Vailoppilli Sreedharamenon and Edaseri Govindan Nair, and a paradigm shift happened through the political poems of N. V. Krishnavariyar. In both languages, a phase of revolutionary poems is seen, which appeared as a reaction to the Emergency period. Alienation due to modern life, identity crisis, loss of social values, human relationship problems, and respect towards regional cultures were some of the main themes of the 1970s and the 1980s. Both languages have a strong tradition of political poetry.

While Atmanam, Gnanakoothan, Nakulan, Kalapriya, Sirpi, Sundara Rama Swami, Pramila Vikramadityan, Devadevan, Sukumaran are some of the significant Tamil poets, Satchidanandan, Atoor Ravi Varma, K. G. Sankara Pillai, D. Vinaya Chandran, Sugata Kumari, N. N. Kakkad, Kadamanitta Ramakrishnan, Ayyapa Panicker, O. N. V. Kurup, Vishnunarayanan Namboodiri, Balachandran Chullikkad are some of the Malayalam writers of the time. Some of these writers are no more now; some still contribute to enrich the literary scenario of

contemporary Malayalam and Tamil poetry along with the new poets who emerged in the 1990s and the early 21st century.

After the 1990s, Malayalam writers like T. P. Rajeevan, P. P. Ramachandran, Anvar Ali, Rafeek Ahamad, P. Raman, Anita Thambi, V. M. Giriya, S. Joseph, Veerankutty; Tamil writers like Manushyaputran, Amalan Stanley, Kanimozhi, M. Yuvan, Yuma Vasuki, Kutti Revati, Salma, Kanmani Gunasekaran, Ravikumar, Sukrutharani, N. D. Rajkumar and Sri Lankan writers like Cholaikili, Gowri, Na. Sabesan, Cheran, Urvashi, Nakshatra Sevindian and others helped to give a multi-dimensional and polyphonic identity to contemporary South Indian poetry. Rajaram Brammarajan in his article "Five Decades of Tamil Poetry" points out that poetry "is a passage or a vehicle or a mean to relate the private world to the public. The attempt to relate the individual consciousness to a social and political context is missing in the 90s [Tamil] poetry". He observes while talking about contemporary Tamil poetry in particular that "dreams, memories, anecdotes, grotesquery are the themes that these poets revel in. Nihilism, blackness and perversity dominate their narration. They follow a negative aesthetic and the poem reads like a worked up diary prose". Similarly, in his article "New Writings in Malayalam", T. P. Rajeevan observes that the replacement of ideology with experience is one of the major features of contemporary Malayalam poetry. There is diversity in the attitudes of poets regarding poetry and its functions, "sometimes even antagonistic to one another". He remarks that the "social, political, historical or just personal, clarity, which always is mistaken for plainness, is the most outstanding feature

of the new poetry. The new poets have no big claims for what they write. They know that poetry is no substitute for anything". The contemporary poets with their harsh questions, arguments, negations, negotiations and doubts do not explicitly mix their creative practices with moral ideologies. Their language can be understood as a parallel articulation along with the mainstream culture and politics.

Almost all the political poems can be categorized under *Puram*. There are a number of political poems in both Malayalam and Tamil which problematize the issues of untouchability, class struggle, caste struggle, the Emergency period, anti-authoritarianism, racial struggles, female body/identity struggles, eco-political struggle, etc. In ancient times, poems related to war were considered *Puram* poems. We know in a post-Marxian context that ideological struggles can be viewed as seriously as a military take-over. The response to every hegemonic relationship, either political or cultural can be identified as *Puram* poetry. Such poems which talk about public/social issues are categorized here.

Though there are several *Puram* poems, a couple of examples have been taken up here to illustrate the central argument. The theme of recovering land or wealth is explicit in N. D. Rajkumar's "A Wish":

You have Ram Rajya
My country is for me
If you snatch it away
We shall hit and snatch it back (13–16)

...

It is human tendency to disturb
And attain clarity in the fight for liberation. (26–27)

Poets like Ravikumar raise vital questions of identity, which is an outcome of Dalit political doctrines from Tamil Nadu. The difficulties that the downtrodden face, their struggle to come towards the mainstream, and a call for equality are evident in these poems.

To drink tea
He should pay with
Two rupees
And his self-respect. (3–6)

The issue of separate glasses for dalits in the village teashops of Tamil Nadu is problematized through poetry. Here, poetry is used for a political purpose, or the aesthetic practice itself has been started with a political agenda. This ‘aesthetics with politics’ practice has its roots in the early nationalistic poems of Subramanya Bharathi and Vallathol Narayanamenon, revolutionary and Marxist literature promoted by Vanambadi movement in Tamilnadu and Purogamana Kala Sahitya Sangam (Group for Progressive Art and Literature) in Kerala. Azhagiya Periyavan and other Dalit oriented poets attack the socio-political hierarchies that prevail in the society to develop a parallel stream of writing, a rereading of history and culture in a new dimension. In his poem “At First It is Ours”, the poet describes the socio-political situation:

We shared
A bowl of rice
A cup of tea
And a small room.
But the caste between us didn’t go. (1–5)

Though we live in the same public sphere, the issue of caste works subtly in another sphere created by the ‘institution’ of caste. In his poem “The Word for You

and Me”, Azhagiya Periyavan’s poetic imagination goes to the extent of bringing the vigorous, violent and wild image of Narasimha, to counter the domination of Brahminical ideology in South India.

In front of everybody
I will place you on my lap
And like plucking your lungs
From your chest
I wish to pluck
That word. (9–14)

All these poems talk about the political and public issues, not the personal emotions of the tender mind, and thus can be categorized under *Puram* poetry. During the time of the Emergency, literature flourished as a response to the strict military control of the states. Several political poems were written during that time. “Fever” by K. Satchidanandan, “Bengal” by K. G. Sankara Pillai are some obvious instances from Malayalam literature. Tamil poet Atmanam’s poem “Emergency” goes like this:

In the town
an emergency
is declared.
It cannot be deferred.
Order in the
internal affairs
of the country. (1–7)

K. Satchidanandan’s poem, “How Spring Arrived This Year”, which has as an epigraph a line from Antonio Gramsci, “Shame is a revolutionary feeling”, talks about the horrors of war:

Our war horses were coming back
under the rainbows of vultures.

Bound to each horseback was
one soldier: with his head cut off
or with a spear in his chest.
Some horses carried
bundles drenched in blood:
of thumbs and male organs. (2–9)

The poem is written as a response to the Gujarat riot. The brutal inter-communal violence in Gujarat has been drawn with words by the poet; the poem is a political response against genocide, state terrorism and ethnic cleansing. The poem can be identified as a political reaction using poetry as a medium of resistance.

S. Joseph's poem "A Letter to Malayalam Poetry" is a critique of how the language and metaphors has been hijacked by the mainstream upper-caste society. The need to celebrate a new language, the language of dalits, is the central theme of the poem. The poem doesn't 'shout' politics loudly, but subtly suggests the need of freedom in language by triggering multiple nuances of caste politics in contemporary Malayalam language and literature.

What you want is freedom, right?
That is all we have:
You can say what you like,
can bathe in the brook,
can chirp with the wagtails
visiting the compound,
can sit on a mat on the veranda. (37–43)

Through the clarity in language and simplicity in style, the poet makes his difference from his contemporaries; this can also be considered as his unique technique as a resistance towards the existing caste-inflected hierarchies in Malayalam language.

All these poems with plural identity can be brought under one categorization, that is, ‘aesthetics with politics’—which is not to be confused with the fascist agenda of ‘aesthetization of politics’ or Marxist agenda of ‘politics of aesthetics’. Since, the ‘aesthetics with politics’ poems can be considered ‘public poems’, all these can be categorized under the umbrella of *Puram Thinai*.

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From Oblivious Existence to Obvious Dissent: Representational Patterns of the Female in Imtiaz Dharker's Poems

SANDEEP T. G.

In her seminal work *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir maintains that the politics of mystification is a part of an extensive patriarchal project where woman always was the 'other', the opposite of ideal, normative, and special. All through this process of constructing 'otherness', to which the female was subjected to, she had to experience the irrational, masculine derivations of patriarchal sensibility. Beauvoir argues: "Women are still, for the most part, in a state of subjection. It follows that woman sees herself and makes her choices not in accordance with her true nature in itself, but as man defines her" (169). One of the predictable social components in any order of 'civilized' life is the existence of the inevitable dichotomy of power and subjugation. Human saga is fractional without an explicit reference to the unequivocal and subtle methods contrived by the 'superior' to establish the desired structures of absolute power and authority. Subjugation of the female, as a systemic activity, has been one of the predominant modes of exploitation contrived by the patriarchal entities from time immemorial. Society conceptualised the masculine as hierarchically superior and normative

while the feminine as subjugated, the second and *the other*.

Feminist movement around the globe demarcated an explicit method/methodology to mark out such tendencies and propose a counter mode to register dissent and resistance. Numerous cultural pronouncements arguing for female resurgence and resistance were enunciated as a result of the same and they thoroughly examined diverse equations of domination that function in the society. Thus the refurbished ideological stance was reflective in Literature as well, which began to reposition the female self/identity that remained submerged within the socio-cultural peripheries of patriarchal systems.

Judith Fetterley, in her acclaimed work *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*, points at the politics involved in Literature and claims that Literature is neither 'neutral' nor universal; it is predominantly the 'male' canon at work in literary works which fixes preordained identities. Later, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray (along with Julia Kristeva) urged women to "write themselves" (*écriture féminine*)—a categorical metaphor, of a liberated space/identity/position. The 'Feminist' enterprise, as it gathered momentum among the Western academia, advocated a new, self-determining space for the female to register her innermost aspirations without fail and her intense disagreements without fear. Thus the post 1970's stood witness to the emergence of copious female writers across the globe who formulated their own creative responsiveness in resisting the patriarchal obsessions.

Yet, in pursuance of its aims, the dimensions of such a significant 'move' got fragmented since the very proposal of feminist discourse failed to respond to the myriad calls from divergent socio-cultural and geo-political entities. The Feminist movement, which had its origin and intensification in Europe, was prone to Eurocentric assumptions where the anxieties and concerns of 'White' womanhood alone got inscribed with the indelible ink of racial prejudice. The apparent exclusion of the 'Black' and Third World Women from the discursive interface marked an obvious chasm in the feminist project, exposing the Western epistemology as fundamentally and radically racial. The endemic dissatisfaction (of Black, Aboriginal, Non-white women) within the feminist movement resulted in the emergence of new-fangled, ethno-specific feminisms' like Black feminism and Postcolonial feminism/Third World feminism. Chela Sandoval suggests an 'oppositional consciousness' against the 'white/hegemonic feminism', which constructs itself as a standard feminism by opposing women from other ethnic backgrounds.

Irrespective of the centrality of notions like race and ethnicity, Postcolonial feminism is an extension of the concerns propelled by Black feminism as it addresses a more inclusive group of women from wider geo-political regions and larger ethnic communities. Inviting cue from Postcolonial as well as Feminist theories, it seeks to locate the cultural dissimilarities among communities (especially from 'white'), to concentrate on region-specific, gender-specific concerns, to emphasise empowerment and emancipation. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" written by Chandra Talpade Mohanty launched this particular argument where she cited that the rest of

world's women are to be categorised as 'one' who stand in contrast with white women. She discarded the descriptive generalizations of women, made without considering multiple/intricate cultural variants.

Despite the authorial and thematic abundance in Postcolonial Indian English poetry, the poets, including women writers (with obvious exceptions) indeed failed to reflect the female perspectives and aspirations. Since Kamala Das, who broke the timeless jinx and the inviolable taboo that had been lastingly cast on women, there appeared a number of female authors who were daring enough to articulate their private idylls from personal landscapes. Writers like Mamta Kalia, Eunice De Souza, Imtiaz Dharker, Smitha Agarwal and Sujata Bhutt foregrounded the female standpoint and enunciated a resistive poetic idiom that mediated female experiences to the contemporary sites of intellectual discourse. In the postcolonial socio-political context these new wave of writers modelled a distinct narrative of female history; thus seeking 'counter-spaces' within each cultural sphere of influence.

One noteworthy figure among the plentiful female voices is Imtiaz Dharker, who, through her literary 'dissents' attempted a serious cross-examination of the 'female absence' from all cultural significations. Born in Lahore (in 1954), educated in Britain, and living in India, she imbibes the cultural quintessence of diverse geo-political extents. She calls herself a Scottish Muslim Calvinist and along with her poetic talents is a highly accomplished visual artist as well. As a result of such dichotomies she considers herself (in "Minority"): "I don't fit / like a clumsily-translated poem" (13–14). Her poems sharply and sarcastically present specific/manifest

cultural occasion where a woman finds herself as a socially subjugated, historically obliterated, economically invalidated being. With poems like “Purdah I” and “Purdah II” she questions the metaphorical veil that wipes a woman out of identity and postulates on the bio-politics of female body. In “Purdah I” she comments:

Pardah is a kind of safety.
The body finds a place to hide.
The cloth fans out against the skin
much like the earth that falls
on coffins after they put the dead men in. (4–8)

Here the poet has cautiously picked words up like ‘safety’, ‘hide’, ‘coffin’ and ‘death’. ‘Safety’ in this specific context is employed as a sarcastic observation on the female self who has to shroud herself up from ‘male gaze’, masculine obsessions with female body and patriarchal predisposition; yet contented that she is safe. It is an irony that irrespective of the safety offered she deems it as a place to ‘hide’- her identity, experiences, longing and belonging remain hidden and it apparently is corresponding to her burial. The woman “half-remembers things” (14), “she stands outside herself” (25) and as she distances gradually away “...the doors keep opening / inward and again / inward” (35–37). At last in the poem “Honour Killing” Dharker declares her ultimate emancipation from that symbolic cover, that finally had become a state of mind. Her bold attempts at demolishing all cultural and religious barriers become conspicuous in her mutinous declaration that:

At last I’m taking off this coat,
this black coat of a country
that I swore for years was mine,
.....

this black veil of a faith
that made me faithless
to myself,
that tied my mouth,
gave my god a devil's face,
and muffled my own voice. (17–25)

In that act of relinquishing the veil she is opening herself up to new vista of liberation and new voices of individual freedom. It is a very bold conviction that leads her to take such a drastic decision- a decision that could shed light not only to her own life and living but to entire community to which she belongs. Her adventurous soul challenges the cultural codes and when she discards the veil that made her 'faithless', it becomes a powerful cultural proclamation—a decree for independence and self-assertion. It is a radical voice that yells against all tendencies of gender based discriminations that suffocate her existence. It is a remonstrance against deep-rooted conservatism that binds woman.

Dharker's cosmopolitan views are so revolutionary in its intense yearning for a sweeping change in orthodox rituals as in "Not a Muslim Burial" she wishes that her body to be burnt, and not buried, so that her ashes are scattered with all her creation and its instruments mixed in it in a country she never visited. Or her body be left in a running train moving to unvisited and unseen country. The poem closes with a very solemn prayer/longing whereby the poet is subverting the traditional system of 'burial' and asserts that her body should be burnt. She also yearns to traverse all the boundaries of class, gender, region etc. and daringly asserts:

No one must claim me.
On the journey I will need
no name, no nationality.
Let them label the remains
Lost property. (40–45)

In “Battle-line”, which illustrates the mounting discontent between man and woman, Dharker brilliantly constructs the metaphor of territorial aggression into body’s private dominion. During the impetuous battle the woman finds her ‘enemy’: “...from my distance map / its breadth and strength. / His muscles tense” (53–55). The physical vulnerability of female body in comparison with her counterpart is hinted as a cold actuality from which erupts the realization, “spaces become too small” (70). She proclaims her long-awaited, unconditional emancipation—“...leaving home, / you call yourself free” (80–81)—from the territories where she once had planted a tree (symbolizing domestic composure, compromise and harmony).

Situating the ‘female’ in postcolonial latitude, Dharker reasserts the necessity of a definite feminist voice that will sound quite dissimilar to the monologue of Western feminist ideology. In “Minority”, she brings in explicit imagery to define female experiences in third world contexts:

...through all the chatter of community,
family, clattering spoons,
children being fed –
immigrate into your bed,
squat in your home,
and in a corner, eat your bread... (37–42)

She is so specific in delineating her cultural landscape and with the intricate details incorporated into its

periphery she dwells deep into question the existing patriarchal codes that define the 'female'. Such 'constructions', invariably found in the sub-continental expressions, were to be addressed using a culture-specific critique and Dharker employs a distinct feminist dialect that adapts itself to postcolonial sites.

Dharker's poems vividly reflect the postcolonial anxieties of a woman constrained within religious, domestic, political and social barricades that limit her days to insignificance. That is why in "Parduh II" she asserts:

But woman. Woman,
you have learnt
that when God comes
you hide your head. (86–89)

'God' is a metaphoric masculinity who enters so authoritatively to the pre-ordained 'meekness' of the female and she cocoons herself up from external universe. But the poet is contented—there are many a Saleema and Naseem, who "had annual babies, then rebelled at last" (119); who had declared their freedom from the rigid conformity of religious restrictions, thus cutting familial roots away since,

... table is laden
and you are remembered
among the dead. No going back.
The prayer's said. (139–42)

Dharker's poetic sensibility endorses the need for education, which is proposed as a panacea for liberation and empowerment of woman, and in "A Century Later" she says:

This girl has won

the right to be ordinary,
wear bangles to a wedding, paint her fingernails,
go to school. Bullet, she says, you are stupid.
You have failed. You cannot kill a book
or the buzzing in it. (11–16)

Here, it becomes a noticeable celebration of Malala—the young Afghan girl, a victim of Talibanisation, the youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate—who, for the current world, stands as a vehement symbol of grit and determination. Dharker uses Malala’s audacious story as an obvious metaphor for women’s desire/will to get education and a subsequent socio-economic independence. Malala, for Dharker, is not alone in her struggle for survival: “Behind her, one by one, / the schoolgirls are standing up / to take their places on the front line” (17–19).

Hélène Cixous in her influential work “The Laugh of the Medusa” pointed out the impracticality of defining feminine writing, which can never be theorized, enclosed or coded. She further warned that it will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination. By setting off a feminist point of view in her non-linear narratives that was startling and transgressive in nature, Dharker invariably brought in a new, coherent rhetoric of self-expressive female. In “Living Space” she states:

There are just not enough
straight lines. That
is the problem.
Nothing is flat
or parallel. (1–5)

She discards clearly drawn out straight lines that exist for women alone and points at the inadequacies of her

living space. Her literary crusade is against existing patriarchal equations where the living space for woman is one that offers no solace and freedom.

With the emergence of new theoretical assumptions like Black Feminism and Post colonial Feminism (Third World Feminism) the varied issues/concerns related to African-American women and women from third world countries, Asian immigrants in First world nations etc. received a more exact and explicit attention. Keeping the cultural differences between women from various geographical locations in mind Dharker's poems seek emancipation and empowerment in a completely dissimilar socio-cultural environment. Her creative contributions consistently serve as a gynocentric critique to the contemporary 'liberated postcolonial environment' which had always given false promises of ample space and voice to victimized racial and gendered subjects. With that paradigmatic shift in artistic judgment, she attempts to demystify the patriarchal/Eurocentric matrix of 'othering' and to foreground the female perspectives in a postcolonial milieu.

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The Australian Landscape and Symbolism in D. H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo*

C. G. SHYAMALA

This paper explores the symbolic elements in D. H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo* and associates the landscape with the protagonist's quest for a new life. For the reason that the bush, the bits and fragments in the life of the protagonist and the elements in nature play dominant roles in the life of the protagonist, the book would not have been called a travel narrative.

In Lawrence's short story "The Man Who Loved Islands" (1927), the protagonist desires "an island all of his own: not necessarily to be alone on it, but to make it a world of his own" (n.pag) as the master of a small island, to possess and control it. The man grows disenchanted with human contacts there and moves to an even smaller island. Not long enough, he finds that the second island feels like 'a suburb' and he moves farther out to settle on a third, almost uninhabitable island; 'a few acres of rock away in the north'. What started as a hopeful utopia ends drastically. He goes mad on his desolate rock, and shouts: "The elements! The elements! You can't win against the elements!" (n.pag). This story provides the link, as to why Somers, the

protagonist in Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo* chooses in the end to move from Australia to America after being to Britain and the great Empire. His friend Jaz says to Somers near the end of the novel: "...seems to me you just go round the world looking for things you're not going to give in to" (n.pag). By choosing travel and leading a nomadic life, Somers chooses an alternative means of achieving detachment that he seeks, apart from what he cares for.

The genesis of *Kangaroo* is perhaps Lawrence's disillusionment with the World War I that resulted in the concomitant loss of lives and the opportunity for a radical change and for the rebirth of an old, decaying civilization. Realizing that humans were used a pawns to satiate the power hungry despots, Lawrence writes a letter to Lady Cynthia Asquith on 31 January 1915. He says: "...it seems like another life—we were happy—and since then, since I came back, things have not existed for me" (Zytaruk 268).

In his works Utopia can never be attained. The place becomes a dystopia and the dream results in a nightmare for what is initially thought of as a source of security and happiness turns out to be the place of an experience leading to death or to utter personal loss and disorientation as in the Australian novels *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush*. Such thematic narratives are quite common in western literary tradition and have become frequent from 1700 onwards; especially in narratives whose setting is, at least in part, an island. The examples include Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), H. G. Wells's *Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), John Fowles's *The Magus* (1966) and *The Island of the Day Before* by Umberto Eco (1994), where

the author presents a journey in time and in the protagonist's memory.

Lawrence had a very intense relationship with islands in life. He stayed in Sicily from 1920 to 1921 and visited Sardinia for a week during a very brief journey in January 1921, which inspired the travel book, *Sea and Sardinia*. He visited Sri Lanka, the source of the unfinished short story "The Man Who Was Through with the World," whose very title suggests the meaningful and symbolic association between isolation and island. In his second novel, *The Trespasser*, the Isle of Wight is the destination of the elopement of a middle-aged musician with his a young female student. The elopement would result in the protagonist's suicide as a result of his inability to come to terms with the return to his old life on the mainland. A tragic ending is also found in "The Man Who Loved Islands" (1927), the short story where the island is thought of as the place of some absolute achievement that proves to be unattainable, thus decreeing the tragic ending of the story. The metaphorical islands or utopian settings, such as gardens and farms are described in his early novels *The White Peacock* and *Sons and Lovers*, where the characters hope to find a shelter from the world and to achieve a harmonious relationship with fellow human beings. These fictitious islands turn out to be the source of a dangerous loss of contact with the outside world and at once being serious obstacles to the protagonists' quest for achievement and the rendezvous with the feeling of being different from others is significantly an essential step to the realization of one's growing up.

The wild Australian bush is similar to the American wilderness. It is a continent-island which has preserved

within it a form of savage ruggedness, which is ruthless that forms the setting of *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush*, and turns out to be a sort of alluring but dangerous or even fatal maze. Here the protagonists either lose themselves as expressed, “the bush has got me [...] and now it will take life from me [...] I shall wander in the bush throughout eternity” (*The Boy* 287), or become aware that giving in to the bush, to the magic of its silence, would involve the loss of one’s identity as Somers says: “I don’t want to give in to the place. It’s too strong. It would lure me quite away from myself” (n.pag). In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, a metaphorical island in the heart of Old Rural England, the gamekeeper’s hut becomes the place of rebirth for the female protagonist. It becomes the place where the protagonist experiences a close interconnection with her inner self and the pleasure of the senses, which signifies completeness of the self.

Kangaroo begins with the arrival of Somers, a professional writer and his wife Harriett in Sydney. Somers reacted strongly against what he saw as the empty materialism of the New World and the idea of civilization. He finds that his life has disintegrated into bits as a result of the war. The narrative, fragmented and digressive, reflects and reiterates Somers’s fragmentary self, which is disoriented and unfulfilled. The houses in Sydney seem like “chicken houses” or “dog kennels” (n.pag). The shabby bungalows with rats at Torestina and Co-ee, the litter, the tins that lie scattered around are symbolic of the disorganized and fragmented outside world that seem to envelop the inside landscape of the bush, which is dark and impenetrable. Somers refers to the bush as a dark entity into which the outside “never penetrated” (n.pag). The bush is a form of God on its

own. Somers believes that the real civilization is in the “interior,” but the “bush scared him...the bush seemed to be horribly waiting. And he couldn’t penetrate into its secret” (n.pag). Somers introduces the dichotomy of the inside and outside that is crucial to man’s perception of self and the outside world. Lawrence’s proposition is that the surface must be penetrated and the bits have to be left behind. In Lawrence’s view, civilization or humanity lies mainly outside and it should be the projection of the inner mind that is invisible to the people but visible to the inner conscience.

To Somers, Australia is strange and its invisible beauty provides the impetus to explore the outer and inner human worlds. The perceptible disoriented state of the country needs resuscitation from the primitive and frightening interior of the wilderness that is dangerous and difficult to access. The human “bits” framing this interior self or world, live outside. For this reason, Somers insists that the Australians are “marvelous and manly and independent and all that outside. But inside, they are not. When they’re quite alone, they don’t exist” (n.pag). They live in a lacuna and hence they are solitary. They all “merge to the outside, away from the center,” the bush (n.pag). Their existence is at a safe distance from the centre and this state makes them isolated. When man is in isolation, he is just a fragmentary piece of self. Somers believes that man has become “deaf and dumb scurrying ants fallen out of relativity” (n.pag). The inside-outside opposition is connected to the imagery of the demon and the beast that resides in every man.

On Somers’s first meeting with Kangaroo, Kangaroo quotes him the first few lines of Blake’s poem: “Tyger,

tiger burning bright/In the forests of the night” (n.pag). Somers asks Kangaroo if the tiger is his principle of defining evilness. Kangaroo negates the assumption and asserts that the tiger in the forests, the lava in the volcano and the evilness in Lawrence’s belly represent the continuous struggle between opposing forces that find projections in the struggle to maintain relationships in marriage and in the society as a whole.

The reference to the sleeping volcanoes restates the forces in nature that one knows nothing of the “awful forces at work beneath the crust of the earth, and nothing of the internal fires or that” (n.pag). Schneider comments: “The volcano could be deciphered as the conflict between “sympathetic connection” with the world of men and politics on the one hand, and on the other a “voluntary resistance” [to] and “rejection of the social world” (163). The volcano assumes a diabolic and sinister role that forces life to fight and regain strength to perpetuate itself with hope. An extension of the bush symbol is the woman’s womb that gives new life and new thoughts.

Somers is isolated in the vast interior of the Australian island-continent. He represents the metaphysical recluse and voyager in search of the absolute which is unattainable. The bush is the aboriginal, uncontrolled force that breaches man’s crucial connection with the interior self. The bush remains a mysterious symbol that consciously drives man to acknowledge his fear of the unconscious, instinctual self. A projection of the bush symbol is seen in the beard that Somers wears. It stands for the dark, desolate and unconscious self.

The bush symbol assumes different colours and creates diverse effects. The Diggers, quasi-fascist, with their black-and-white uniformed wing, the 'Maggies' are mostly servicemen from war preparing for action. They also desire the kind of firm, paternalistic authoritarian rule that Kangaroo offers. They represent the groups fighting for freedom and are symbolised by "fern world" aspect of the bush, characterized as lethargic that affect all the characters at one point of time. The beard also suggests the dark, unconscious world, where the clash between civilization and the undiscovered aspects of the world is evident. The search for the real civilized consciousness within the unconscious self projects the individuality of an individual.

Somers joins the politics of the land temporarily. The plan, as Somers explains to Harriett, is

To have another sort of government for the Commonwealth—with a sort of Dictator'. Lovely! This would lead in turn—though it is by no means clear how—to the discovery of 'a new life-form, a new social-form'; 'a new show' in which a natural aristocracy, the leadership favoured by so many modernist writers, would turn the world away from its materialistic path, its 'frenzy for possessions', 'and let life begin to live again'. Making it new, on a grand social scale, is what interests. (n.pag)

When a bomb explodes towards the end of the novel, the newspapers report the event, attributing the tragedy to a foreigner. This kind of violence is unpredictable and hence the incident results in political saturation. Once Kangaroo dies from a bullet wound received in the riot, things calm down and return to what the novel portrays as the predominant "gentleness (n.pag) to denote the passivity and unconcern of Australia to the unexpected

turn of events. Somers awakes as if from an enchantment, and decides not to involve in any other incident of political significance. Ultimately, the novel's political turmoil returns to its natural state of absolute nullity: "The politics of the Old Country are alien here; they graze the surface, but leave no lasting mark on the landscape" (n.pag). But despite this Commonwealth frame, the political action of the novel is foreign to Australia, and ultimately it fails to include the masses. In the novel, as in life, it is imported, brought over from Europe. Somers loses interest in continuing to remain in Sydney.

Lawrence describes that the bush is "so dark, like grey-green iron. And then it was so deathly still .It seemed to be hoarily waiting, harbouring a secret he could not penetrate" (n.pag). When Somers walks into the wilderness, he senses a hidden, lurking danger that fills him with terror. Later, in the novel when Somers decides to leave Australia, he finds that he cannot sever his connection with the bush for it has become endearing as "wanting a woman" (n.pag). This way, the bush becomes an ambiguous and developing symbol that has yet to take a form. The bush that extends to the Blue Mountains is described as being impressive with an aborigine face and beautiful eyes. The bush is then what man has lost- it holds man's ancient self, the primitive, unconscious beings before man became outward and white. Somers decides to "cut loose from his own white world, his own white, conscious day" and he will not give up his real, civilized consciousness" (n.pag).

The bush reappears again in the ultimate chapter of the book where he describes it to be most terrifying and barren. He could sense the "utter loneliness, the

manlessness, the untouched blue sky overhead...the age—the broken silence of the Australian bush” (n.pag). This view is in sharp contrast to what Harriet notes of the bush at Coo-ee to be the “loveliest thing” she has known. The flowers ...were like angel-presence, something out of heaven. The bush! The wonderful Australia” (n.pag). Somers looked around him and discovers that he loves the Australian landscape. Somers and Harriett appreciate it as the converse of the typical mechanical civilization they have left behind. Australia is described no longer as simply a potential building site for a new utopia, ruled by Kangaroo. It is a sort of place that consists of bungalows, shacks and residential areas of corrugated iron.

Although Somers, like Lawrence, remains ambivalent about his relationship with Australia during his stay, his attitude toward the country lightens as the novel progresses. Gradually, he leaves his colonial view and his nostalgia for England and Europe behind and begins to acclimatize to his temporary home. When he is told that he “has a bit of an Australian look” he answers with nodding enthusiasm: “I feel Australian. I feel a new creature” (n.pag). Losing his colonizing gaze means he no longer wants to in Australia’s political imbroglio or to enforce a political system to suit his will. Somers thinks: “Perhaps... this is really the country where men might live in a sort of harmless Eden” (n.pag). In this reflective interval he realizes that “nothing is so meaningless as meanings” (n.pag). He denounces politics and all that he cares for and sees the futility of revolution, class hatred and the desire for revenge.

The trauma of the First World War, which hangs over the novel, seems suddenly far away. He feels the vast expanse of geological time. At the beginning of the novel he had gone for a swim in the ocean and felt for the first time “that he weighed so little, that he was such a scrap of unimportance” (n.pag). At the end, he sees the colonial project, just beginning its long decline and in this context: “white men thrown in like snow into dusky wine, to melt away and disappear” (n.pag). Civilization at this point “felt like a clock that was running down. It had been wound up in Europe, and was running down... here in Australia” (n.pag). Somers decides to stick to his plan and sets sail for America: “...farewell Australia, farewell Britain and the great Empire” (n.pag). To settle is inevitably to embrace the cosy, homey, domestic life. Somers, remaining adamant that he won’t be deluded by what he calls “the fallacy of home” (n.pag), severs his last ties to Britain, the final image of the book being the colourful streamers as the ship leaves port.

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The Suffering & Survival of “Love / Kalyanikkutty” in P. Padmarajan’s *Nakshathrangale Kaaval*

BIBIN JOSEPH

P. Padmarajan, an author, screen writer and film director from Kerala, noted for his astute portrayal of human relationships and emotions, was successful in inviting the readers’ attention to the complex psyche of female characters in his works. His characters were all natural and emotional; and at the same time, they were all different and unique. They were speaking the language of love in their own way and in their own contexts. In spite of the violent and vehement opposition from the socio-cultural structure around them the female characters portrayed by Padmarajan were bold enough to express their feelings, emotions and desires.

The novel *Nakshathrangale Kaaval* portrays a carefree Kalyanikkutty who is brought home in the middle of her exams by her widowed mother following the rumours that had been running around the town on her affair with a boy with a bad character, Prabhu. She surprises everyone with her cold attitude towards what they think is taboo in this society, she attains maturity and becomes strong enough to shock the society once again.

The novel introduces the central character Kalyanikkutty (hereafter Kalyani) to the reader through her mother's surprise in her maintaining her childishness unchanged. The surprise is reassured when she called her mother "mummy" (10) which reminded her mother Kalyani's habit of using any word in the spur of the moment to call her "amma, mummy, chechi, kochamma" (10). Kalyani surprised her mother who expected a shocked response from her daughter when asked about her lover's photo, by maintaining the smile and answering yes. She even boldly stated that "three photos are there" (11). When the confused mother questioned her intentions, she clarified that "I don't want any other proposals" (11). The dialogues followed made her mother to be harsher in her decision: "We have given word to that captain's family," to which she replies "'I haven't given any word to anyone" (11). The answer was a strategic move from her mother to discontinue Kalyani's studies and to take her home. This decision reveals how the socio-cultural situation has placed its priorities above the interests of the individual and how it has prepared its agents to resort to any measures without a second thought to get things done.

Kalyani's reaction even to the decision of her mother to take her away from the college confused and at the same time surprised her mother. Kalyani's boldness and sheer practical responses surprised not only her mother but also her friend Devootty: "...are you sure that I will get through even if I attend the examination? So isn't it better not to attend? And to make this marriage happen mother has to know about it sometime" (14). Kalyani even when vacating her room celebrated it by making it dramatic with the lines from *Abhinjananasakunthalam*: "O, Priyamvada, where is my woodland sister?" (14)

Even on the way back home she continued to be confident and active as before which only increased the confusion of her mother. She confined her feelings to herself and her control over her feelings was uncommon for the people around. She didn't allow the gossips around to affect her, and carefully ignored the negative comments, mutterings and glances from people around. The entire village including her uncle failed to turn her from her likes and dislikes. Even Captain Gopikrishnan and the elders from his family who came with a proposal were sent back in no time. She faced the anti-woman and (traditional) remark from Gopikrishnan "friendship and enmity of girls won't last long" (38) with a sarcastic comment "scholar!" (38). She pretended to accept the blame regarding her affair with Prabhu and suggested that since there is no way out, the only option left behind for her is to "marry Prabhu" (39). Gopikrishnan who was already informed about her affair with Prabhu never expected Kalyani to remain firm in her position. He realized that she was a different girl when she clarified her love for Prabhu in spite of his flirty nature and habits like drinking, smoking etc.

It was not the protest from others but the irresponsible replies from Prabhu which haunted her badly: "Call me a coward, I deserve it. Kalyanikutty should marry someone else. I won't encourage an infinite waiting for me" (42). Kalyani who could withstand the anger of uncle who evoked fear in everyone around, with a lot of criminal deeds including killing the priest and hanging him on the banyan tree in the premises of the temple for questioning uncle's extramarital relationship with the priests' wife, felt the escapist reply from Prabhu like a blow on the head. Kalyani who dared to convince her mother that there

was physical intimacy between herself and Prabhu was shattered by Prabhu's hypocrisy.

Kalyani expressed her individuality and confidence not only in the issues regarding her affair with Prabhu but also regarding the maintenance and output of the rice-field, which after her father's death was done by her uncle according to his likes and dislikes. Krishnankutty, who was sent for more supplies to uncle's house was sent back terribly beaten and without rice. Both Kalyani's mother and Lakshmiyamma were shocked when she enquired "isn't there any rice left" (50), because until then she had never asked anything regarding household tasks and management. When Kalyani learned that there wasn't anything left for dinner she suggested loaning some rice from the neighbour Mariyaheven if it affects the family honour. Kalyani not only suggested but also instructed Bhavani (maid) to do so.

Kalyani brilliantly took control of their property from her uncle by challenging him face to face. She was clever enough to understand the usual tactics of the system which in critical moments made use of sheer muscle power and violence, and hence took Antony (neighbour) with her so that she can avoid any physical encounter which her uncle otherwise may resort to. She warned her uncle not to interfere in the management of her field anymore. On the way to her uncle's house she ignored the foul comments from the people on the road. This reveals her sensibility to avoid unwanted encounters and shows that she was well aware of the priorities in her life.

Kalyani very confidently made one last attempt to meet Prabhu so that she can live her life as dreamed earlier. Since his intentions were only momentary she

managed to run away from the hotel. “What saddened her mostly was not a feel of being cheated, instead a thought that how foolish she was” (69). She was undisturbed by the cultural weight of morality and public concern. Instead what bothered her was her ability to make and take proper decisions, which ultimately makes one’s life rich with satisfaction and a feel of meaningfulness.

When Panicker (marriage broker) brought a new proposal from a widower named Thirumulpadu (an ex-military officer) Kalyani made use of the opportunity to arrange the marriage of Lakshmiyamma to him. She behaved as if she was a seasoned elderly woman in arranging the marriage of Lakshmiyamma and Thirumulpadu.

Padmarajan also offers insights into the lives of women who had faithfully followed the dictates of tradition and the social structure around. Women like Kalyani’s mother, Lakshmiyamma, Sobha etc. who obeyed and were certified good, but who on the other hand were burning inside for not living their lives. They were merely satisfying the whims and fancies of others by just fitting themselves into the moulds society has formed. Sobha who couldn’t face the crisis allowed the old servant (Damodaran) to use her sexually so that she could cop up with the anarchic life of Prabhu. Sobha was retorting to the hypocrisy of the society in the same manner, which gave her a feeling of revenge. Her sexual encounter with Damodaran changed her attitude towards Kalyani. It broadened her perspective and she felt that: “hasn’t my approach to Kalyani changed since I have started committing a bigger mistake than hers?” (93).

When Kalyani's mother turned bed-ridden Kalyani boldly faced the situation in the same way she faced the challenges against her affair and against her uncle who was enjoying the lion's share of the income from her lands. Kalyani's decision to arrange the marriage of Lakshmiyamma makes it clear that she was concerned not only about the desires of herself but also of others. The responsibility of taking care of the bed-ridden mother alone didn't affect her decision not to affect Lakshmiyamma's honeymoon by informing that Kalyani's mother is hospitalized. Her sense of independence and individuality enabled her to evolve into a matured and balanced character, which in turn shaped her behaviour into a dynamic and sympathetic one. This enabled Kalyani to be gentle in the encounter with Sobha, in taking care of her mother as a child, in not preventing Lakshmiyamma from moaning when she saw Kalyani's mother bed-ridden and in many other instances. Kalyani even compelled Lakshmiyamma to return with Thirumulpadu as she could guess it would be uncomfortable for him if his wife stays there too long.

When Kalyani's uncle tried to give a "traditional" interpretation to her mother's illness and her earlier acts of denying and challenging the elders' decisions, in a bold and cool manner she denied it and prevented connecting her mother's illness as an output of her "disobedience".

"Isn't it enough?" Uncle suddenly asked.

"What?" She raised her face.

"Aren't you done yet doing all nonsense?"

“Nobody did any nonsense here”. She was cool when she said this.

“Then what is lying on this bed?” Uncle pointed at her mother as if she is dead.

“Is it nonsense?” She smiled.

“Yes”.

“Whose”.

“Yours. If not whose?”

“Gods.” She replied controlling her sadness. (153–54)

Kalyani was also prepared to face the aftermath of her decisions.

Uncle said: “I came here just for a visit. Need not fear that I came for taking something away. Neither for helping you.”

“Not necessary”. She prepared herself for a tit for tat. This is a relation spoiled once by myself. No intentions remain for a reconciliation. Any attempt to reconcile will be my defeat. Kalyani is not ready to give up. Whosoever it is. (154)

Sobha who was otherwise meek and who in the process of following the dictates of society and its lethal blend of morality and hypocrisy, polluted herself (according to herself) by her sexual encounters with the servant (Damodaran) at her home and with Varmaji (Prabhu’s stepfather) at her husband’s home. Through this her attempt was to keep up with the hypocritical people around. When Sobha was leaving Prabhu’s home for her delivery, Varmaji pretending to be a caring old man said: “I will come and see you in your home” (170); and her reply revealed how life has taught her to be bold and

open in critical moments: “If you come there you won’t return alive” (170).

Sobha turned ill after giving birth to the son of Damodaran. Kalyani visited her after repeated requests from Sobha. Sobha shared all her feelings and pleaded Kalyani to take care of her son hereafter. In this novel Kalyani and Sobha are opposite pares. Both are innately good. When one (Kalyani) faced it boldly the other (Sobha) couldn’t withstand the pressures of the social structure and hence following the hypocritical model of the people around (elders, husband, Varmaji etc.) destroyed herself. Sobha’s “well arranged” marriage turned out to be a slow paced suicide.

After the death of Sobha, Prabhu brought her child to Kalyani. While handling over the child he requested for Kalyani’s permission to visit the child occasionally. Kalyani who gathered a lot from life and the people around could see through the anarchy of Prabhu. Together with it was Sobha’s confession to Kalyani at her death bed which enabled Kalyani to understand the making of Prabhu and his misdeeds. Kalyani commented on Prabhu’s life: “Human beings usually grow up from the day of their birth, some stay stagnant like that, without growth” (191).

Prabhu on an occasional visit to see Hari (Sobha’s son) opened up how Sobha’s life and death changed his thoughts and approach to life. Later on a drive together he pleaded Kalyani to help him grow-up: “I want a new life. I am unable to resist it. A life which is not uproarious and riotous. A peaceful life of a school master or a village poet...won’t Kalyanikkutty help me?” (194).

Kalyani ignored the tensions in the society around when she adopted Hari (Sobha's son) and took care of her. She did the same when Prabhu invited her to his life. Her presence gave confidence and brought life into the lives of Prabhu and his mother who were enslaved by the crooked Varmaji. Kalyani even dared to challenge the authority of Varmaji, took control of the bunch of keys, and instructed the servants not to buy food for Varmaji from outside. Prabhu was surprised to see the transformation she brought into his home and to the lives of himself and his mother. He couldn't hide his excitement: "My mother, my goddess, my elder sister, my wife, my beloved, my guide" (212).

Prabhu who was living in an artificial world of celebration happened to see the real world through Kalyani. She helped him see a different picture of the world around. Prabhu could see through the smiles and support of Varmaji, his real intentions. What Varmaji required was to stop the growth of Prabhu. The dam Varmaji made preventing the flow of Prabhu's growth was devastated by Kalyani. The realization shocked Prabhu and he went back decades for a restart. But the first thing he wanted to do was to take revenge on Varmaji for poisoning his father. Prabhu was in a hurry to correct the mistakes of decades which include revenge for his father's death, saving his mother, Kalyanikutty and Shoba's son from the clutches of Varmaji, and above all to become an independent human being and never more to be a toy in Varmaji's hands. In the act of destroying Varmaji he got himself killed. In other words, Prabhu was erasing every possible influence of Varmaji from earth. He couldn't find another way out. His death was also a punishment he decided for himself.

Shoba and Prabhu represents people without agency. They obeyed people around them in different ways. Both were destroyed in the act. On the other hand, Kalyani's life is a suggestion how fighting for one's life bravely saves it. She neither got herself carried away by the whims and fancies of social approval in matters regarding her life nor attempted to set everything right altogether. She was practical and well balanced in her moves. She always stood on her foot. It was the sense and spirit of independence which enabled her to stand up and talk for herself. Even the final act of returning to her home instead of staying in the palatial bungalow of Prabhu points to her spirit of independence and practical approach to life. It was this sense and spirit which enabled her not to be carried away in the ebb and flow of social approval. She sacrificed her social image for living her life. Kalyani turned out to be a touchstone revealing the darker sides of the society and of the people around including her uncle and Varmaji. The elders and father figures were stripped off the images of protection, goodness, values etc. Their conflicts with Kalyani brought out their real intentions. She who was true to her nature, who kept her words and maintained her deeds not different from it, had nothing negative or evil to be revealed. She fought for her emotions, stood for her dreams and lived her own life. Hence all the pretensions and the people who represented it failed to stand against her for long. Kalyani's life, when compared to the others, reminds the world that the greatest fear to overcome in following one's own passions and emotions is a fear of terrible results by realizing that the price of not following them is even more terrible. When the fog and dust of all fierce battles settle down, like mother nature, she remains; she survives.

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Reflection of Gandhian Ethics in Select Visual Narrations

ANILKUMAR V. R.

One of the most important images of Gandhi represented in the valid literary genre is his Ethical illustration. Gandhi, as a subject and also as a person, has been professed through multiple images depending upon ones intention and approach on Gandhi. Gandhian ethics is always multiplying, debating and discussing. Even decades after Gandhi's death many interpretations and representations of Gandhian ideas of ethics are still functioning in India as well as in the world. During his life period and after his demise, several ethical images of Gandhi have been constructed in the mind of the people. Gandhi has been an elusive figure because of his unprecedented engagement in the socio-political and cultural sensibility of Indians. Ashis Nandy projects the iconic image of Gandhi and its relevance in *Speaking of Gandhi's Death* (2010) as, "...most creative Gandhians today may not even call themselves Gandhian, but they will recognize that in their world-view, in their philosophy, in their actions, Gandhi is represented everyday" (7). The major Gandhian ethics that are much studied and celebrated are Truth and Ahimsa. The celebrated images of Gandhi—God/Mahatma/Philosopher that are constructed by the

biographers, life-writers and filmmakers are based on ethical principles of Gandhian Truth and Non-violence. Therefore, this paper would attempt to trace the reflection of Gandhian ethics in two visual narrations, that is, *Maine Gandhi Ko Nabin Mara* (2005) and *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* (2007).

Gandhi attempts to explain his thoughts on Truth from his *Young India*, 17-11-1921 as,

I am but a seeker after Truth. I claim to have found a way to it. I claim to be making a ceaseless effort to find it. But I admit that I have not yet found it. To find Truth completely is to realize oneself and one's destiny, i.e., to become perfect. I am painfully conscious of my imperfections, and therein lies all the strength I possess, because it is a rare thing for a man to know his own limitations. (2)

Gandhi further explicates his notion of Truth in *Truth is God* as, "To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of light and life and yet He is above and beyond all these" (7). Replying to a question asked of him at a meeting in Switzerland on his way back from the Round Table Conference in London, Gandhiji said:

I consider that God is Truth...God may be love, God is Truth, above all. If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, I have come to the conclusion that for myself, God is Truth. But two years ago I went a step further and said that Truth is God. (12)

The word *Satya* is derived from *Sat*, which means 'being'. Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why Sat or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact it is more correct to say that Truth

is God, than to say that God is Truth. But as we cannot do without a ruler or general, such names of God as 'King of Kings' or 'The Almighty' are and will remain generally current. On deeper thinking, however, it will be realized, that *Sat* or *Satya* is the only correct and fully significant name of God.

Like Truth, Ahimsa can realize only by the ceaseless striving. Ahimsa is not the crude thing it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of Ahimsa. But it is its least expression. It is Gandhi's conviction that without Ahimsa it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. Akeel Bilgrami in *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment* (2014) attempts to explicate the Gandhian concept of non-violence as,

Despite the modesty, one could, of course, resist those with whom one disagrees, and Gandhi made an art out of refusal and resistance and disobedience. But resistance is not the same as criticism. It can be done with a "pure heart. (107)

Gandhi's search for the meaning/purpose of life is linked with his private and public act of involving in issues, and thereby to settle the problems with his ideas of convictions based his experiments with truth. His attempt to engage with truth is to know God face to face. The philosophical search of Gandhi to know his self and to know God is practiced by Gandhi with truth. Such a philosophical conviction of Gandhi is being applied in his anti-colonial movement. It is through this spiritual/metaphysical thought process, that Gandhi has formulated the theory of truth, satyagraha, ahimsa, bhramacharya and fasting. These self formulated

practices are Gandhi's methods for his anti-colonial movement. Therefore, the life writers and filmmakers of Gandhi have foregrounded his unique thought process in formulating the practices by which he approached in self-realization and also to get India free from the British hegemony.

Maine Gandhi Ko Nahin Mara (2005) is not a film about Gandhi's life as other biopic movies presented above. Jahnu Barua attempts to bring a story of a person who has been living with a memory of Gandhi. The memory of an incident related to Gandhi haunts him even at his days of retirement from the job of a professor. One's emotional sensitiveness perhaps pushes his or her mindset into further complexities in the later stages of one's life. Here, this film reveals a theme of present day society's fragmented and isolated conditions of a person living with stress and unnatural memories.

Uttam Chowdhury, acted by Bollywood actor Anupam Kher, is retired Hindi professor shakes with the problem of dementia. He suffers absent mindedness due to dementia and goes to Chemistry class for teaching Hindi poetry. So no one understands the fact that Uttam Chowdhury not only suffers from dementia but also with a severe guilt feeling that appears peculiar and distressing, and the reason for his emotional complexity is Gandhi. Uttam Chowdhury believes that he has killed Gandhi and it is impossible to keep this claim because he was only eight years old in January 30, 1948. During his childhood days he used to play with toy guns and darts filled balloon with red dye fixing it on someone's picture. Uttam Chowdhury blasts the balloon and blood sprinkled over the picture of Gandhi, and his father, an admirer of Gandhi, hit him for committing this.

Though Uttam replies to his father that ‘Maine Gandhi Ko Nahi Mara’ (I Did Not Kill Gandhi), he believes in his conscience he has killed Gandhi. At the age of sixty five, he still believes that he has killed Gandhi with a gun. This incident creates a blot in his mind and this emotional dilemma dominates his mind, as a result of it, the image of Gandhi brings trauma to Uttam’s mental faculties.

Trisha, the daughter of Uttam, brings her potential father-in-law to the house and during the talk he carelessly places an ashtray on a newspaper photograph of Gandhi, suddenly Uttam gets provoked and shouts at him. The picture of Gandhi in a news paper provokes his memory, and after this incident Uttam began to lose his psychic balance to reach out for Gandhi. In order to get away with his sense of guilt he tries to identify his self with Gandhi by going out from his house to sit under the statue of Gandhi. The life of Uttam is a search for a solution to his problem with Gandhi. Finally, this unnatural and psychic relation with Gandhi puts Uttam in state of mental trauma. To cure his mental illness, Uttam’s daughter, Trisha, with the assistance of considerate psychiatrist perform a mock trial as a therapy to make Uttam convince that he did not kill Gandhi.

Maithili Rao, a film critic, in her article entitled “A Professor in His Labyrinth” (2005) remarks critically on the structure of this film:

An engaging beginning, a strong middle and weak ending—that is the narrative graph of *Maine Gandhi Ko Nabin Mara*. The title, of course, is a sure-fire hook to arouse curiosity and challenging our preconception of Gandhiji’s legacy....The whole

elaborate charade of the re-trail of Chowdhury, to absolve him of his self-inflicted guilt, sounds better on paper. (111)

Though this movie does not speak on Gandhian thoughts, the undercurrent of the plot of this movie generates the critical sense of Gandhi from the perspective of a traumatic individual. Jahnu Barua has incorporated Gandhi in a new aesthetic way through a family story line which puts the audience to think about the legacy of Gandhi. The major focus of this film could be the complexities involved in approaching Gandhi's assassination psychologically, and the contemporary degeneration of the social institution called family. Maithili Rao has observed the issues related to the assassination of Gandhi in this film:

The Professor's matter-of-fact regaining of his rationality, the causal way he says that of course it was Godse who killed Gandhi and not he with bows and arrows, is the launch-pad for a tired sermon holding us all guilty of assassinating the Mahatma's ideals. This arraignment comes after we see how the globalised world has fractured families. (112)

Jahnu Barua presents the problems and concerns of a typical upper educated middle class family of India. Fragmenting nature of the family relationship is the major cause for the deteriorating conditions of the mental trauma affected by his childhood memory of Gandhi. By placing the shade of Gandhi in the core of the film, for the purpose of foregrounding the present day family issues along with the intricacies involved in father-child bond, the director attempts to create a new aesthetic sense in illness visual narration. Trisha's love and care to her father is presented at the beginning of this film, but other two sons of Uttam are not like

Trisha in terms of their love and respect to their father. The elder son of Uttam Ronu, played by Rajit Kapoor, works in the merchant navy in USA, and his first priority is his wife and children. The younger son Karan is a college going student who wishes to be in the fast changing world with lots of fun and enjoyment. Karan advises his sister Trisha to send their father to a place like asylum, so that they can be free from the responsibility of taking care of him.

The underlying signification of this movie is that it puts forth few values like courage, responsibility, compassionate and unconditional love. The tolerance is one of the ideas which resonates Gandhian principles. This film also puts forward the critical question that when children could not take care of their parents how can they extend tolerance to others. Trisha and Uttam love to recite the Hindi poem which tells about courage 'Himmat karne walon ki haar Nahin hoti' (Those who are courageous will never fail) written by Suryakant Tripathi Nirala. This poem influences Trisha in facing the challenges of life and moving with her professional in the midst of her father's mental trauma. The principle values that are discussed in this film relates with Gandhi's sense of values. Although this film never discusses anything on the Gandhian ideologies explicitly, the ideas and principles by which Trisha fights her life in bringing her father to a normal stage endorse the Gandhian sense of courage and responsibility. This film proposes the possibilities of a new strategy in discussing Gandhi and Gandhian thought in the contemporary visual aesthetics. The novel filmic method of backgrounding the image of Gandhi and foregrounding it with an event which has absolutely nothing to do with

Gandhi's life shows a further scope in comprehending Gandhi from the current visual and artistic approach.

Unlike other Gandhian films, a new alternative aesthetic method is used in propagating Gandhism and bringing the image of Mahatma in a commercial comedy genre *Lage Raho Munnabhai* (2007). In age of tremendous growth of science and technology, the manner of presenting the ideas also get changed. The film has attempted to bring historical significance by the popular identity. This film would be an example for transforming history into the popular culture space, where one can accommodate the nuances of history as part of their common cognitive capacity. The film shows the spirit or apparition of Gandhi that is visible only to the hero Murali Prasad Sharma or Munnabhai.

In an article "Come, Smile with the Mahatma" by Ziya Us Salam remarks on the feature of this movie:

Lage Raho Munnabhai is that rare, rare genre: a patriotic comedy. No jingoism in the name of patriotic cinema, no documentary-style narration masquerading as cinematic tributes to the freedom fighters. No longer will we have to fight historians from different schools giving their color, their slant to history. In conformity lies salvation here.

An attempt to bring Gandhi in a comic genre would a challenging task in presenting without losing the essence of the intention that is to bring Gandhian principles in foreground. The conversation between the characters tells the intensity of the comic element in the movie:

JHANVI. Do you walk on the path shown by Mahatma Gandhi?

MUNNABHAI. Of course! I walk three miles every day on Mahatma Gandhi Street.

MUNNABHAI. What is on 2nd October?

CIRCUIT. Dry day, brother. Do you want to order stock (of liquor)?

The protagonist begins to practice Gandhism; as a result of it, there follows a transformation in his character and life style in totality. All day experience of Munnabhai has got oriented towards the principles of Gandhi, whenever the chance of violence happens he uses Gandhism to solve it. Ziya Us Salam mentions the experience of Dilip Prabhawalkar (who acted as Gandhi) in the write up as,

There is nothing preachy about Gandhi here. His philosophy is shown as very practical. While doing the role I realized the true greatness of the man...I am very cool by temperament. By playing Bapu I have imbibed compassion, empathy and benevolence.

Though the practicing of non-violence, truthfulness and fearlessness is in funny way the values that is expressed through this comic presentation and dialogue seem a novel method of calling Gandhi back into the contemporary cultural space for providing a better society:

MUNNABHAI. (Munnabhai is slapped by a police officer) Gandhi said if you slapped, kindly show them the other cheek!

MUNNABHAI. (The officer slaps his other cheek, Munnabhai punches him) Gandhi didn't say what to do after he hits the other one!

The film shows the spirit or apparition of Gandhi that is visible only to the hero Murali Prasad Sharma or Munnabhai. The apparition of Gandhi is shown as an

adviser of Murali Prasad Sharma, his advices to him are in short and straightforward manner. In the real life also Gandhi has a style of his own in the way of speaking, he listens to everybody and share his views in simple manner this fact and has been observed in the work *Music of the Spinning Wheel*:

His words come across as the words of a living man, eager to listen to you and also to share his thoughts ...If you remain unconvinced and choose to disagree , he respect your choice...film *Lage Raho Munnabhai*, made by Rajkumar Hirani and Vidhu Vinod Chopra, and starring Sanjay Dutt. Circumstances compel the film's bumbling hero to become—or, rather, pretend to be—a Gandhi scholar. But whenever he is in quandary, or has a query, the ever helpful Mahatma comes to him as a ghost to show the way. And without his knowing this small –time criminal in a big city gets transformed into a genuine servant of society and fighter for justice. (Kulkarni 365)

The undercurrent of the movie has no trace of Gandhism as a serious subject matter but through the genre of comic narration Gandhism is fore grounded along the other commercial feature of a movie. The confluence of the commercial filmic entity, entertainment value and a serious subject like Gandhi are rendered in such a way that it reveals the influence of changed cultural of aesthetic sensibility in the new age of post-globalization. In the globalized age the film sensibility has drastically transformed in its outlook and presentation, the subject matter that has to be discussed whether it is an age old or new would be treated in the parameters of the contemporary style. This filmic venture could be a new experiment in providing an aesthetic space for Gandhi in order to propagate the

ideas of Gandhi in an era of new understanding of art forms. Through this movie it could also be observed that the text of Gandhi is not outdated in the contemporary age of new high tech oriented literary art forms. The focus is on the three basic principles of Gandhi, namely non-violence, truthfulness and fearlessness. An entertainment movie with all the required commercial entities tries to capture the three ideas of Gandhi in the lifestyle of Munnabhai. *Lage Raho Munnabhai* in its movie features has proved that Gandhi and Gandhism could be allocated a space for re-interpreting and re-enacting even at the time of changing formulas of the contemporary filmic version.

Gandhi as subject could be experimented not only in the print literary medium but also in the visual narrative, for bringing the notion that Gandhism is an inspiring and motivating topic for literary genre for criticizing and endorsing. Today's visual and verbal representation is new culture of aesthetics in conveying a message. Filmic communication as an art form reflects the voice of the voiceless for providing a space for them the raise their voice. Any art form is a tool for transforming the humankind to witness the new cultural format. In the present age of globalization and high technologies there could be always a possibility of proliferating the medium of literary expression for the formation of new genre to place the realities. Therefore, this section of the chapter examined the possibilities of representing an International icon like Gandhi in a visual narration to disclose how the person would be approached in plurality to bring new meaning and message. The visuals are today's language in which the world speaks.

Moreover it has attempted to comprehend the reconstruction of Gandhi in the contemporary popular aesthetics and also to apprehend the plurality of Gandhi. Even decades after Gandhi's death, the ideas of Gandhi and Gandhism are becoming the subject for the popular visual narratives. The contemporary popular aesthetic like film has been polemical in nature in its approach to Gandhi. Treating Gandhi by means of the present-day cultural parameters, namely films and visual representations provide new space for exploring new possibilities to reconstruct and reinterpret Gandhi and Gandhian thought. The contemporary popular medium of art endeavoured to admonish the established historical format of Gandhi on the one side, but some other attempted to celebrate and romanticize Gandhian philosophy in a didactic way. The representation of Gandhi in visual narration is a strategy for marketing Gandhian philosophy, and a new visual experiment in proliferating the different aspects of Gandhi which is not freely expressed anywhere in the formal format.

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Conflicting Concept(ion)s: Polemics of Childhood in Asia

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I was one of the invited keynote speakers to the 22nd Biennial Congress of the International Research Society for Children's Literature at the University of Worcester in August 2015. Professor Jean Webb*, the Conference Chair, suggested that I speak on Eastern/Asian Childhood. The topic presumes a standardization of concepts regarding constructions of childhood in Asia. Can we hone our intellectual acumen to conceive of a homogeneous Asian Childhood? Can anyone born of human mettle ever authoritatively speak for the whole of East / Asian childhood? Pursuing the given parameters of Western standards of constructions of childhood, the fundamental investigation leads to the question: Is there an Asian Childhood? The inadequacies of governments in many Asian countries, the ignorance of the adult perception of the social/psychological/philosophical/

* Professor Jean Webb is the Director of the International Forum for Children's Literature at the University of Worcester. I thank Jean, my intimate friend, for the invitation to be the keynote speaker at the IRSL Congress and I acknowledge with due gratitude the fiscal assistance to present this paper at the University of Worcester.

literary/socio-pedagogical/cultural construction of childhood, the lack of educational opportunities, the callousness of the public at large towards children, violations of the rights of children, child labour, child-prostitution, and many more pertinent issues related to children make the Western world evaluate many countries of Asia at large as genuinely devoid of a mature construction of the concepts of childhood. Yet, Asia constitutes the largest child population in the world and the West at best believes that the whole of Asia, perhaps excluding a few countries like Japan, Singapore, Taiwan or China needs western guidance when it comes to forming concepts/conceptions of childhood, which these countries consciously attempt to resist but they are impotent to prevent the penetration of western values of childhood that just pervades along with neo-liberalization and globalization.

At the outset, I would like to distinguish between what I mean by 'concepts of childhood' and 'conceptions of childhood'. By concepts of childhood I mean the constructions of the notions of childhood. Whereas, conceptions of childhood are what people expect of children in a society. While concepts of childhood in the East have been dynamic but blindly imitative of the West, Eastern/Asian conceptions of childhood have remained stereotyped and static. The major conceptions that construct Asian childhood relate to religion and philosophy. Religious construction of childhood is strongly present in many Asian countries that consider the child as close to the divine. For example, in the child-centred religious construction of children and childhood in India, Indian children are imagined as little replicas of Sri Krishna or Sri Rama. Philosophy and religion intertwine in operation in the conceptions of

Asian childhood. Chinese childhood is strongly built on Buddhism and the philosophy of Confucius or Hindu philosophy permeates Indian perceptions of childhood. Conceptions of the sociology of childhood are inevitably present in the developing countries in Asia. Asian Children's literature, along with other allied fields that are concerned with childhood, such as, History, Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy, and Geography, is engaged in the conflicting polemics of these concept(ion)s of childhood.

The concepts of childhood have undergone varied changes in Western history and have often deeply influenced and interfered with the Eastern views of childhood—from the erstwhile concept of the naïveté's of childhood, to the authoritarian as well as puritan perspectives of childhood; or from the 19th century Romantic views of childhood to the Victorian complexities of the notion. Of late, there has been a resurgence as well as a structured effort to conceptualize in literature and media a homogenized childhood, which merely is an offshoot of western neoliberal policies of globalization and this aims at a standardization of western concepts of childhood that have successfully intruded into the oriental children's literature. However, there is a simultaneous but heterogeneous resistance of these standardizations of childhood by the renewed conceptions of idealized and static childhood that pervade all native Asian children's literature.

Most of the countries in Asia are postcolonial and that's a point to begin with as the colonial heritage foregrounds the general Euro-American dominance in global academic research in childhood studies. In this contested hierarchy of dissemination of knowledge,

Asian ideas about childhood were often discarded as irrelevant and bizarre. While the colonizer considers it the White man's burden to civilize colonized society towards adulthood, what adequate concepts of developed childhood is to be expected from the colonized? The global standardized concept of childhood Western society has achieved is then the only ideal, and all aberrant versions of childhood existing elsewhere in the world need homogenization towards the Western ideal. How far has neo-liberalization and ensuing globalization assisted in this process of standardization? Will there be a possibility of postcolonial hybridization of childhood depicting resistance to the contested ideals that will exhibit a repetition with a difference? What has the media to do with the globalization of childhood? Are there any perils awaited in this much applauded globalized homogenization of childhood, when executed in practice in the local contexts of Asian nation/s? This paper focuses upon these and other similar postcolonial interrogations awaiting adequate considerations.

The interdisciplinary view on the construction of childhood is relevant. A history of Asian childhood has perhaps not yet been attempted. At least, the history of Indian childhood isn't yet written. Peter N. Stearns (2005) who has remarked on the challenges of history to construct childhood historically, adds: "The history of childhood is a rich subject, but it has not been evenly explored across the world; a pronounced Western disproportion continues to affect the world" (845). When we consider the cultural construction of childhood, in most of the Asian countries, the sociology of childhood is the favoured construction; prone to moral ideologies in childhood, a philosophy of

childhood has developed in Asia too. A psychological construction of childhood is perceived and the socio-pedagogic construction of childhood also is operative. But very few Asian countries have imagined a literary and cultural construction of childhood. Supplementing with the Indian context, as an example, Sudhir Kakar (1981) examines the network of social roles, traditional values, customs and kinship rules that link the psychological development of children in India. It is a work that reveals the interventions of myths, rituals, fables, and arts into the life of Indian children. Basically it analyses Hindu infancy and childhood in order to show the psychological moulding of the Indian child in a specific cultural context. Ashis Nandi's (1983) is, indirectly, a more recent attempt to portray the psychological and postcolonial nuances of Indian/Western childhood. The thesis of Nandi is that while Rudyard Kipling, a Westerner, spent his childhood in idyllic India just to later hate all that is Indian in identity in his later life as an adult, Sri Aurobindo, a typical Indian, was forcefully sent to the West to assimilate western ways of life yet returned to India to embrace the Indian spirituality in him and not hate the West but accommodate western thoughts in practice. Nandi tries to argue that culture is hereditary and highlights the perils of childhood in contestation in alien culture. Nandi, then, concludes of Sri Aurobindo's mission: "Gradually, discovering the East in oneself by losing oneself in the East-in-the-West became a transcendent goal and a practical possibility" (96). Orientalism often asserted Eastern childhood as something that had to be chastened, because the West imagined it as strong-willed, defiant, and they pictured it as the uninhibited child particularly spoilt, unsaved and

reprobate. Indians have yet to look at the construction of childhood as a literary and cultural concept.

The colonial hangover further asserts the binaries[†] of Eastern/Western childhood and seen from the Western standards, East/Asia hasn't yet achieved the ideals of standard concepts of childhood. Viewed from the Eastern perspective that cannot fully agree with the Western ideals of childhood, the Eastern childhood is in a flux that now, at certain moments of revelation in a few countries of the East, opens up to a discrete simulation of the Western ideals of childhood. Let us return, then, to the premier question: Is there an Asian childhood? What concepts does it stand for? In most of the Asian countries, the educational systems are rigorous and score driven. The ideal child has to score high in national examinations. The institution of schooling is exam based, test-book driven, and teacher-directed, and negotiates a large group of students in the classrooms. The Asian child has to adjust to the extended family system of multiple mothering and has to learn from all adults and respect the adult society. The social values of interdependence dominate and individual autonomy has the least priority. Asian societies have a collectivist culture and the extended bonding of the child and the caregiver lasts till the end of one's childhood. Living together and sharing belongings, the Eastern child easily learns the necessities of economic interdependence and

[†] There is a perpetual fascination for the West to treat the East as exotic. The Eastern child is often seen as aggressive, primitive, and impulse-driven. In the binary system while the Western child is portrayed and seen as autonomous, whole, and creative, the Eastern child is a considered a savage, damaged and aggressive.

what is stressed to the Asian child is the importance of group or community values. On the other hand, highly individualistic Western children have abundance of material equipments and these social differences create a galore of a difference between Asian childhood and Western childhood in general. Asian childhood is also highly dominated by institutions like Religion, Politics, and Moral Ideology. Religion has a tremendous influence as children and ideas of childhood are determined by religious groups in Asia. They prescribe the normative values of childhood. Islam determines the constructions of childhood in the Asian Arab world and other Muslim countries. Buddhism has a normative influence upon many countries in South Eastern and Eastern Asia. The Indian Subcontinent is hugely pervaded with the Hindu cultural values of childhood. Judaism determines the values for Israeli children's literature. Other religions like Christianity too have a sway over concepts of childhood. Many Asian countries have dominant political rulers who lack in democratic values but assert their hegemonic views in the government's propagandist children's literature. Even in democratic countries of Asia, government sponsored children's literature is common. Asian adult society often insists upon overt presence of moral values in children's literature. In short, Asian conceptions of childhood are static and those of the West are inherently dynamic.

While these traditional conceptions of childhood are still valued as the ideals of childhood in the East, globalization and neo-liberalization have erupted cultural intrusions of progressive Western ideals of childhood in Asia. These progressive values of childhood may be summed up as being child-centred,

learner-friendly, assertive, and individualistic, having self advocacy, free expressions of one's feelings, or, standing up for one's rights, with an emphasis on personal choice. Postcolonial childhood is at once national and cosmopolitan and as nations' continuous reconstructions, there are fluctuations in the images of the child and childhood. Child may be viewed as a lens to perceive the development and shape the discourses of nations. Therefore, there are paradigms of childhood to nation-narratives in the contested postcolonial contexts of Asian children's literature, where narratives of nation and subject formation in children's literature have local as well as global figuration of resistance and hybridity that leads to 'repetitions with a difference'. Asian childhood moves away from its inherently static mode to a dynamic of imagined child's expressions of subjectivity and agency. However, the instances of pulling the Asian childhood to a degenerative stasis is perilous as well as vibrantly operative amidst creating impressions of progression. I first consider how Asian constructions of childhood transform to the dynamic mode positively and then also expose the ambiguities that pull it downward. The examples I often consider are from the Indian context but can have wider applications in other Asian contexts.

There is a correlation between changes in society and changes in how adults imagine children and childhood. Nick Lee (2001) extensively argues that with the influence of globalization on the image of the child, Western society have moved from considering adults as human "beings" and children as human "becomings" to raising children to be on par with adults, and we now imagine children as having their own agency and accompanying opinions, as 'beings' in their own right

(9). Speaking of the contemporary Western image of the child, the modern child is seen as a social actor who participates in his or her own education and life. Children thus construct their childhood together with adults. In real life, children have a renewed focus and attention: their opinions are counted at home, they influence purchase of certain products, and they are consulted in family problems like divorce, etc. raising the image of the child to be an “agentic being”. The changes in the social processes of acquiring information through the internet have made the adults descend from their unchallenged positions of authoritarian masters of knowledge to accept the reality of children sharing this knowledge. Adults now admit that essentially there is not much difference between themselves and children and the dichotomy considering adults as “being” and children as “becoming” no longer exists; both adults and children are “becoming-without-end” (Lee 82). While the West has easily accepted this metamorphosis, Asian culture finds it as conflicting instances when information technology changes adult-child relationships. Conceptions of childhood in Asia demand the child to be obedient, respectful, and submissive to the adult; yet the power of knowledge violates such normative expectations. The child then teaches the adult.

Contemporary Indian children’s stories now begin to acknowledge the marginalized female child’s agency to present a better perspective for the world. Mukerjee & Ilango’s picturebook entitled *Who will be Ningthou?* (2008) is a commendable endeavour of Tulika publications to changing children’s literature in India. This book is a retelling of a Manipuri folktale from the remotest North-eastern region that affirms a better wisdom in and insight into the princess instead of her

brothers. When the question of succession to the throne of Kanglaiphek in Manipur arises, the king evades the patriarchal norms. The king says that times have changed and succession should not be determined by primogeniture but rather it is the worthiest who should inherit power. Hence, there was a contest among the sons of the king in which they all equalled in knowledge. As the contests got more complex, they were asked to perform unique remarkable feats to prove their claim to the throne. The eldest son shot through a big tree on horseback and the bullets pierced the heart of the tree. The second son jumped across the tree on horseback. The third son's adventure succeeded in uprooting the tree on horseback. The king and his male subjects felt that the youngest son was the strongest because he uprooted the tree. But, meanwhile, the princess was sad at the destruction of the tree. She went near the uprooted tree and cried. Suddenly, the queen remarked that if anybody deserved to rule the kingdom, it was the princess, for she was concerned about the happiness of all subjects—humans, trees, and animals. Finally, the princess succeeded to the throne of Kanglaiphek. The story from a highly marginalized region of India now reaches to all of the country, and what is significant is that female wisdom is upheld as superior to male valour and acrobatics.

These tales appear simple to Western standards. Yet they offer a change to the static Indian context that merely promotes mainstream Hindu mythological tales retold in the same familiar stereotyped mould. The child's agency to save the endangered species and balance the ecology appears to be the theme of Karim-Ahlawat & Roy's *Gulla and the Hangul* (2008), a tale from Kashmir. Hangul is a deer-species in the region, an

endangered one, a protected animal. The story is set in the shades and tones of contemporary Kashmir. It portrays the quiet life of the villagers in Tangdhaar, the valley, their close link with nature, as well as the underlying disquiet of militant and military presence they have learnt to live with. The illustrations evoke the rugged, rocky region less familiar to child readers in their images of Kashmir yet give a soft charm to the beauties of the region. The story describes the simple shepherds who live on the slopes of the valley. They know little about the world outside. Describing their life, the tale reads: “They work hard in the warmer months, because they know the winter will be long and difficult. They live close together like the pines, in large families” (9). The protagonist of this story is Gulla, a shepherd boy of this region, which is frequently affected by earthquakes. In a recent earthquake, Gulla lost many cousins. One day, while coming back from the forest, Gulla spotted a deer, a hangul, being chased by two wild dogs. Gulla forgets about all the lurking dangers—other wild animals, children’s fantastic tales of Banbudhiya (the old woman who eats male children), and military men moving about with guns in hand—Gulla is adamant to save the deer. He makes a desperate attempt to save the poor animal and doesn’t care for his own safety; the child is a social actor in his own right. The tale continues, “Without thinking, Gulla jumped up and ran behind the dogs. . . His feet caught on the roots of the pines and he stumbled. But he had to save the deer” (22). He did save the deer. After the night passed into day and Gulla was quite certain that the hangul would now be safe, he took it out from his phreran (define “phreran”—don’t know what it is--), where it was safely ensconced for the night. The story now twists as the

hangul miraculously turns into a boy and is recognized as Sheen, the Spirit of the Eternal Snows. The supernatural creature is pleased with Gulla and offers to bestow a boon. Then Gulla instantaneously asked, let there be no earthquake in Tangdhaar. The conclusion suggests that this tale is the reason why Kashmiris consider hangul as a protected animal as it is believed to possess the Spirit of the Sheen ever willing to bestow a boon. I have just illustrated two simple Indian tales that exhibit childhood agency. The best guide to explore representations of subjectivity in Asian childhood is to right away read John Stephen's edited work, *Subjectivity in Asian Children's Literature & Films: Global Theories & Implications* (2013).

This paper is incomplete; I feel if it has no references to Asian Arab childhood. Children's literature in the Arab world is highly religious in tone, politically ideological in perspective, and full of values and social norms. Historical fiction is the most popular genre for Arab children that celebrate the heroic adventures of religious or national leaders. Non-fiction is also preferred that narrates outstanding Islamic figures, such as the prophet Muhammad's companions and the heroes of the Islamic conquest like Khalid ibn al-Walid, Ubeida ibn al-Jarrah, Ali ibn Abi Talib. Biographical works celebrate similar themes as does the one about Saladdin and his war against the crusaders. However, today, Arab children's literature is not exclusively impregnated with morality, ideology and didacticism. Powerful political structures support propagandist children's literature that employs uncontested political and religious ideals to celebrate Arab childhood as obedient, well-behaved, satisfied, understanding and mature. Recent examples that deviate from this majority trend in children's

literature present native Arab children as facing childhood challenges in their culture such as the difficulties in making friends, attending school and doing homework. This aims at a complex representation of Arab childhood with all its heterogeneity as vibrant, well-rounded and dynamic.

Is there a possibility of writing ideal children's literature that aims at a resolution to the gulf between East/Asian childhood and Euro-American childhood? Childhoods differ according to cultural differences; yet is there a possibility of transnational children's literature that celebrates childhood? How can the Asian childhood peel off overt moral values in tales for children? Inspired by Mr. Ramachandran, the Director of the Singapore National Book Development Council, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, a US immigrant Malaysian writer and critic, had to write an ideal children's book for Asian children, *Princess Shawl* (2008). She wanted to write a work that leads Asian children to explore the heights of imagination. She thought of writing a novel about Hang Li Po, the legendary princess from China, who had been sent by her father, the Emperor, to marry the Melaka prince, Sultan Mansur Shah. Speaking of the circumstances that led to the writing of this fiction, Lim says:

With little Mei Li in *Princess Shawl*, I have been able to rescue my inner Hang Li Po from the island of exile to unite with the Sultan, and hence to secure, if only in imagination, a future for diasporic Chinese who have been transformed through Time's mighty engine into national subjects in Malaysia and Singapore. (*Asiatic* 24)

Then, an ideal tale emerged, a convergence of the hybridity of the Euro-Western written literary standards

and the Asian-Malay-Chinese oral story tradition. It is a conglomeration of the multiple traditions from West and East, from literary and oral narratives, from the layered histories of a serial European colonialism, from Chinese and Malay folklore and it is a cultural vision of Mei Mei's adventures. Opening and closing chapters of this novel with a narrative layering are set in contemporary Singapore. There is time sequence layered in chapters to be peeled back as historical time beginning with the most recent and ending in the earliest historical events. The novel begins with Malaya in 1950s, then sequences to pre-Independence, leading on to colonial 19th century Malaya of Chinese immigration, and then the settlement of assimilated races of Nonyas and Babas, before covering the loss of Portuguese Malacca to the Dutch, the loss of the Malacca Sultanate to the Portuguese, and the legends of the time of Princess Li Po's exile from Malacca. This style of narration is called a kuih lapis-style story, as time is sequenced like the layers of a kuih lapis, the traditional Malaysian shawl.

Little Mei Mei, the heroine, is a nine-year-old Singaporean girl whose quest is to rescue the legendary Chinese princess from Pulau Tikus, the island of exile, so the princess can marry the Sultan and achieve the destiny intended for her and for future generations of diasporic Chinese Malaysians and Singaporeans. The dramatic action is plotted on Mei Mei's quest. The little girl heroine, aided by the magic shawl, has to go back through time to succeed. The romance of the princess and the Sultan is redoubled in the romantic relationship between Mei.

Li's father and mother and consummates with Mei Li receiving a baby sibling at the end. *Princess Shawl* is a true quest novel and raises suspense and surprise. Though no explicit moral messages dominate, the plot dramatizes the struggle between good and evil, love and hate, and in the end, good triumphs over evil, love wins over hate. When we make a final evaluation, here is a celebration of childhood that is not confined to one national or one ethnic cultural identity. Although it begins and ends in Singapore, the book is also about Malaysian origins, and although thoroughly Chinese diasporic in cultural references, it is fairly Southeast Asian and Malay in nuance, idiom, and linguistic shading. It is an ideal hybrid text for children—for Malaysian Singaporean Chinese diasporic and all transnational children. The novel ends with the image of such a future with Mei Li celebrating her eleventh birthday in the presence of family friends and her new baby brother.

Until now I have considered how Asian childhood transforms to the dynamic mode positively; now a brief explosion of the ambiguities that pull it downward. What negative impact does current global politics of culture have on Asian childhood? We have just two important points to consider. First, Asian childhood has been transformed to consumer identities. Television, having reduced the already low rate of reading habits of Asian children, has brought a remarkable re-conceptualization of the child and childhood within the context of global media culture. The media plays a decisive role in constructing multiple and diverse social identities and the essence of identity are in what we perceive and consume. Television advertisements lead children to a homogenization of culture. Asian children

now sit at home watching television animation shows mainly from Japan's children's cartoon programs such as Dora Emon. The vibrant Asian child howling and running, playing and fighting outside in nature is a rare sight now. Kids now watch animations; play video games and half notice the advertisements of children's drinks, snacks and other items for their own actual consumptions. Then, in the mall they see the same drinks and snacks and transform themselves to children who are consumers of children's stuff. Asian childhood identities have now been defined by the commodities advertised, purchased, and consumed.

The second negative impact is potentially more perilous. Globalization can imply some radical simplifications. Ideals of homogenization of childhood can have drastic effects when the hegemonies of production of children's literature are blessed by powerful dictators or may have similar effects when even in the case of powerful democratic rulers as the following example explicates. *Bal Narendra* (2014), an illustrated cartoon fashioned story for Indian children, presents Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a kind of perfect young saint in this graphic hagiography. The story depicts the ideal childhood for Indian children by presenting the childhood of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He grew up in tough circumstances but overcame them to be the leader of the nation. The overt message for children is to emulate the childhood of Modi. Modi as a role model child is presented as he reads Swami Vivekananda; cleans his house; takes care of his family; washes his clothes; cleans his new shoes with chalk; irons his clothes; wins at sports; kidnaps baby crocodiles but returns them to their parents after his mother explains family ties to him; sprays ink on the shirts of bullies so

his teachers can identify them; performs historical plays; fundraises for his school; wins at kabaddi; saves drowning friends ; bathes and clothes a sadhu; helps out at his father's tea stall; feeds soldiers going to fight China in 1962; joins the National Cadet Corps; saves a pigeon and swims across a lake full of crocodiles; and writes plays that teach people that the idea of untouchability is wrong, because as a child Naredra Modi believes that "Everyone has the right to enjoy God's world, no matter who they are or what their caste is". Sycophants who idolize Modi now belittle children's literature to an airliner safety instructions chart, notes Basu (2014), a critical reviewer of the book. Evidently such imagined childhood can only encourage conflict and debate rather than presenting a picture-perfect world. This attempt at homogenization is aimed at creating a Modi Nation as the book is supplemented with Modi masks, Modi tunics, and Modi pen drives.

Globalized consumer culture can thus take childhood to the other extreme when experimented. It reinforces homogeneous concepts of childhood and evades the essential heterogeneous aspects of Indian/Eastern/Asian childhood. Will these forces of homogenization of childhood succeed in crumbling down the heterogeneous conceptions of childhood in Asia?

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Aesthetics of Reformation and Transcendence: Experiments in an Art Form of Subversion

M. P. HARIKRISHNAN

Bharathanatyam: An Art Form of Subversion

Bharathanatyam has incurred several colourations through the passage of time considering contextual and popular aesthetic values. In *Movement and Mimesis* Mandakranta Bose reveals that, Bharathanatyam which synthesizes abstract and mimetic forms of dance has now become marginalized as the classical dance of Tamil Nadu. Its etymology problematizes linguistic and social paradigms, Sanskrit/Dravidian and privileged/marginalized.

Although the name Bharatanatyam was given only in the thirties of the present century, the usage is traditional. The word for *natya* in Tamil is *atta*, which has always been used to mean dance and Bharatanatyam developed from *Dasiattam* of Tamil Nadu. (130)

Here the dance envisaged by Sage Bharatha is inseparable from the dance form of the working class, thereby subverting social hierarchy through aesthetics.

According to Sage Bharatha the very reason behind creation of *Natyasastra*, the Indian Science of Stage

Performance is to provide a common harmonious space by transcending restrictions imposed by racism and classism. “Natyotpathi” of *Natyasastra* emphasizes that Lord Brahma created it for the benefit of all castes by obliterating racial discrimination and cerolizing almost all human skills in the art of performance. *Natyasastra* incorporates the quintessence of four Vedas in the form of four principle elements: voice modulation from *Rig Veda*, musical quality from *Sama Veda*, acting skills from *Yajur Veda* and aesthetic emotions from *Atharva Veda* (1: 7-10). Therefore, this new Science of Dramaturgy subverts the canonical Vedas which have been instrumental in sustenance of social hierarchy by asserting itself as the Fifth Veda. Moral obligation of performers and patrons of the art form demands fructification of its creator by dissipating values of unity and global harmony.

It is not unknown fact that the scope of this art from has much more to be comprehended and utilized. Julia Hollander analyses Indian Classical Dance in the contemporary globalized society as a carrier of bourgeoisie values. Even though Bharathanatyam is considered as India’s best-known dance export, it is equally inferred to as a high-art dance style of middle-class girls. Despite this disparity, scholars are of the opinion that this dance form has influenced foreign as well as native forms of theatre like: Greek Theatre of Euripides and Indian Folk Theatre; especially through emotions modulation and choreography (18, 124). It is ironical to notice that the forces of social oppression act as revivers of traditional art forms, which were part of popular aspirations. *Contemporary Indian Dance* by Ketu H. Katrak formulates that, the revival of this dance form was made by the elite sections of society which included

operational forces of brahminical and patriarchal powers. They became instrumental in not just abolishing social evils like devadasi system but uplifting women as propagators of culture and aesthetic vitality of the art form (36, 44).

With the exception of old court dramas intended for the academic and elite classes, the Indian Theatrical Art of *Natyā* has been providing entertainment and enlightenment according to common and collective need of the folk. Ananda Coomaraswamy identifies Classical Indian Theatre as a unifying phenomenon which fulfils the aspirations of all sections of society. "Where such a need is felt, there arises a common and collective art, that is to say, an art which is not, indeed, practised by everyone, but is understood by everyone" (6). This is fructified through: selection of common themes and use of comprehensible psycho-physical expressions ensure that any common Indian spectator can appreciate the work of art. Moreover, the actors employ imaginative power to manifest suitable aesthetic emotion in the audience. Classical dance has thus outlived the onslaught of time and fluctuating aesthetic tendencies even in the present day world.

A Panorama of Theatre in India by Som Benegal speculates that the present form of Classical Dance has the legacy of only three decades, following its revival in the seventeenth century. Bharathanatyam owes its primitive origin as form of dance-drama based on *Natyaśāstra*, and later transformed into a solo dance form performed by women who were confined to temples. The archaic form of Bharathanatyam is considered as the source from which later derivatives like Bhagavatha Mela, Natakam, Yakshagana and Kuchupudi, evolved

(58). Mulk Raj Anand's *The Indian Theatre* identifies Harikatha as a harmonizing force that blends social and spiritual discourses. Song, prose, poetry and dance are inter-woven in the folk form of theatre known as Harikatha which mainly focus on narratives pertaining religious and spiritual themes. This form marks the beginning of subversive art forms which destabilize social hierarchy by harmonizing all sections of society. The narrative form incorporated popular themes of everyday life, along with adherence to traditional metrical verse (30). "Nandanar Charithra Kirthanai" began its epoch through Harikatha adaptations, which had already popularized the life of devotees like Prahlada and Ramadas.

Life of Nandan: An Expression against Oppression

Legend of Nandanar has been the part of Tamil literature especially marginalized as a religious text, without much reflection on socio-cultural context. Sundaramurthi Nayanar in "Thiruthondar Thogai" makes a single line reference to Nandanar, which later found place in one stanza reference by Nambiandar Nambi in "Thiruthondar Thiruvanthathi". This was followed by the narrative of *Periya Puranam* [also known as *Thiruthondar Puranam*] written by Chekkizhar Swamikal (Swamikal 78–79). The text deals with the life of Nandanar or Thirunalaipovar in thirty seven verses, and is recognized as one among the sixty three Nayanar Saints who worshiped Siva as the principle manifestation of divinity. This was followed by "Nandanar Chatithra Kirthanai" by Gopalakrishna Bharathi, who identifies the subversive discourses inherent and inseparable from that of the spiritual experience of the devotee. The novel, *Nandan*, by A. Gopalasami Iyengar and G.

Aravamudha Iyengar tries to dilute the discourse of oppressors by creation of progressive upper caste characters who argue in favour of Nandanar using scriptural scholastics.

The latest interpretation of saga of Nandanar is *The Legend of Nandan: Nandan Kathai* by Indira Parthasarathy, translated from the Tamil by C. T. Indra and printed by Oxford University Press in 1978. The critically acclaimed work of the latter, “Critical Theory and a Reading of *Nandan Kathai*: Hindu Culture as Text” complements the intentional effect of the fictional work. It analyses the legend of Nandanar and foreground its canonical nature in terms of racism, and gender bias. The plight of a Devadasi dancer Abhirami is wound along with the main plot of this play and the protagonists has to face opposition from both oppressor and oppressed classes. *Frontline* illustrates the review of the text with previous versions,

Unlike in the earlier versions, no miracle happens, but Nandan is led to believe that a miracle the harvesting of standing crop by God has happened, only with a view to persuading him to undergo the test by fire. Nandan and Abhirami perish in the fire, as desired by the conspirators. The plotters’ intention was to teach a lesson to those aspiring for emancipation. (9)

The causes of subaltern sections are foregrounded following a socio-cultural contextual reading of textually embedded discourses, which marks the popularity of the work in critical, academic and scholarly circles.

Among all these versions “Nandanar Chatithra Kirthanai” by Gopalakrishna Bharathi stands out as the most popular among the common masses in the form of music concerts, Hari Kathai, Villupattu and now

through Bharathanatyam adaptations. This is mainly due to its lyrical quality, simplicity of language and construction, traditional story telling method and cardinal aesthetics. This work is distinct from previous versions through its reformatory ideology and subversive nature, without sacrificing spiritual significance of the narrative. Contrarily, *Nandan Kathai* by Indira Parthasarathy demystifies all cultural discourses including the spiritual, ascertaining an antithetical role of spirituality in socio-cultural reformation. Here spirituality and religion are undifferentiated, where the former is marginalized in the light of latter as monopoly power executing oppressive canons of the dominant community.

Apart from popularity among the common masses and providing an inspiration for other versions, “Nandanar Chatithra Kirthanai” asserts that social reformation and spiritual fulfilment are inseparable and inevitable. This holds valid in the contemporary world where value crisis and oppression are only two sides of the same coin. Therefore the former work can act as a carrier of reformatory ideologies in confirmation to Spiritual Leaders who created revolutionary epochs in socio-cultural reformation, like Sri Narayana Guru and Sri Ramalinga Swamikal. The practical validity and success of Social Renaissance Movement invoked by aforementioned leaders, disapproves spirituality as a mere expression of masochism and self-immolation. Kathryn Hansen in *Stages of Life Indian Theatre Autobiographies* rejects the euro-centric interpretation of Indian Individuality as self-deprecation, based on the studies made by Mattison Mines. Individuality, especially in South India has transcended the limitations of domesticity, especially due to historical importance

attached to it. Hence the concept of “collective self” is relevant, where the emancipation of the individual is inseparable from the cultural community. This provides space for subaltern studies and women’s studies to raise voice against oppressive ideologies established through colonialism and caste system (304–07). Social Reformation in South India initiated by Ayya Vaikunda Swamikal validates this fact through inversion the binaries, individual/community, spiritual/social and self-reliance/self-realization.

“Nandanar Chatithra Kirthanaī” composed by Gopalakrishna Bharathi synthesizes and synchronizes ideologies of emancipation at the physical and metaphysical realms by interweaving the discourses of aesthetics and pragmatism. The text simultaneously intensifies and pacifies emotions of audience, through incorporation of alienation effect and emotional investment. Sublimity of spiritual element demands heightening of emotional motivation along with simultaneous co-existence of subaltern issues provokes thoughts, ideas and messages against oppression are evoked in the audience. This motivates the audience for self-examination and self-rectification where each individual is able to identify with cultural context, and to answer the issues impeding its progressive evolution. The earliest versions of the legend especially in *Periya Puranam*, has been inspired by reformative ideologies dissipated through the sixty-three Nayanar Saints of Saivism.

Spirituality was instrumental in transformation of society through anti-oppressive discourses that destabilized social hierarchy established by canons of racism and caste system. Discourses of the subaltern

struggle might have got diluted within the royal context of creating *Periya Puranam*, yet destabilization of social hierarchy can be clearly visible from its narrative content. Of the sixty-three Nayanmars whose statues are being erected in all Siva temples, many belonged to the lowest untouchable castes. Dr. M. Annamalai and Dr. L. Selvamuthu Kumarasami illustrates that spiritual movements like Saivism played a vital role in cultural integrity by confuting racial discrimination.

Enati Nayanar of Sanar (toddy-tapper) caste, Kannappa, Niiyanar of Vettuvur (hunter) caste, Atipattar of Nulayar (fisherman) caste, anayar and Tirumular of Idayar (shepherd) caste, Kaliyar from the cekkar (oilpressers) caste, Tirukurippu Tontar from Ekali caste, (washerman) and Nandanar from Pulaiya or Paraiya (drumbeaters) caste are all worshipped in Siva temples. (4)

The triumvirate Nayanar saints Appar, Thiru Gnana Sambandar and Sundaramurthi along with Manikavasakar acted as motivating force for the resurgence of downtrodden and social outcastes through devotion of God. The earliest mention about Nandanar can be traced from Sundaramurthi Nayanar who addresses the former by the epitome Thiru Nalaipovar [Divine One who goes tomorrow], which reflects the desperate attempt to attain the greatest goal of spiritual fulfilment. The name might have originally been used in a derogatory manner by high caste and low caste members, who mocked Nandanar's lifestyle as a mimetic one and scorned his value system.

The Legend of Nandan by C. T. Indra and *Pali Adugal* by K. A. Gunasekaran describe religious authorities among proletarian class and elite classes as oppressors of

the subaltern, where God is merely a pawn in hands of the former. Scholars like K. Selvam similarly interpret texts with unilateral rationality by negating Divinity as a human creation and instrument of oppressive power. Nandanar is said to have been tricked by the Brahmins who exploit his sainthood making him enter into fire thereby getting rid of him (36). Even if this interpretation of Nandanar as a victim is valid, ironically it is an undeniable fact that none of his oppressors are revered by the people, nor do their names find a place in history. On the contrary Nandanar has become popular historical, mythological and spiritual personage. Speculation of the rational human mind determines that a human being cannot emerge alive out of blazing fire, making life of Nandanar as a figment of human imagination. Demystification of the bourgeoisie concept of “reality” based on rationality corresponds to foregrounding spirituality for subversion of religion. Foucault acknowledged a certain degree of value and validity in disrupting or unlevelling of thought through ‘spirituality’ which simultaneously affirms religion and negates it (Carrette 60). Transcendental thinking is an inevitable part of socio-religious reformation, where spirituality deconstructs religion to achieve it.

Swami Sivananda Saraswathi the founder of Divine Life Society narrates the anecdote of Nandanar’s successful recovery from fire in *Sixty Three Nayanar Saints*:

Nandanar went round the fire, and with His Name on his lips and his mind fixed on the lotus feet of the Lord, he jumped into the fire. He emerged from the fire with a new holy body, with sacred ashes smeared all over, the holy thread and matted locks. He was then taken inside the temple. (27–28)

Nandanar imitating life style of Brahmins and wearing holy thread owes little to mimicry of oppressors' culture, but more to Caliban Paradigm. Ania Loomba illustrates this fact,

Caliban can curse because he has been given language by his captors. But one problem with such a line of reasoning is that subversion, or rebellion, is seen to be produced entirely by the malfunctioning of colonial authority itself. In Bhabha's view, too, it is the failure of colonial authority to reproduce itself that allows for anti-colonial subversion. (80)

Similarly none of the privileged class Brahmins was able to create a Brahmin in its true sense [Spiritually Enlightened] which Nandanar achieved. Nandanar like Ayya Vaikunda Swamikal was able to demonstrate his spiritual potency by defying physical laws and claiming public recognition (Ponnu 40-52). Chekkizhar Perumal de-mystifies Brahmin hood as a racial insignia of privileged birth by illustrating Nandanar as a "true Brahmin" tested and verified through trials. The role of performers and creators in representing the life story of Nandanar on stage is crucial in dissemination of reformatory values for which the latter overcame all trials and tribulations imposed by socio-religious monopolies.

Legend of Nandanar on Stage

Among various versions of Nandanar's life history, "Nandanar Chatithra Kirthanai" by Gopalakrishna Bharathi has become popular through Bharathanatyam adaptations. On stage improvisations usually determine variation in aesthetic content and discursive implication. A close reading of the performing arts provides a cross section of cultural continuity reflected in contemporary

aesthetic value system. Analysis conducted on the following versions of this legend reveals the extent to which reformatory ideologies are foregrounded through embedded spiritual narrative.

1. *An Element of Nandanar Charithram* by Thavarajah Mohanprian in Norway on June 16, 2012.
2. *Bharatanatyam: Nandanar Charithram* by Bala Devi Chandrashekar, video posted on June 5, 2012.
3. *Bharatanatyam, Nandanar Charithram, Gopalakrishna Bharathi, Varughalamo, Natanam* by Bala Devi Chandrashekar, video posted on January 19, 2011.
4. *Idu Thano (Nandanar Charithram)* by Janani Jayanth posted on April 11, 2014.
5. *Suswaraa Performance 2013* by Mythili Kumar at Suswara Academy of Music and Dance.
6. *Nandanar Charithram* by students of Sri Bhavani Natyalaya at Brihadeeshwarar Temple, Thanjavur on the occasion of Chinna Melam.
7. *Vazhi Maraikudhe* dance by Sulakshana Jayaram at Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago as a part of HTGC Program “Rudra: Who really is He?”
8. *Varugalamo* solo theatre performance by Smt. S.S. Kalairani posted on December 5, 2014.

According to Dr. Ninu M. S., efficacy of Bharathanatyam corresponds to the effective use of *mudras* [hand gestures] to convey emotions and ideas, rather than extensive reliance on facial and physical modulations. Hyperbolic use of latter creates emotional turbulence which may hinder reception of thought provoking contents of the art. Use of *atavu* [dance steps]

and *jathi* [rhythmic steps] in between the performance prevents emotional saturation, separates episodes of the narrative and creates congruity of dramatic elements with the dance. Improvisations of the dance forms can be analysed in the light of discursive representations and variations of textual representations on stage.

Situations

The statue of bull moving aside at Thiruppankur Temple has become the most popular anecdote represented on stage, especially in case of short performances. Here the element of sublime is evoked which is parallel to scenes describing wonder of Nandanar on apprehending the unseen Chidambaram and also when he visits there. While depicting the complete history, the dilemma of duty vs. devotion, anguish of separation from God and oppression of the landlord are comprehensively described (Chandrasekhar, 5 June 2012).

Descriptions

Description of slum area, market place, temple, field, and houses of Nandanar and his landlord VEDIYAR are the prominent ones. Short solo performances show emotional turbulence of Nandanar unable to get a glimpse of Lord at Thiruppankur veiled by the huge statue of *Nandi*. Steps of *jathi* depicting iconographical attributes of Siva and environmental beauty are the part of long performances.

Aesthetic Emotions

Chapter 6 “Rasavikalpa” of *Natyasastra* identifies eight cardinal aesthetic emotions known as *rasas* [some textual versions include *santham* or tranquillity as an emotion],

which exist as an important criteria of evaluation (240–65). On stage adaptations of the legend is mainly impregnated with *Sringaram*, *Karunam* and *Atbbutam*; which create pity, wonder and joy in the minds of the viewers. All aesthetic emotions are incorporated, in case of long and comprehensive performances, and they determine qualitative evaluation of the art work by interested recipients.

Sringaram [Beautiful]: *Vipralambha Sringaram*, the beauty depicting separation from the dear one along with the hope of union, forms the core theme of devotion fostered by Nandanar who yearns to visit his Lord at Chidambaram. This hope against hopelessness interweaves the elements of beauty with psychic strength which endorsed the protagonist with the epitome Thiru Nalaipovar, The Divine One who goes tomorrow. Physical attributes of Siva, environment, temple and paddy field are all the insignia of beauty producing joy and happiness (Kumar).

Karunam [Pathetic]: Helplessness of Nandanar for his inability to go to Chidambaram by continuous deferment for tomorrow and isolation due to opposition from both upper and lower caste communities creates pity in the minds of spectators. Repentance of the landlord VEDIYAR when he comprehends Nandanar as a supreme devotee makes him a round character by evoking the infectious effect of the pathetic emotion. *Deus ex machina* in the form of Ganapathi and Siva indulging in manual labour for Nandanar affirm pacification of the pathetic emotion.

Viram [Heroic]: Heroic devotion of Nandanar is the core theme which radiates qualities of duty, discipline, determination and discrimination. Without any heroic

deed Nandanar proves his valour by Human Values, for example Truth. If Nandanar wanted, he could have easily reached Chidambaram by presenting any personal or domestic excuse before the landlord.

Roudram [Angry]: Anger towards Nandanar is mild and not ferocious in case of religious authorities belonging to brahmin and paraya castes. Pity towards Nandanar incidentally creates anger in minds of spectators towards his oppressors, which finally dissolves with their repentance.

Hasyam [Comic]: *Upahasitham* and *Vikhasitham* grade the comic element that includes laughter as ridicule and mockery. Heartfelt laughter is drowned by scorns and gibes of society against the protagonist.

Bhayanakam [Fearful]: The only fear throughout the performance is that of Nandanar about hastening and losing his chance to see God. Here the element of fear is almost diluted and mild. Connotative fear corresponds to the mention of evil patron deities of downtrodden sections like *Veeran* and *Mari*.

Bibhatsyam [Disgusting]: Unaware of reformatory standards and unsullied devotion of Nandanar, the landlord reveals disgust towards the lower caste by calling him beef eater, mutton eater and lunatic. Unhygienic lifestyle and premises of slum dwellers create apprehensive disgust; while their adherence to these even after Nandanar's persistence for intrinsic and extrinsic purity is more contemptible.

Atbhatam [Wonder]: Miracle of moving aside the stone statue of bull in Thirupunkur and overnight cultivation of one square kilometre create amazement in viewers. Wonder is created through power of devotion

fostered by Nandanar in the former case, and latter depicts response from Divinity for confirmation. Greatest wonder is provoked by steadfastness of the devotee even when confronted with vehement oppositions and determination to achieve the cherished goal without escaping from canonical taboos and related ordeals (Jayanth).

Actions Represented

Manual labour like ploughing, sowing seeds, irrigation, harvesting, threshing winnowing, piling, drawing water, making musical instruments, selling goods and animal care are usually uncommon themes portrayed in Bharathanatyam. Singing hymns, paying homage, doing oblations, dancing and prayer by Nandanar are common to devotional temperament ascribed here (Mohanpriyan). Divine interventions like Lord Ganapathi building temple tank at Thiruppankur and Lord Siva accomplishing the humanly impossible manual labour for Nandanar are unique to this narrative.

Psycho physical expressions

Hyperbolic emotional representation is adopted which is accompanied with repetition of lines and re-enactment in case of short performances of specific anecdotes. Sincerity of Nandanar regarding his duty towards the landlord and devotion to God; and his inhibition to enter temples despite surmounting flawless devotion, invoke moral dilemma as an inevitable element. Depicting moral dilemma of Nandanar demands wise enactment skill from performers due to conglomeration of various emotions simultaneously. Most of the dance performances are made by a single individual who enact the role of all characters, which requires precision,

proficiency and professionalism, especially during spontaneous switching of roles (Chandrashekar, 19 Jan. 2011).

Changes incorporated in stage adaptations can influence the aesthetic temperament of audience and can be instrumental in inculcation of reformatory values. Pre-aesthetic materials of text comprised of ideas, messages and thoughts work out receptive psychological conditioning through modulation of aesthetic materials. Acceptability, appreciation and value education of audience depend not only on the choice of theme but more on the shift of emphasis in form of representation.

Ideology

Reformatory ideals and ideologies should be the part of performances instead of exaggerated expressiveness. Repetition and use of emotional hyperbole brings forth escapism instead of foregrounding social concerns or clarifying spiritual experience (Jayaram). Efficacy of short performances can be utilized to its maximum by providing time for the audience to reinforce the underlying ideology, instead of creating a tightly packed stage event.

Idea Conveyed

Efficiency of a performing art lies in conveyance of multiple ideas and emotions effortlessly in short time span. For example the performance by Aparajita Sarma minutely portrays the guilds and chores of subaltern sections through the example of Nandanar and expresses the oppression by enacting corporal and psychological admonition faced by the protagonist (Sarma). Eco centric message and Human Value of compassion is conveyed through care given to bullocks after ploughing

the field [switched use of *simhamukha*; and *tripathaka mudras* followed by *pathaka mudra*].

Voice of the Subaltern

Even though experimentation on Legend of Nandanar is always relevant, the necessity of expressing issues of the subaltern need not confine within the frame work of folk adaptations (Kalairani). Group performances in *sanchari bhavas* [transitional emotions] can be improvised as effective carriers of messages by utilizing the quality of mime and lack of any specific language endows universal acceptance to the art form (Students).

Language of the Oppressor

Caliban Paradigm is the most effective way of subversion, according to postcolonial theory which is applicable to art forms depicting subaltern issues. Many dance performances purge the caste name *parayan* with which Nandanar is addressed by his landlord [also used in self reference]. Avoiding such a term in the fear of demoralizing any particular caste proves effective only in diluting the voice of the subaltern. Gopalakrishna Bharathi might have deliberately used this term to emphasize the bitterness faced by the protagonist and to highlight the irony of an untouchable merging physically with Divinity where the three thousand priests of “privileged birth” are mere onlookers.

Emancipation of human and the Divine

The story of Nandanar is usually seen as a struggle against oppressive canons established by social hierarchical system and as a saga of sublime devotion. A close reading of “Nandanar Charithra Kirthanai” reveals that textual discourse against racial discrimination is

equally emphatic along with intellectualization of spirituality. Popular cultural outlook of the present world towards spirituality is either by marginalizing its relevance or by ascribing the halo of scholastic excellence over it. In Song 54, the land lord chides Nandanar for his illiteracy and racial inferiority by highlighting scholarship of Brahmins as the qualification to see The Lord of Chidambaram. The final union of Nandanar with Divinity suggests that measuring spirituality with bookish knowledge and oratory skill is a futile and self-deceptive exercise. The life of Nandanar cautions self-seekers to forsake hypocrisy and develop unconditional, selfless and blemish less love towards Divinity.

Initiators of Social Renaissance Movement in South India Ayya Vaikundar and Sri Narayana Guru were influenced and inspired by Nandanar and Lord of Chidambaram. Hymns like Uchchippatippu [identifying singularity of God and Guru] and rituals like *Thottu namam* [concept of Singular Divinity indicated by white mark in the shape of a flame] of *Ayyavazhi* and literary works of Sree Narayana Guru clearly acknowledge Chidambaram as Unifying Universal Principle in accordance to its etymology [Cosmic Divine Effulgence]. Verse 9 of “Anukampadasakam,” by Sree Narayana Guru recognizes Nandanar as Supreme Devotee of Supreme God, who demonstrated physical immortality through spiritual union (Guru, “Anukampadasakam,” 180). “Sivasathakam” [Verses 21, 24] by Guru exemplifies the unique achievement of Nandanar as an ideal standard of spirituality (Guru, “Sivasathakam,” 173–176). Life of Nandanar has proved its potential as a covert power whose overt expression

insists in the creation of a progressive egalitarian world; and socio-cultural reformation is just the beginning step.

Creation of the dance form Bharathanatyam is attributed to The Cosmic Dancer who coincidentally hails to be the source of inspiration for subversion through spirituality. “Thandavalakshnam” of *Natyasastra* concludes that, whoever practices the dance form created by The Supreme Lord shall be purged of all anomalies and find place in the auspicious world (4: 244). Apart from universal acceptability of the art form, the performers are thus endorsed with the responsibility to create a progressive auspicious world by highlighting the vision of Cosmic Unity and Global Harmony. This is possible only through purification of the globalized world from regressive tendencies by providing education in Human Values. Forces of oppression and hegemony have attained new dimensions in the contemporary global community that range from fanaticism, terrorism, environmental exploitation and value crisis. Handling the final one among these determines the future of human community, as the other issues are automatically resolved along with it.

Conclusion

Proficient and proper use of art forms involving onstage performance creates explicit impact on audience due to direct contact with performers. On the spot feedback from spectators insists on the necessity of practice, precision and dedication on the part of performers. Response from the receptive end can inspire performers and choreographers to make improvisation in the art form and ensure that the intended aesthetic effect and ideologies are transmitted to the audience. These factors point towards inevitability of art forms like

Bharathanatyam as a subversive force which is the need of the hour. Nandanar asks in Song 38, “Thillai veliyle kalanthu kondaal avvanivar thirumbiyum varuvaaro” ‘once a being enters The Light of Chidambaram; will he ever come back?’ (Ramachander, “Nandanar Charithram,” 73). Similarly, once Human Values are acquired, will a person ever stoop down to destructive and negative tendencies? If the answer is yes, our value education is incomplete and each individual should adhere to the self-initiative for self-evaluation. Art can reach the hearts of multitudes for investment of progressive discourses in their consciousness in order to actualize the long cherished goal of an egalitarian world.

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Robert Bly: The “Rational Manipulator” of Deep Image Poetry

SANIL RAJ J.

Deep Image Poetry is part of post-war New-American poetry inspired by the Black Mountain Poets and the Beat Generation of poets. The term “Deep” doesn’t refer to certain great intellectual depth and understanding, but to the “direction of seeing” (Rothenberg 31). The focus is on the inwardness of poetry, which prompts the human self to articulate and bring significant transformation to the outside world. It all depends on the depth of image that can bring out logical link between the internal and the external world. The Deep Image poets were a loose collection of poets spread across America during the 1960s and early 1970s. Principally the movement was spread around three major figures of the group: Robert Kelly, Jerome Rothenberg and Robert Bly. According Haskell, the distinguishing feature of these poets from other group of poets was “the rational manipulation of irrational materials” (142). They were keenly particular in exposing the chaos that has engulfed the psychological realms of the contemporary world than the highly sophisticated and philosophically oriented poetry.

Robert Bly was one of the central figures in American poetry during the second half of the 20th

century, whose remarkable journal *The Sixties* acted as a medium for the propagation of “Deep Image” poems and poetics. He is credited with the formation of this literary movement, though he disliked the title. Many critics consider him as a teacher and Hall considers Bly as “a learned, eclectic priest” (qtd in Perseroff) as his writings are primarily religious and his purpose in his readings also was to teach. But he rebelled against the established notions of poetry and the established politics. His themes varied from events affiliated to the personal psyche to the events of the global psyche.

Even though Bly is considered to be a typical Deep Image poet, among his writings, it is difficult to identify a representative “deep image” poem of him that encompasses all the deep image poetic tenets. His poem “Ravens hiding in a Shoe” interprets the paradox of living in this world. The poem begins with a general statement:

There is something men and women living in houses
Don't understand. The old alchemists
Near their stoves hinted at it a thousand times.
Ravens at night hide in an old woman's shoe.
And four-year-old speaks some ancient language.
We have lived our own death a thousand times. (21)

This is a world of contradictions and paradoxes and every sentence that we utter can be interpreted in different ways: “Each sentence we speak to friends means the opposite / As well. Each time we say, ‘I trust in God,’ it means / God has already abandoned us a thousand times” (21).

The tone of inconsistency is sustained till the end of the poem. The plight of mothers has never been answered at all. During times of war they have

desperately prayed for the protection of their sons, but their prayers were always refused. The last stanza is an interior monologue arising from the inner conscience of the poet. It asks whether he will continue writing even though it is a futile action, and the poet answers in the affirmative:

Robert, you've wasted so much of your life
Sitting indoors to write poems. Would you
Do that again? I would, a thousand times. (21)

Bly's preoccupation with Indian philosophy and ideals might have prompted him to write the poem "Nirmala's Music" with an Indian touch. The name in the title bears an Indian identity. From a very particular incident of Nirmala's playing of music, the poem takes into a universal theme, the exploitation of women. Unfortunately, it is noticed by women alone. The opening lines introduce two typically paradoxical characters: "The music that Nirmala is playing today goes / By two names: The One Who Finds Lost Things, / And The One through Whom Everything Is Lost (26)".

The next stanza takes us to a totally different scene of wild animals that consume human beings in "The Forest of Existence." The poet finds even the gods bloody and they grant consent to this heinous act of murder. The saints also have their share as they are the ones who admire the whiskers of the killer animals that have been dipped in blood. Next, the poet introduces the case of the women who have become so lean owing to their overexposure to the religious ceremonies. The poet asks the pertinent question: ... what does it all mean?" (Bly 26). The dominant position of men is highlighted in the following stanza: "Men think ahead,

and are mainly providential / They laid out Egypt, But I like women so much / They say: 'Let the lambs come and be killed' (26).

Towards the end, the poem tries to convey the hardships that women experience at home. Man occupies an uncompromising role in the lives of others. Women are destined to lead a very sub-ordinating position and she finds her life a paradigm of suppression. It is her fate to deliver a baby once in every year: "And women suffer the most. Between every child born, / So many rugs are woven and taken apart. The water / Of a hundred bowls is poured out on the ground" (26).

The theme of the poem is universalised in the last stanza. The animals mentioned above soon unveil their masks and their real self is publicly exposed: "The hungry tigers follow the disappearing dogs / Into the woods of life. Women understand this, / For this is a world in which everything is lost" (26). This being a valueless world, one cannot expect anything hopeful. The hungry tigers are after the dogs and its significance is revealed through very harsh language. The predicaments of women are clear, as from this modern waste land nothing promising will emerge.

"The Sympathies of the Long Married" is a unique poem that exposes the vanities of marriage and married life. Living together as couples is compared to a long and tedious journey. It is like eating the yields of eternity. Since the journey is quite long, the poet reflects on the thought that nobody will get worried about the other person who is left behind as it is natural to get left behind. Even if a single bird can fly through the clouds, the poet says that it is enough. Similarly, the poet's partner's beautiful and welcoming face at the door of the

house is also enough. Then the poet goes on to various comparisons of the married couple: "The two farm horses stubbornly pull the wagon, / The mad crows carry away the table cloth, / Most of the time, we live through night" (28).

It is followed by a gentle supplication on the part of the poet. Let the heavenly bliss be with the couple throughout their life: "Let's not drive the wild angels from our door / May be the mad fields of grain will move, / May be the troubles rocks will learn to walk" (28).

In order to the smooth running of an ideal married life, there ought to be certain compromises on the part of the couple: "It's all right if we're troubled by the night / It's all right if we can't recall our own name. / It's all right if this rough music keeps on playing" (28).

The poet finds the life of the couple hard compared to a single man. It is possible that the couple may experience setbacks in their life. Old can wither their presence of mind and there are chances that they may even forget the other person's name. Living together is an achievement and even the petty happiness that the couple gain often is more than sufficient for a couple who know each other: "I've given up worrying about men living alone. / I do worry about the couple who live next door. / Some words heard through the screen door are enough" (28).

"Starting a Poem" is another poem on married life. In a humorous vein, the poet tries to compare the way composing a poem is related to the concept of marriage. This is a typical poem in deep image mode and the poet depicts the clash of the physical world to his tortured

inner psyche. Bly being a poet knows the way a poem gets composed and how one word that catches his attention gets related to other words and finally the process of creation being done. The poem is personified and it begins in a very informal tone, and then there is an unexpected twist:

You're alone. Then there's a knock
On the door. It's a word. You
Bring it in. Things go
OK for a while. But this word

Has relatives. Soon
They turn up. None of them work.
They sleep on the floor, and they steal
Your tennis shoes. (42)

During the time of poetic composition, one word gives rise to more number of words which ultimately give way to the verses of the poem. The poet will experience much hardship if he won't get the word of his choice for the completion of one particular idea. Once the words get accumulated in large numbers, the poet will feel that everything is a mess.

Similarly, the poet is of the view that getting married will put people in the same embarrassing situation. Even when one gets married to one woman, he needs to carry the idiosyncrasies of the whole family:

That's what being married
Is like! You never receive your
Wife only, but the
Madness of her family.

Now see what's happened?
Where is your car? You won't
Be able to find
The keys for a week. (42)

The poet considers the entrance of marriage into his life as a deliberate intrusion into his area of privacy and liberty resulting in the collapse of the inner world of the poet.

The same element of personification of the poem is carried forward in another exciting poem "Turkish Pears in August." In the opening session, the poem is compared to a woman who has a husband and all other dear ones.

Sometimes a poem has her own husband
And children, her nooks and gardens and kitchens,
Her stairs, and those sweet-armed serving boys
Who carry veil in shiny copper pans. (65)

In the last session the poem is treated as a treasure house of delicious confectionary. The poems emit delicacies sweeter than tasty chocolates and fresh pears:

Some poems do give plebeian sweets
Tastier than the chocolates French diners
Eat at evening, and old pleasures abundant
As Turkish pears picked in the garden in August. (65)

Bly is an ardent admirer of the celestial nature of poetry and he believes that it has soothing effects on the ailing soul of man. So he considers it as a human being and also as a delicious sweet item, tastier than the best fruits and the chocolates available in the garden in August or the evening food of the French diners.

"Rains" is a very short poem with just four lines and it is a prediction on the uncertainty of the Second Coming of Jesus. The poem can also be interpreted in an ironical manner. Even though the land is under water, Christ has not turned up so far:

The weather is moody and mainly,

No one knows when Jesus will come
The long rains have come and gone
A thousand acres are under water. (33)

The weather being severe, one will even wonder if it is a premonition to the second coming of Christ. Only the weather is unfair, and the question is whether it is an identifying mark of the arrival of Jesus. But no one knows when Jesus will come. For some time there were incessant downpour and many a long rains have come and gone. Thousands of acres of cultivable land are now under water and it is the only reasonable evidence available on Jesus' coming.

An element of pathos and pangs of an ailing soul lie hidden in some deep corners in most of the poems of Bly. The title "The Lost Trapper" is an indication of the protagonist of the poem at a loss. One man's meat is another man's poison. Such a belief is re-echoed in the poem and the poet stands as a helpless person wailing at his fate. He wonders why many despicable human beings cannot make at least a desperate attempt to evade from the hands of their impending fate. The situation is not different even if music is concerned:

Each time the soprano and the tenor
Kneel and sing to each other,
Somewhere else on stage the baritone
Is about to die. (41)

Man has to bear the consequences of all his evil deeds. The Alaskan trapper is finally convinced of his own sinful life and he finds the blood of the innocent in his own hands. His radio is now dead and it indicates the portentous feeling of the inherent fear that engulfed the whole humanity. It is new snow that falls everywhere

and the mental paralysis that has wreaked mankind is also exposed.

In the third stanza, the poet is haunted with certain significant questions where each and every creature of this earth is not an exemption. The important question is why the animals trapped in their fate do not make any attempts to escape from their fate:

I don't know why the grasshopper
Doesn't try to wiggle
Out from the bird's claw
But he doesn't move. (41)

The poem closes with a note of frustration and it is symbolic of the dilemma of human existence. There doesn't prevail any means to escape the critical situation where everyone is ensnared. Even if we cry, help will come from nowhere and salvation is now only a remote likelihood.

Just forget the idea that
Someone will come and save
You whenever cedars begin
Making that low sound. (41)

The theme of partings and the subsequent frustration is another characteristic of the deep image poets. The pangs and worries that the human beings experience are transferred as such both to the animate and inanimate things. "Heard Melodies" is the poet's artistic endeavour to draw attention to such an abysmal issue. At the time of separation, people will struggle to get words and what come out of their distressed exertion can be some whispers.

The spider sways in October winds; she hears the
whisk

Of the bat's foot as it leaves the branch, the groan
 The bear makes far out on the Labrador ice,
 The cry of the wren as the hurricane takes
 The house, the cones falling, the sigh of the nun
 As she dies, the whisper Jesus makes to
 The woman drawing water, the nearly silent weeping
 Of bones eager to be laid away in the grave. (61)

The parting pains of the spider when the bat leaves the branch of the tree, the cry of the bear in the Labrador ice, the lament of the wren when a hurricane destroys its house, the last sighs of a dying nun, the whisper of Jesus to the woman who was drawing water from a well and finally the weeping of bones as they are about to be laid in the grave are typically portrayed here by taking into account the original feel of the parting moments.

Robert Bly has the rare talent to transform ordinary events into fine sophisticated poetry. Heart's intimate feelings lying deep in its safest corners often turn to be the premise under discussion. The short poem "The Teapot" examines the very act of making tea in his household and all of a sudden it takes an unexpected turn:

That morning I heard water being poured into a
 teapot
 The sound was an ordinary, daily, cluffy sound
 But all at once, I knew you loved me.
 An unheard-of thing, love audible in water falling.
 (84)

Making tea in the house is a routine activity, and he is used to listen to the sound of water falling into the tea pot every day. But it happens to be an instance where the love of his wife is revealed to him in a very personal

manner. The poem also has the Keatsian echoes, “Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter.” The poet takes us to the time of the Romantic poets and their concept of “unbridled love” in which “beauty is truth, truth beauty.”

“My Mother” is one of the autobiographical poems where Bly pays glorious tribute the departed soul of his loving mother. The poem is very personal and it exposes some of the private fears and worries that obsessed his mother. It begins in a plain straightforward manner and the poet warns the readers not to be prejudiced while discussing something personal associated with his mother:

My mother was afraid—oh not
Of the things you imagine—just
Tuberculosis, death,
And my father. She did all right. (88)

In addition to the grave ailment tuberculosis, she was also afraid of death and in a humorous vein the poet adds that she was scared of her husband also. She was quite a cheerful person and initially she never heeded much attention to her motherhood. Still, she had her own justifications for being scared as she lost her mother because of flu:

Her own mother died of the flu
In the First War. So
Everything was shaky.
People kept leaving. (88)

But she never succumbed to her fate as such and she made frantic efforts to evade her impending doom. She always tried to be active and energetic. She found her own outlets to lead a fruitful life:

She had an instinct to
Escape herself. She took a job
In town and bought a piano
With her own money. (88)

Finally it so happened that all her fears were mere illusions. Things never turned out to be as she feared. She was privileged to have a long life and she was taken to an old age home at a later stage in her life. She was loved by everyone, especially the nurses, but she maintained a distance. She rarely shared her feelings with them and they remained deep in her heart:

She lived a long time
In the old people's home
The nurses liked her,
But she hardly said a word. (88)

The last part of the collection, *Talking into the Ear of a Donkey* discusses much about death and heaven. The poem "Longing" expresses the death wish inherent in most of the human beings. There is more talk on heaven and man's desire for longing to it. All objects of this universe, irrespective of being animate or inanimate have the innermost craving to be in the kingdom of heaven. Whenever he witnesses something hanging on for some time, the poet is under the impression that they are longing for something. The items vary from the air drops inside the water glass to a shaggy dog: "I don't know why air drops gather on the inside / Of water glasses, and why the shaggy dog / Always seems to be waiting for heaven" (99).

The poet stands at a privileged position and he believes that things are in his favour than that of the past. Previously, it was only on Sundays that the churches remained open, but now anytime, even on

Mondays, one can go to churches and assure their seat in heaven. There are chances, when the genuine efforts of people to go to heaven become bleak: "The porcupine climbs straight up the tree / With its heavy tail hanging down, / But he doesn't give two beans for heaven" (99).

The bedridden old man, who is still active with his poetic composition, has his brain "light up" and he has managed to learn the odd way of approaching heaven: "The old man lying in bed writing poems / Feels his brain light up, and he knows / That in some odd way he is approaching heaven" (99).

The following stanza depicts the vanity in human relations. It is quite natural for a man to direct his attention towards woman. The poet's humour is at its best when he introduces the case of women listening to handsome young priests: "Men sometimes turn around to see a woman better. / The eyes of beautiful women often glow / When the handsome priest talks of heaven" (99).

The poem concludes in a very affirmative tone and the poet expresses his satisfaction as being a poet. What he longs to is to write the word "heaven" every morning in his life and thus his life can be meaningful: "I write these poems so happily each day / I guess it means that I've had a longing / All morning to write the word "heaven" (99).

Bly undertook genuine interest in the establishing of American Writers against the Vietnam War in the latter half of the century and brought the isolated world of poetry into the realm of public life. His writings were so powerful and they rendered a new interpretation to the definition of horror. Such a concept is illustrated in his

collection of poems entitled *The Light Around the Body* (1967) and *Counting Small-Boned Bodies* (1979). The poems such as “The Teeth Mother Naked at Last” is a long and mournful compliant to the administration and it foresees the destruction of the authoritarian government: “Now the whole nation starts to whirl, / the end of the Republic breaks off” (*Light* 35). War and its aftermath is devastating and the “teeth-mother” stands exposed at last:

Europe comes to take revenge,
the mad beast covered with European hair rushes
through the mesa bushes in Mendocino County,
pigs rush toward the cliff,
the waters underneath part: in one ocean luminous
globes float up (in them hairy and ecstatic men—)
in the other, the teeth mother, naked at last. (35)

Some other poems project him as someone wearing a mask to hide his real identity. In “Counting Small-Boned Bodies” he identifies himself as a member of some affluent business class possessing power who was instrumental in bringing war and devastation. The poem is highly ironical and it is a blazing attack on the idiocy and stupidity of war:

If we could only make the bodies smaller
Maybe we could get
A whole year’s kill in front of us on a desk!

If we could only make the bodies smaller
We could fit
A body into a finger-ring for a keepsake forever.
(*Light* 44)

Yet another poem “War and Silence” is a translation of the dreadful realities of war into a nightmarish experience:

The bombers spread out, temperature steady.
A Negro's ear sleeping in an automobile tire.
Pieces of timber float by, saying nothing.
* *

Bishops rush about crying,
"There is no war,"
And bombs fall,
Leaving dust on the beech trees. (*Light* 49)

Bly's message is clear in all these poems- he seeks a solution to the problem in which humanity as a whole is caught in. According to Gray, Bly in his poems, "relates the contemporary political crisis to a more crisis of belief" (547). He is the rational manipulator of a world that is about to collapse, but the word "manipulation" has a different connotation here, meaning setting everything alright.

Many critics find Bly as a religious poet and his innate passion through his poems was to teach. His poems serve as a vehicle to convey his deep rooted thoughts and ideals. His writings are noted for their repetitions, song sequences and live commentary and his only intention everywhere is didactic. His book *The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart: Poems for Men* is instructive in its mission but it was contentious and infuriating and many find it as antifeminist. Bly is original and real and the rational part of his writings distinguishes him from the perfunctory writings of the Surrealists. His poems operate through the conscious and unconscious realms of the mind and Bly refers it as the "psychic leap." Such leaps of poetry are inspired by feelings and emotions and not logical thinking.

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I, Rigoberta Menchú, An Indian Woman in Guatemala: An Autochthonous Testimonio

USHA K.

The world is upside down if it is discussing now whether Rigoberta deserves the prize, when it should be debating whether the prize deserves her.

—Eduardo Galeano

I, Rigoberta Menchú, An Indian Woman in Guatemala (1984) an autobiography of a peasant Maya woman from Guatemala is an interesting book not only because of its realistic portrayal of the trauma of those oppressed people but also due to its controversies regarding the credibility of certain events described in it. The arguments about the book which won Menchú the Nobel Prize in 1992 were first raised by David Stoll, an American anthropologist in his book *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (1999) who proved that Menchú was overdramatizing some of the events in order to gain support for the Guatemalan guerrilla movement. During the 1990s, *I, Rigoberta Menchú* was the subject of increasing controversy and debate, which came to a head when David Stoll, an American anthropologist, travelled to Guatemala and, through interviews with Menchú's family and neighbours, picked

apart the accounts that Menchú communicated with such vivid detail in the book. In his book, Stoll claimed that Menchú made up or overstated many of her reports, including a searing account of what it was like to watch as her younger brother was burned to death in public by the Guatemalan military. Whatever be the controversy, the book uses the strategies of the oral tradition which was the mode of articulation of the indigenous communities from time immemorial. Hence it is only natural that it uses the technique of storytelling like any folk lore which flows down through history gathering new stories into it as it rolls by. Hence the book may be read more as an auto fiction which uses the proverb 'we' to articulate the collective longing of a population for freedom, sovereignty and self respect. If the book violates the norms of history, it classifies itself as testimony. The authenticity of the book lies if not in historical details, in the experiences of a community in general whose sufferings were exposed before the world. My paper intends to argue that hence the book carries a powerful message to all hegemonic institutions who revel in demoralizing the weaker by treating them as objects meant to be subjugated.

Testimonios as Resistance Literature

Testimonios describe anything written by a first person witness who wishes to tell her/his story of trauma and hence fluid. John Beverly in *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth* says,

By testimonio I mean a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet form told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose

unit of narration is usually a life or a significant life experience. (31)

Testimonies may combine narrative discourses such as autobiography, anthropology, fiction, interviews, documentaries etc according to Linda J. Craft. Due to this collective representiveness testimonio is an intertextual dialogue of voices, reproducing and reordering events and provides a vision of life and society which requires transformation

Mark Zimmerman states in *Literature and Resistance in Guatemala* that

clearly testimonio is a form in which literary and social constructions become necessarily and overtly intertwined” and because of this intersectionality, testimonio defies any easy explanation or categorization. (11)

The testimonio writings may be regarded as a kind of resistance writing by the colonized against the colonizer who had decided the kind of colonial writing as the literary other, themselves being the oppressor and the dictator of atrocities. Hence these writings are

produced by the subaltern people on the periphery or the margin of the colonial situation. Thus the margins of the empire are now writing back in an overdue attempt to correct the Western Canon and its versions of truth. (Gugelberger and Kearny 4)

In her essay, “Re-membering the Dead: Latin American Women’s Testimonial Discourse” Nancy Saporta Sternbach points out that “military repression and authoritarian rule are no newcomers to the Latin American political scene, but women’s open and direct opposition to them is” (91). Testimonios should be

recognized as an empowering and powerful mode of women's resistance at the margins.

Latin American women's movements are "more than a reaction to the cultural model of domination and authoritarianism envisaged by the regime; they involve 'a process of creation as well'" (Dandavati 8). Thus testimonial literature becomes a new form and forum for resistance not only for those communities but all underprivileged peoples to find their voices.

Testimonial literature have to be considered as serious because it re-scripts history, re-defines literary conventions and re-inscribes otherwise ignored stories. Latin American women's testimonio challenges the authoritarian powers which destroy peace; in various places *I, Rigoberta Menchú* denounces military discrimination against indigenous Guatemalans. When Menchú, a youngster of 23, narrated her life story to the world through the writer and anthropologist, Elizabeth Burgos, it immediately drew the attention of readers worldwide and threw light on the genocides in Guatemala against the indigenous tribes there.

Menchú is unaffected by the controversies that surround her work. She states at the beginning of her book that she is an indigenous woman activist and that this book is her and her community's testimony. "I didn't learn it from a book and I didn't learn it alone. I'd like to stress that it's not only my life...it is also the testimony of my people...My story is the story of all the poor Guatemalans" (1). Also,

They were Indians...our brothers. And what you think is that Indians are already being killed by malnutrition, and when our parents can hardly give us enough to live on and make sacrifices so that we can

grow up, then they burn us alive like that. Savagely. I said that is impossible and that was precisely the moment for me, personally when I felt firmly convinced that if it is a sin to kill a human being, how can what the regime does to us cannot be a sin? (Menchú 180)

Thus she proves that it is not the indigenous people who are savages but the Guatemalan government which is responsible for the atrocities against that community.

The book truly exemplifies the revolutionary nature of testimony literature which gives voice to the voiceless and revolt against all kinds of hegemony including patriarchy. Menchú's testimony is often placed adjacent to other resistance testimonies across the world including those written in other Latin American countries. If one such woman writer Alicia Patrony's *The Little School* is a testimony not only of her life as an Argentinean political prisoner but all international political prisoners, Menchú's account of her experiences are also those of all native tribes from the margins across the world, thus blurring the distinctions between the public and the private experiences. The main intention of these writings is to invite international attention to the causes of these oppressed groups. At the same time they write to "insure that their story is heard, written and heard" (Sternbach 96).

Relevance of Women's Testimonios

Saskia Weiringa in her *Subversive Women: Historical Experiences of Gender and Resistance*, has theorised the evolution of such forms of resistance thus:

Movements are not static;; they should be seen as processes which are modified as they come into contact with everyday life, confronting politics and

generally (but not always) the state, in a constant process of reflection, communication and negotiation. They generate certain social processes as they define and redefine themselves. (7)

Through Testimonios the Latin American women define themselves and their perspectives of hegemony creating a genre for self expression. Latin American women writers continue to “challenge the conventional way of doing politics” emphasizing on “survival, respect of human rights and gender equality” (Dandavati 9).

Testimonial narrative is at once a discrete literary genre and an acknowledgment of the limits of literature itself. Rather than evoking oppression and brutality as fiction might do, testimonial literature lays them bare through the words of those who endure and painfully resist, exalting rather than hiding the rough edges of those written out of history.

I, Rigoberta Menchú, as an autochthonous resistant testimonial

The oft discussed testimonial writing, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, conveys the harrowing experiences of the autochthonous communities including hers in Guatemala. The story actually is a blending of two narratives—one told by the speaker to the editor and the one narrated by the one to whom the story is told. Probably this is what created the controversy surrounding the events described in the work. However this controversy need not distract the reader because the pain and loss of a whole community is inscribed in it authentically and movingly.

Menchú’s description of harsh realities of life is at the same time painful and convincing. She weaves

stories and anecdotes using the thread of memory. It includes rituals, traditions and customs of the Mayan culture of the Quiche community. The wedding celebrations, arrival of newborns, rituals regarding agriculture, value-based customs, etc. which the Eurocentric civilization lacks are hence ignored and mocked by them as is revealed in the book.

This narrative is a moving record of the bitter personal experience of the Guatemalan peasants during the political terror of a 36-year Civil War that ended in 1996. It is a story of struggle and survival of the poor people to preserve their life, identity and culture against armed antagonists who are determined to see the complete eradication of a culture that resists them. Menchú's book delineates the crisis evolved in Guatemala due to the gaping differences between the haves and the have nots, i.e., the rulers known as ladinos (Guatemalans of Spanish descent) and the native peasants, the Indians respectively. The ill treatment of the peasants in the plantations, their exploitation and resultant poverty etc are actually Menchú's firsthand experience as well. "In Guatemala," she says, "the division between Indians and ladinos has contributed to our situation" (167). Rigoberta's young days had been spent between the highlands of Guatemala, known as the Altiplano, and low country plantations, or fincas. Like all the other peasants of her community, Menchú and her family also spent about eight months at the fincas working for ladinos. They moved between the two worlds each year in a truck covered with a tarp, and by the time she was eight years old, Rigoberta was capable of picking several pounds of coffee each day.

Starvation and malnutrition always turned fatal in the fincas in addition to which was the spraying of pesticides. In the deeply wooded Altiplano, the Indian's life was steeped in rituals and ceremonies which celebrated the natural world which provided space for humans along with other living beings. At the fincas, she and her people struggle to survive in cramped, miserable conditions at the mercy of wealthy landowners and their overseers. The village and the highlands also provided hide outs for the rebelling guerrilla armies. Menchú's father, Vincente Menchú formed the Peasant Unity Committee (the CUC) in 1978. He became Menchú's role model and mentor as he trained and inspired his daughter to continue the fight after his death. Words became Menchú's chief weapon. Vincente was an orphan who entered the Guatemalan army at a young age before he met and married Juana Tum, Rigoberta's mother. A traditional Indian healer, Juana believed strongly in upholding the values and practices of the elders and the ancestors. She too embraced the cause of the Guatemalan peasants and worked for their cause in her simple but powerful manner. Her militancy drew inspiration from the gruesome murder of her three sons at the hands of the Guatemalan landowners and government.

Though she lives in a traditional Indian society, Rigoberta becomes aware of the importance of word and starts learning various languages including that of the rulers, namely Spanish. A visit to the city of Guatemala is the turning point in her life. A close look at the centre of all atrocities makes her decide to learn that language in order to retort against their cruelties in their own tongue. The death of her little brother, Nicolas, due to malnutrition at the finca is another eye opener for

Menchú as she starts worrying about the future of their community in such contexts. These incidents prove inspiration for her to yearn and strive for a better future for her community.

Rigoberta makes use of the chance to be in Guatemala City when she gets a job as maid in the house of a rich land owner. This opens her eyes to further kinds of discrimination that existed in the city towards the natives. Her sisterhood with another maid servant named Candelaria who resisted the domineering masters by speaking Spanish, dressing like the ladino and back answering is significant. Though inspired by Candelaria, Menchú believed more in the power of words than in physical retort.

Her father's repeated arrests for his refusal to support the land owners to take away the lands of his villagers disrupted the family as the children had to work harder in order to release him frequently. Rigoberta unknowingly started to take the reins of the CUC founded by her father. They relentlessly fought the enemies with traditional weapons like traps, knives etc, being influenced by biblical stories of wars by landless people. The book offers poignant insights into the strategies of the Guatemalan government to eradicate the native tribes and establish their supremacy over the land. The kidnapping, and later burning alive, of Rigoberta's brother Petrocinio, killing of her father while storming the Spanish embassy, kidnap, rape, torture and finally murder of her mother are instances of gruesome violence and specimens of similar victims throughout the regime. Rigoberta herself has to flee as exile subsequently. While her sisters join the guerrilla army to fight for the rights of Guatemala's Indian

peasants, Rigoberta decides to take a diplomatic route, telling stories of her people and putting legislation into place as a way of furthering the rights of Indians.

Menchú uses the Indian words like corte (which means the traditional Indian woman's skirt), huipil etc to stress the Indian identity asserting its difference from the imposed identity thrust upon them by the Eurocentric parameters. She includes characters which symbolize the ancestors who are strong defenders of culture and resistentes who challenge autocracy. When the Old Woman meets Rigoberta and the community after killing the soldier, she joyously tells a story about it. During marriage ceremonies, Indian elders tell stories of their past. Thus, language is used as a powerful tool by Menchú to articulate her assertion of the autochthonous identity.

During a visit to Paris as part of the Guatemalan political organization known as "the 31 January Popular Front," Rigoberta Menchú meets Venezuelan anthropologist Elisabeth Burgos-Debray and agrees to tell her life story so that it could be transformed into a book. Rigoberta narrates her story in Spanish, the language of the colonizer, thus giving a powerful dig at those who were responsible for the story.

I, Rigoberta Menchú can be considered not only a cultural text, but also a political one. Her narration was an effort to bring the issue of the Guatemalan Indian to international notice. The power of Menchú's voice is evident in the response her testimonio provoked. Her voice decries an unjust Civil War and asserts the right of a culture to exist within a larger, global community. As a person who survived a violent past, Menchú now looks

to the future. She reminds the world of faith in progress and the eventual good life in a radically better future.

Though Menchú desires separation for the peaceful and dignified existence of her community, she is aware of its limitations and the importance of unification. Her father, Vincente, helped her see that

the justification for our struggle was to erase all the images imposed on us, all the cultural differences, and the ethnic barriers, so that we Indians might understand each other in spite of different ways of expressing our religion and beliefs. (169)

She comes to understand that “the barrier that divides Indians and ladinos have kept both groups oppressed by the wealthy elite who run the country” (165). However, she asserts that this requires a restructuring of the society which is possible only through a re- construction of attitudes.

The various arguments against Menchú is that she exploited the violent situation in Guatemala to publicise her political leanings, that she was part of the guerrilla groups and that she allowed the editor to alter facts according to her whims. However she also had supporters who felt that the authenticity of her narrative lies in the portrayal of the troubles faced by an entire community and hence is accurate and convincing.

The opening lines of the book authenticate these arguments:

My name is Rigoberta Menchú. I am twenty-three years old. This is my testimony. I didn't learn it from a book and I didn't learn it alone. I'd like to stress that it's not only my life, it's also the testimony of my people. It's hard for me to remember everything

that's happened to me in my life since there have been many very bad times, but, yes, moments of joy as well. The important thing is that what has happened to me has happened to many other people too: My story is the story of all poor Guatemalans. My personal experience is the reality of a whole people. (1)

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Retrospection, Reconstitution and Referentiality: Exploring the Spatiotemporal Schema in *Sugandhi Enna Aandaal* Devanayaki

UMA PARVATHY V.

History, or the knowledge about History, becomes most pivotal in the contemporary philosophical/ theoretical contentions, where it is described as a common site for provisionality and uncertainty. Gilles Deleuze discusses about the ‘knowability’ of the past in *Difference and Repetition*:

It is futile to try to reconstitute the past from the presents, between which it is trapped, either the present which it was or the one in relation to which it is now past. In effect, we are unable to believe that the past is constituted after it has been present or because a new present appears. (81)

Based on this Deleuzean notion of futility in assimilating ‘past’, it is pertinent to ask—does History possess certain amount of omniscience in terms of understanding the ‘pastness’ of the past. Or does it necessarily provide any signification to the obliterated ‘real’ or can reflect/relate the past to the stubborn ‘presentness’ of the present. History, as we conceive it today, proceeds through the discourse of supplementarity. It is keen on adding to the

present and focuses on the materiality that consistently functions as the 'background'. The conceptualization of a historic document develops through emplotment and implication of past events in the 'present terms', or as we perceive it to be.

Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* rejects the traditional historian's tendency to read straightforward narratives of progress in the historical record:

For many years now, historians have preferred to turn their attention to long periods, as if, beneath the shifts and changes of political events, they were trying to reveal the stable, almost indestructible system of checks and balances, the irreversible processes, the constant readjustments, the underlying tendencies that gather force, and are then suddenly reversed after centuries of continuity, the movements of accumulation and slow saturation, the great silent, motionless bases that traditional history has covered with a thick layer of events. (3)

Linda Hutcheon, a Canadian theorist, conceptualises the narrative modes of post modern fiction and concludes that it is not the metafictionality alone that is evident in these novels- with the self-referential, self-commentating aspects in them- but what she calls the historiographical metafictionality. This term invariably refers to the contradictory positioning of fiction and history and even accounts to a combination of these two juxtaposed ideas on a single platform of fictionality. Here, what Hutcheon proposes is that the neutral/objective referentiality of the past is an impossible enterprise. Secondly, it denotes to the strategies employed in the act of retrospection and the extent of artificiality involved. In Deleuzean terms there

is an element of 'inescapable doubleness' to History. He argues that there are two presents involved in the notion of the past- the present 'present' in relation to which the 'past' is past and a former present, which is not same as 'past', since the 'past' is something that we focus on from the new present.

The postulations of New Historicism become crucial at this juncture when the historical past merges with the textuality of present. Aram Veesser in *The New Historicism* perfectly lists the precepts that characterise New Historicism:

New Historicism really does assume: 1) that every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices; 2) that every act of unmasking, critique and opposition uses tools that it condemns and risks falling prey to the practices it exposes; 3) that literary and non-literary texts circulate inseparably; 4) that no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to the unchanging truth or expresses unalterable human nature; and 5) that a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe. (2)

Thus the empirical arguments/notions by the 'old-historicists'—that there pre-exists a definite polarity between 'history' and 'literature'—received a strong opposition from the New Historicist assumptions. The intricate patterns of relationship between a text's literariness and historicity were, subsequently, revised by the New Historicist thinkers. Stephen Greenblatt in *Towards a New Poetics of Culture* remarks that, "Methodological self consciousness is one of the distinguishing marks of the New Historicism in cultural studies as opposed to a historicism based up on faith in the transparency of signs and interpretive procedures"

(158). New Historicists argue that the production of a literary text, during any given period, is (ultimately) a cultural practice and that there obviously are no distinctions between literary and other cultural practices. For Greenblatt art is “made up along with other products, discourses, practices of a given culture” (13).

In *Sugandhi Enna Aandaal Devanayaki (SAD)* T. D. Ramakrishnan attempts to reread the ‘history’ of a nation in general and a community in particular (the Tamil population in Srilanka and their struggle against multiple prototypes of hegemony and oppression) through the magnifying glass of a ‘literary’ form that in turn functions as a platform for the other (or vice-versa?). The work ends up as a chaotic field for hectic interaction between history/mythmaking and literature/fictionality, something that the New Historicist conjectures argue for. For example, they position a literary text in the pre-determined social and economic circumstances in which it is produced and further argues that such circumstances are prone to recurrent rewriting and transformation. In *SAD*, we perceive the Foucauldian recognition that ‘history is the history of the present’, signifying that history is not a closed mode of narration rather the one, that has possibility of reorganization as well as reformation.

The narration of *SAD* develops through the accounts of Peter Jeevanandam, the script writer and member of the crew that was into the making of a movie *Woman Behind the Fall of Tigers*. The proposed movie is a manipulative stratagem, deviously sponsored by the Srilankan Government, in order to subterfuge the blatant human rights violations in the context of terrible

internal skirmishes. But the crew has other plans as well—they plan to undertake an alternate path by which they try to bring to light the undemocratic and even dictatorial tendencies that exist within the Revolutionary organisations and expose how women became instrumental in the ultimate devastation of such organisations. The narrator begins his blurred search for Sugandhi, a former member of LTTE, who, if located, could provide obvious hints at numerous intricate chronicles of immeasurable violence and trauma. While searching in social media for further information, he accidentally comes across a tale of Devanayaki, written by one Meenakshi Rajarathinam.

Devanayaki, a cult/mythical figure appearing in many of the southern legends in India, is presented within the narrative as an embodiment of unearthly exquisiteness, influential intelligence and unconstrained courage. She was the one who, with her superlative calibre, quite unlike other females of the age, took part in the administrative endeavours along with the King himself. She could easily manoeuvre through adverse circumstances, acclimatize to any reign and region, and articulate her wisdom when required (thus startling various Kings whom she willingly opted as husbands). It is a common belief, even today, that she was a master in dance and music, finances and administration, science and the art of lovemaking alike. Though there are various versions to her tale, in all of them she is presented as an incarnation of Goddess Saraswathi herself, who possessed mysterious powers at her disposal. Sugandhi, on the other hand is a ‘contemporary’ Devanayaki, exulting herself in the current Sri Lankan political scenario and fighting for the rights of Tamil community. She is metaphorically

equated with the older version and suffers the same amount of mental and physical torments all the way through. Towards the end of the narrative she even acquires an identical mythical dimension which Devanayaki possesses.

The New Historicist assumptions on the *absence* of a margin to a literary text (its historical frame in particular), the subsequent negation of an ascribed 'finality' of the text's context/meaning and the assertion on the dynamics of negotiations prove vital here when the story turns itself back to a period AD 992. The socio-cultural imprints of the time along with the political configurations are rendered within the 'rhetoric' of literature so as to provide a context to the *discourses* in history. For instance, in order to show the *circulation* of power (a common term in New Historicist studies) during the specific age, the author, brilliantly and elaborately discusses the public culture of Royal spectacle. The explicit cultural practices of the age are detailed; that invariably cut across the textuality of history and historicity of text. A close reading of the chronicle, brought in as a metaphoric/ historic enclosure where Sugandhi could easily be placed, throws open a plethora of discursive possibilities like: the notions of political hegemony, gender based segmentation, politics of female body, forced conformity and systematisation, creation and assimilation of myths etc.

The author brings in various open-ended versions of Devanayaki's account that are intricately incorporated into the main theme to showcase a historic correspondence and semblance along with the varied references to the ancient systems of warfare, cultural practices, codes and beliefs, plentiful Dravidian

perspectives etc. While reading the literary text in connection with the historic text we come across the interplay of multiple discourses and social conditions which the text ‘constructs’ in turn than simply reflecting them. Thus the episode of Devanayaki in *SAD* turns out to be a sophisticated combination of *texts* (literary and historical, with the entirety of implications), *discourses* (the obscure traces of cultural specificities of the given period) and *material practices* (the visible signifiers like institutions etc.). The palpable references to historic events and ancient Dravidian dynasties (that function as contextual constructions) like the Chera, Chola and Chalukya and their mutual rivalry present us with the distinctive possibility of exploring the correlated milieu and their discourses.

As *SAD* move back and forth and during its advancement, presents a more ‘present’ history (the *present present* in Deleuzean terms) we come across manifest indications on the ‘contemporary’. The ‘situatedness’ in the ‘present’ is demarcated by the political contextualisation and cultural practices of *the* period.

1. The Hero's Day Celebrations in Sri Lanka on 27th November, 2002.
2. Reference to Elam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS).
3. LTTE and their multiple propagandist activities.
4. Prabhakaran's (LTTE chief) murder on 18th May, 2009.

5. Allusion to Reporters sans Frontiers (RSF), Galle Literary Festival, Arundhati Roy, Orhan Pamuk, Noam Chomsky etc.
6. Revolutions around the world against dictators like Mubarak and Gaddafi.
7. Direct suggestions on Sri Lanka's current political turbulence and authoritarian administration by the former President Mahinda Rajapakse.

Sugandhi's personal tragedies involving the gruesome attack on her 'body' (represented as an assertive pictogram of oppression/subjugation) and the calamitous culmination as a resolute martyr draw a doubtless parallel with the mythical tale of Devanayaki. Both of them, belonging to two distinct spatiotemporal limits, are presented as the epitome of valour, vigour and wisdom. They are self-consciously preoccupied with the political imbroglio and articulate a temperament produced/defined by the determinate period. The socio-political *contexts* in which they struggled, survived and suffered renders meaningful insights into their traumatic episodes and exposes the deliberate/dexterous omissions in that 'grand narrative' trajectory. For instance, as a part of fictional experimentation, the work proceeds through a series of simulated argumentations about the past and creates an illusion about exhaustive research and reference. 'History' is conjured before the reader and the episodes circumspectly retextualised, thus urging him/her to accommodate such anticipations as historical truths. Within the extensive course of time, from 10th century to 20th century, the work provides the primary assumption of an imaginative literary construct, a by-product of historical data, and interconnects the same in the thematic correspondence of analogous

female experiences. But, at the same time it fails to undermine the facade of textual representations that mask the social conditions, which, if identified and reflected precisely, would have endowed further insights into the periods of historical citations.

Divided into thirty one chapters, *SAD* is an ultimate critique on the creation as well as dissemination of power and hegemonic practices (Gramsci's 'hegemony', Foucault's 'discursive practices' and Althusser's 'interpellation' merge into singular denotativeness) but at the same time it also is a critique of dominant ideologies prevalent during various ages. Placing both Devanayaki and Sugandhi in the invariable contextual politics of patriarchal subjugation, *SAD* presents us with the extensive possibility of a comparative analysis on how 'domination' could be exercised in society as a habitual response to woman's attempted involvement in the activities of 'culture'. Though we treat the 'text' primarily as a literary work with its qualitative attributes its contextualisation on the spacious platform of cultural forms and cultural industries ascribes it a concrete amount of reflexivity. The New Historicists notions like *circulation and improvisation* find definite meaning in the work as it methodically examines 1) how entire repertoire of representations, irrespective of time sequences, remains firmly within the contexts as structures and moments in the circulation of power, whether it be ancient dynasties or the modern 'democratic' configurations; and 2) how, as a mode of identity-formation through repeated performances (war, for instance, to be identified as a King), the act of *improvisation* is employed to enable one to enter into a system of power.

SAD as a literary project conclusively attempts diverse levels of implications—from authoritarian political constitutions to the questions on gender-based segmentations, from the politics of ‘female body’ to the politics of culture, from mythological representativeness to political systematisation, from provincial documentation to international perspectives. It, in due course, puts the question forward—whether such post-modernist/ region-specific fragmentation in the narrative (as an aesthetic experimentation) unlocks the possibility of a global contextualisation and a subsequent ‘historical’ interpretation.

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Historical Review of the Language Policy in India and its impact in English Language Teaching (ELT) in India

VIJU M. J.

1.0 Introduction

The position of English in the world today is the joint outcome of Britain's colonial expansion and the global prominence of the US. The question remains whether English has become so entrenched in the world that a decline in the influence of the US would harm it. Or, will other languages come to rival English in their global importance, pushing English aside much in the same way as Latin was abandoned as an international lingua franca 300 years ago (Graddol, *The Future* 9). To Graddol, "Those who speak English will outnumber first-language speakers, and increasingly, will decide the global future of the language" (10). Kachru's three circles will overlap and the 'centre of gravity' will shift towards L2 speakers. Fig 1.0 provides an alternative way of visualizing these three communities such as 'first language speakers' (L1), 'second language speakers' (L2) and 'speakers of English as a Foreign Language' (EFL).

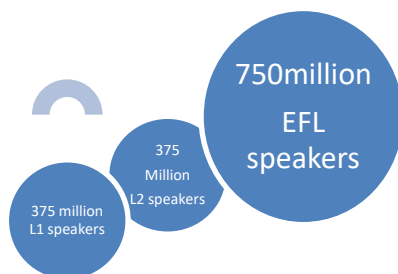


Fig. 1.0 Alternative way of visualizing language communities

(source: Graddol, *The Future* 10)

English in the world today will have an impact on our perception of what constitutes ‘good’ English and, as a corollary, the teaching of both its spoken and written forms. With so many speakers of English and the change in its function from being the language of ‘great literature’ to a tool of communication, there is bound to be a shift in perception of what acceptable English is (Nagaraj 5). Ramanujam Meganathan in his article “Language policy in education and the role of English India: From library language to language of empowerment” says:

Throughout India, there is an extraordinary belief, among almost all castes and classes, in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill, but as a symbol of a better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression. Aspiration of such magnitude is a heavy burden for any language, and for those who have responsibility for teaching it, to bear. The challenges of providing universal access to English are significant, and many are bound to feel frustrated at the speed of progress. But we cannot ignore the way

that the English language has emerged as a powerful agent for change in India. (Graddol 2010:120)

1.1 Language Education Policy and English Language Teaching in India

The Indian sub-continent is a land of striking contrasts: snow-capped peaks in the North, golden sands of the arid deserts in the West, luxuriant vegetation in the East and evergreen forests in the warm South. At one time, the different parts of the sub-continent (India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Burma) were able to connect through the medium of English under the British Empire. In the first half of the 19th century, English assumed a dominating position in this sub-continent. In the words of Lord Curzon as quoted by K.L Sharma:

The cold breath of Macaulay's logic passed over the field of Indian languages and text books... It became most exclusively the language of higher education. It was the language of the missionaries who ran a number of outstanding educational institutions in different parts of the sub-continent. Thus it began to assume the position of *lingua franca* of the multilingual Indian Communities. (1)

Vaish describes about English Language education in India as a case study: with 114 languages, India presents a fascinating case study for scholars of language in education and society (9). The census presents a more homogeneous picture of linguistic diversity in India than is the reality. For instance, the Central Institute of Indian Languages finds that over 1652 languages belonging to four different language families are spoken in India. India is a multilingual nation. Eighteen languages have been recognized in the Indian constitution for official use. The government has

recommended the three-language formula: Hindi as 'national language'; a 'regional language' (for example Malayalam in Kerala), and English which continues to serve as the 'associate link language'.

According to the 1971 census, the country has 1,652 languages belonging to five different language families: Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Burmese and Semito-Hamitic (GOI 1971). The Indian constitution identifies 22 'recognised languages'. About 87 languages are used in print media, 71 languages are used on radio and the administration of the country is conducted. As Graddol points out, the language which was a "key part of the mechanism of exclusion because of its very unequal distribution in society" is now seen "as a means of inclusion" (*English Next* 120).

The English language in India today is both an admired and a hated phenomenon. On the one hand, there is an increasing demand for the language which is associated with progress and development, while on the other the language is perceived as a killer of native or indigenous languages. The linguistic diversity of India poses complex challenges but also a range of opportunities. India is unique not only in that a large number of languages are spoken here but also in terms of the number and variety of language families that are represented in those languages. There is no other country in the world which represents languages from all the five different language families (*NCF* 36–37).

Annamalai points out that India's Three Language Formula (TLF) policy was recommended by the All India Council for Education in 1956. It is part of the Kothari Commission Report of 1964–65, which is a comprehensive document planning India's educational

future. After various modifications, the TLF was codified in the National Policy on Education in 1968, which is considered by most sociolinguists as the date when the TLF came into effect. This language in Education policy was endorsed by the National Education Policy of 1986 and then again by the Program of Action in 1992, testifying not only to the entrenched nature of the TLF but also to the sensitivity of language issues in India, which the government thinks is best left untouched (Vaish 14). Today, India's bilingualism or multilingualism confers definite cognitive advantages. The three-language formula is an attempt to address the challenges and opportunities of the linguistic situation in India. It is a strategy that should really serve as a launching pad for learning more languages. Its primary aim is to promote multilingualism and national harmony.

1.2 Historical Review of ELT in India

It has been nearly 400 years since English language came to India with the British. As colonial subjects, Indians had no other choice but to learn English. It is often remarked that the English left India on 15 August 1947 but their language stayed on with India even after it became a free nation.

Sharma classifies the developmental history of teaching of English in India into the following periods:

- a. Earliest Period (1765-1813): The British who had come here as traders were afraid of teaching their language in the beginning as they had lost colonies in America by imparting English education. After the Battle of Plassey (1757), when the traders started becoming masters, they opened institutions

of classical learning, namely Calcutta Madarssah (1781) and Benaras Sanskrit College (1791).

- b. The Charter Period (1814-1834): In 1813, the Charter of East India Company was renewed with an education clause added to it. Indian leaders like Ram Mohan Roy made increasing demand for teaching of English, opposing oriental education.
- c. Macaulay's Period (1835-1853): The famous 'Macaulay Minutes'² strongly recommended western learning through the medium of English language.
- d. The Period of Wood's Despatch (1854-1881): The number of English medium schools and colleges increased by leaps and bounds and the vernaculars began to be neglected.
- e. The Period of Commissions (1882-1934): The commissions of 1882, 1902 and 1919 tried to adjust the claims of English and vernaculars by assigning them different spheres of activity in Indian Education.
- f. Period of Struggle and Independence (1935-1965): The need for a national language and the suitability of mother tongue as medium of instruction was strongly felt and advocated in this period.
- g. Period of Grandeur (After 1965): English became the symbol of superiority in Indian society. Parents craved for English medium education for their children and it resulted in the rapid growth of English medium schools in towns and villages, charging exorbitant fees (1-2).

1.3 Present Problems of ELT in India

Saraswathi discusses the problems that India faces currently in ELT in her work *The English Language Teaching: Principles and Practice* (2004):

- a. Vague Objectives: Most of our syllabuses fail to specify objectives clearly. The implicit objective seems to be the fostering of literary sensitivity, which fails, since learners lack the basic competence to understand, much less appreciate, great works of literature.
- b. Lack of Relevance to Learner Needs: Very often learners absent themselves from English classes as they fail to understand the relevance of learning English and mastering its oral skills.
- c. Lack of Co-ordination in the Curriculum: Most teachers explain the texts. In a rural set-up, lessons are often explained in the mother tongue. Learners remain passive listeners or they are merely non-participating spectators without developing any of the four language skills.
- d. Mixed-ability Groups: Every English teacher faces a wide spectrum of abilities among learners: some are from well-educated families whereas others are first generation learners. As the same syllabus is prescribed for all, some find it very easy whereas others are unable to cope with it.
- e. Large Classes: The available infrastructure is inadequate to meet the rising demand of education and consequently the classes are always overcrowded. With such large numbers, discipline becomes a problem and teaching a casualty.
- f. Inadequate Training for Teachers: To make matters worse, facilities for teacher training are inadequate.

Hence many schools are forced to employ untrained teachers.

- g. The Status Accorded to English within the Curriculum: In most schools and colleges, in spite of English being compulsory, students are satisfied if they manage to get bare minimum pass marks in English. They master the strategies of acquiring the passing minimum with the help of bazaar guides, without putting any effort to master the language skills. They feel it is not worth wasting their energy on language; the time could be more profitably spent on learning subjects (5–6).

1.4 Landmarks in the History of ELT in India

The history of ELT in India is full of interesting landmarks. Most die-hard traditionalists attribute the deterioration in the standard of English to frequent attempts at curricular reforms. Saraswathi lists these landmarks:

- a. Michael West's Reading Method (1926): West believed that Indians needed English primarily as a library language; hence it was enough if they mastered the skill of reading.
- b. MELT Campaign (1952): MELT was planned by the state education departments jointly with the British Council, Madras. The Structural Syllabus was introduced and 27,000 teachers of English at the primary level were initiated into the new method.
- c. Bridge Intensive Course (1960s): This was initiated by the British Council, Madras. Brendan J Carroll, then English Studies Officer at the British Council, designed an intensive course to bridge the gap

- between what college entrants knew and what they were expected to know.
- d. Bombay Project (1977): This was the first experiment at the undergraduate level: a skill-based approach for teaching English was adopted. No textbooks were prescribed and this prevented students from memorizing answers.
 - e. Communicational Teaching Project/Bangalore Project (1979-1984): Frustrated with the Structural Syllabus, N.S. Prabhu (1987) and his colleagues evolved a new task-oriented Procedural Syllabus for teaching English. The basic principle was 'acquisition through deployment'. This became an internationally proclaimed project in English language teaching.
 - f. Loyola Experience (1980s): The Loyola College, Madras, experimented with a communicative syllabus at the undergraduate level. Prabhu remarked about it in his work *Second Language Pedagogy* (1989).
 - g. UGC Curriculum Development Cell (1987): The CDC analysed the current ELT scenario in various parts of the country and arrived at a blueprint for English curricula: General English, English Major, as well as post-graduate courses.
 - h. CBSE Interact English Project (1990s): This was a joint effort of the British Council and Marjon's College, Plymouth. The CBSE, New Delhi, selected teachers of English at the Higher Secondary level; they were trained in the UK and helped in the complete overhaul of the syllabuses for English in classes 9 and 10. An interactive

methodology was adopted as part of the CBSE Interact English Project (7–8).

1.5 Changing Goals of ELT in India

Before 1947, the goals of learning English were quite simple. A certain percentage of Indians wanted to please their British bosses; they wanted to talk to them about topics that would be of interest to them. The ultimate goal of English studies was considered to be the mastering of British literature since this was fashionable in the UK. In the years since independence, the goals have changed radically (Saraswathi 9). The Report of Curriculum Development Cell (CDC) (1989) spelt out the aims for the study of English courses as:

- a. to equip learners for their present and future academic pursuits, to understand classroom lectures, read textbooks, do reference reading, participate in classroom discussion, and write assignments and examination answers,
- b. to prepare them to function effectively in their future professions, and
- c. to prepare them to function effectively in the social and other situations in which they may be called upon to use English (*Report of CDC* 57).

Krishnaswamy and Sriram (30) identify three long-range goals of teaching English in post-colonial India:

- a. Mobility (i.e., the utilitarian function of English as the language of opportunity)
- b. Modernization (i.e., the interactive function of English as the ‘window on the world’ and as an instrument of change)

- c. The Projection Principle (i.e., the interpretative function of English as an international language to project our identity and values and to promote better human understanding).

1.6 The National Focus Group on Language Teaching

The NCERT's *National Curriculum Framework* (NCF)-2005 gives the following guidelines for language teaching:

- (a) language teaching needs to be multilingual not only in terms of the number of languages offered to children but also in terms of evolving strategies that would use the multilingual classroom as a resource,
- (b) home language(s) of children should be the medium of learning in schools,
- (c) if a school does not have provisions for teaching in the child's home language(s) at the higher levels, primary school education must still be covered through the home language(s),
- (d) children will receive multilingual education from the outset,
- (e) the three-language formula needs to be implemented in its spirit, promoting multilingual communicative abilities for a multilingual country,
- (f) in the non-Hindi speaking states, children learn Hindi and in the case of Hindi speaking states, children learn a language not spoken in their area, including Sanskrit, and
- (f) at later stages, study of classical and foreign languages may be introduced. (NCF 37)

The National Focus Group on Teaching of English has adopted a strong position in addressing the 'English language question':

English is in India today a symbol of people's aspiration for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life. Its

colonial origins now forgotten or irrelevant, its initial role in independence India, tailored to high education now felt to be insufficiently inclusive socially and linguistically, the current state of English stems from its overwhelming presence on the world stage and the reflection of this in the national arena. (NCERT 1)

Stating that ‘English does not stand alone’, the National Focus Group’s position paper argues that:

(English) needs to find its place:

(i) Along with other Indian Languages:

(a) in regional medium schools, how can children’s other languages strengthen English learning?

(b) in English medium schools, how can other Indian languages be valorised, reducing the perceived hegemony of English?

(ii) In relation to other subjects, a language across the curriculum perspective is perhaps of particular relevance to primary education. Language is best acquired through different meaning-making contexts and hence all teaching in a sense is language teaching. This perspective also captures the centrality of language in abstract thought in secondary education. (NCERT 4)

1.7 Conclusion

English plays the role of a second language in India today. Even after years of independence, India has not been able to do away with English. In fact, the mastery of English has given Indian students a head start; they are doing extremely well in universities in the USA and the UK because of their command in English. English newspapers and magazines are widely read and the numerous television channels help Indians to master English as a second language. According to Saraswathi:

In post-independence India, a wave of patriotic fervour swept over the country. Politicians strongly felt that the best way to demonstrate their patriotism was to regionalize the medium of instruction. Today, a paradoxical situation is emerging. While politicians still advocate regional medium education, the public have resorted to a zealous patronization of English-medium schools. (10)

The future of English in India may be considered promising given its position as an international language. This is especially so with the liberalization and globalization of the Indian economy since whatever happens on the world scene is bound to have a definite impact in India. Again Saraswathi remarks about the future of English in the world today as:

English is the language of international communication today. What will be its position in the future? The growth of language depends on the population. It is predicted that India, Pakistan and other South Asian countries will account for nearly half of the increase in world population. In fact, India has just crossed the billion marks. Considering only the L1 (first language) speakers of English it may be seen that the future of English is dismal. (11)

Considering the immense popularity of English in the world today, it is even debatable whether English will someday become the language of the whole world. Meanwhile, English in India has acquired distinct identity as a regional variety and is accepted as Indian English. In recent years, there has been a distinct change in the attitude of both Indian and Western scholars towards Indian English.

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