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Editor's Note

It is a huge learning process when the decision to launch a Journal is taken. Not only does it put responsibilities of the non-academic kind, but it also alerts you intellectually about the varied efforts in the fields of publishing and related efforts. The decision to focus on the theme of 'Postmillennial Literatures' too added to the challenge since it is an emerging phenomenon and we are only 14 years into it. Yet we thought it is a relevant theme to start off with since the phenomenal happenings of the early stages like 9/11 has impacted the intellectual environment so thoroughly.

This is a humble effort and I thank everyone who helped me realise this goal in a modest fashion.

P. K. Babu., Ph. D
Chief Editor

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**A New Perspective of Feminism: The Drama of Failed Masculinities
In Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss***

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In 2006, Kiran Desai became the youngest woman writer to win the prestigious Man Booker Prize for her novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. Desai came to literary attention in 1995 with the publication of *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* which won her the Betty Trask Award - a prize given by the Society of Authors for the best new novels by citizens of Commonwealth Nations under the age of thirty five. In 2006, eight years after *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Desai won the prestigious Man Booker Prize for fiction as well as National Book Critic Circle Fiction Award in 2007.

Desai may not have the same intensity with which her mother writes but with *The Inheritance of Loss* she achieved a victory which had repeatedly eluded her mother who had been three times selected for the Booker Prize in 1980, 1984 and 1999. Desai has written in her mother's company and in her wisdom and kindness. This is especially true for *The Inheritance of Loss* for the novel has a close resemblance to Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* (1977). Anita Desai's novel dwells into the mind of an embittered old woman who lives in an ancient house in Kasauli, deliberately disconnecting herself from the world she despises, till a great granddaughter shows up. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, an old judge retires to a home in Kalimpong with his dog, Mutt and his cook excluding all others till a granddaughter arrives and disturbs his carefully constructed isolation. Although Anita Desai and Kiran Desai have mostly used the same material for their novels, Kiran Desai maintains a safe distance from her mother's work. She has successfully and delicately been different from her mother to whom she "owes a debt so profound" (Sinha and Reynolds xv).

In *The Inheritances of Loss*, Desai highlights a number of issues prevailing in the world today. She expands her reach from the narrow boundaries of her first novel to the global arena. From the 'hilarious' and 'enchanted' world of *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Desai shifts to *The Inheritance of Loss*, where the prevailing mood is one of bitterness and despair. The novel presents the characters struggling in search of love and happiness. Major issues like globalisation, post-colonialism, economic inequality, discrimination, marginality, immigration, racism, estrangement, fundamentalism, terrorism and nationalism are blended with comparatively minor

issues of personal gains and losses. The novel shows how historical events have a profound impact on the lives of people and how the impact is passed on from one generation to the other. The novel challenges the existing practices which are unjust and discriminatory. It deals with various crisis and traumas of dispossession. Along with all this, the feminist resistance is much evident in the novel but less discussed by the scholars. Desai gives a new perspective of herself as a feminist writer by presenting a drama of failed masculinities in the novel.

Apart from exposing the patriarchal system of the Indian society, Desai in *The Inheritance of Loss* subtly exposes several shades of postcolonial Indian 'masculinities'. The first chapter of the novel introduces the reader to the important characters of the novel. Whereas Sai, Gyan and Mutt, are introduced by their names, the judge and the cook are introduced by their respective designations. Jemubhai is presented as an individual “with his chessboard, playing against himself” (Desai 1). This image shows the judge's 'claustrophobic preoccupation' with his own self. The anonymous representation of the judge, a major character of the novel who is obsessively preoccupied with his exiled world is an example of the inferiority inculcated in the colonial subject. The old judge with his sackless cheeks and artificial indentures is portrayed as living a dead life.

The judge had fallen asleep and gravity acting upon the
slack muscles, pulling on the line of his mouth, dragging
on his cheeks, showed Sai exactly what he would look
like if he were dead (Desai 2).

The colonial civil service seemed to have 'dehumanized' him so much that he seldom appears to be a normal human being. Throughout the novel he seems to be a representative of the British Empire to ruthlessly rule over his countrymen even after colonization. Belonging to a poor family Jemubhai's father arranges a calculated marriage of his son with the daughter of a rich merchant. Bela's huge dowry in cash enables Jemubhai to sail over to England and become ICS Officer in five years. As such, his ambitions lead him to self negation as well as negation of his close relations including his newly-wed wife. Jemubhai's callous and hypocritical nature is revealed from the time he marries Nimi (the name that the judge gives to Bela) to her final assault. Nimi is beaten to death by the judge for the crime of venturing out of the gate of her residence to accompany passionate congress women as “part of the Nehru welcoming committee at the Cantonment Railway Station. She had partaken of scrambled eggs and toast with top members of the Congress Party” (ibid 303).

The judge's colonial mindset is revealed from the very beginning in his approach towards his wife. Bela is renamed Nimi soon after the marriage. The two are never seen as husband and wife except once “when he had indeed liked her. He was twenty, she fourteen. The place was Piphit and they were on a bicycle, traversing gloriously down a slope through cow pats” (ibid 308). He always thinks of her wife as “a liar”, “incredibly stupid”, “a country bumpkin whom he neither liked not loved,

but simply carried along” (ibid 304). He feels embarrassed at the hands of the commissioner who tells him that his wife has been part of the “Nehru rally”. His false prestige for which he is too concerned makes him blink in rage. At home he sinks himself in the whiskey that “half paralysed his esophagus”.

Then the numbness dissipated in a delicious release of heat.

He counted on the fingers of his free hand:

1. “Are you just a country bumpkin?”

Pause.

2. “Are you a liar?”

Pause.

3. “Are you playing foolish games?”

Pause.

4. “Are you trying deliberately to make me angry?”

Long long pause

Then, a venomous spat-out sentence:

5. “Or are you just incredibly stupid?”

When she said nothing, he waited

“Which of the above? We are not ending this conversation until you reply.” Longer wait.

“Which? Are you ... stupid, I ask you ? !”

Silence

“Well I have to conclude that it is all of the above.

It is all of the above” (Desai 304)

Jemubhai's relation and treatment to his wife appears to be a blend of class and gender issue. He looks down upon his wife not only because she is a woman and therefore a subject to subjugation, but also because she represents the non-transformed Indian self that Jemubhai himself is and hates so much. Nimi's silent resistance to Jemubhai's oppressive act is a constant reminder of the conformity and subjugation. At the same time her non-conformist and defying presence in the household appears as a reminder of his powerlessness. His act of violence as a result of inability to face the truth of his submission to the system is summed by his wife when she says, “You are the one who is stupid” (Desai 304). The judge is amazed to hear her speak and thrashes her brutally.

He emptied his glass on her head, sent a jug of water

swinging into the face he no longer found beautiful,

filled her ears with leaping soda water. Then, when this

wasn't enough to assuage his rage, he hammered down

with his fists, raising his arms to bring them down on her

again and again, rhythmically, until his own hands were exhausted and his shoulders next day were strained sore as if from chopping wood. He even limped a bit, his leg hurting from kicking her.... The more he swore, the harder he found he could hit (ibid 304-305).

The judge is not moved by the “Blotchy bruises” (ibid 305) caused by his blind beating. The judge's cruelty has only one response from his wife and that is her plea “I can't go” when he asks her to leave his house and return to Gujarat.

Sanghita Sen in her essay “*The Inheritance of Loss: Individuals in Search of the Lost Identity*” writes:

Jemubhai's... violence to his wife exemplifies what Bhabha identifies as “the narcissistic demand of colonial authority”. His wife's comment about his own “stupidity” immediately presents to him “a gaze of otherness” exposing the discernment of the “the genealogical gaze” shattering the unity of his constructed existence through which he upholds his “sovereignty” (Sinha and Reynolds 105).

The judge sends Nimi away to Gujarat and after six months he is informed about the “arrival of a baby”. He banishes both mother and daughter and defies his father's request of calling Nimi back. Jemubhai says to his father that:

You're following the script of a village idiot.
She is unsuitable to be my wife (Desai 306).

Disgusted by his son the father concludes:

It was a mistake to send you away.
You have become like a stranger to us (ibid 306).

A few years after the judge banished his wife he received a telegram informing about Nimi's death. “A woman had caught fire on a stove” (ibid 307). As Nimi dies of burns, “the judge chose to believe it was an accident” (ibid 308). This leads to the judge's alienation not only from his wife but from humanity as well. Because of this reason he remains engrossed in the chessboard like a 'heron'.

He returned to his chessboard and made his move,
but it felt like an old move in an old game (ibid 89).

His loneliness and shame of what he did to his wife was proving too heavy on him but he remembered time and again that:

You must stop your thoughts if you wished to remain
intact, or guilt and pity would take everything from
you, even yourself from yourself (Desai 264).

Full of self hate as well as hate for his family, community and everyone for not being

English, the judge settles in a crumbling old relic of a mansion from the colonial era. The atmosphere of the judge's house itself reflects solitude and it “had long been a matter of curiosity in the bazaar” (ibid 11). The judge's residence is like a self created asylum infested with hundreds of spiders and it appeared to be in a dire need of repair. To this atmosphere of gloom and solitariness Sai, the orphaned granddaughter of the judge is returned to his care from the convent school. She yearns for the love and warmth of the judge but the judge turns her care over to the cook. It is the cook who comes to receive Sai when she first enters the Kalimpong house. The judge is an embodiment of 'Sahib' who had lived in India during the colonial rule. He is devoid of any feelings for his granddaughter. He bestows all his affection on the pet dog 'Mutt' whom he calls 'little pearl'. On the contrary Sai is addressed as a 'stupid fool' by the judge. Hence, Sai grows up in a house where a dog is treated more humanly than humans. Sai's dynamic character is revealed in contrast to her grandfather's stagnant character. He is projected to cling to his colonial subject hood of which his designation is the primarily token. Although the cook spent his life-time in serving the judge with sincerity and loyalty he could never win his confidence. Sai is the only person to realise the true conditions in which the cook is living. She understands the cook's conditions in the first glimpse of her meeting with the cook when she is delivered from St. Augustine's in Dehra Dun. She thinks of him as:

A poverty stricken man growing into an ancient at fast-forward. Compressed childhood, lingering old age. A generation between him and the judge, but you wouldn't know it to look at them. There was age in his temperament, his kettle, his clothes, his kitchen, his voice, his face, in the undisturbed settled smell of a lifetime of cooking, smoke and kerosene (Desai 19).

The judge did not welcome Sai when she reached Kalimpong and he “seemed not to have noticed Sai's arrival” (ibid 33). His self alienation and loneliness make him stubborn, inconsiderate, haughty and cruel.

He retreated into a solitude that grew in weight day by day. The solitude became a habit, the habit became the man, and it crushed him into a shadow (ibid 39).

Sai felt lonely and the sense of aloofness is deep rooted in her mind. She says to herself “I'm an orphan... My parents are dead. I am an orphan” (ibid 27). When she comes to live with her grandfather, he keeps her in his house with the reason that, “It would be good to have an unpaid somebody in the house to help with things as the years went by” (ibid 210). However, the judge makes his stand very clear to Sai when he says “One must not disturb one another” (ibid 34). Sai believes that, “she would learn, untreated wood could be chewed up in a season” (ibid 34) in the climate in

which she is supposed to spend her entire life. She says:

Oh, Grandfather more lizard than human.

Dog more human than dog (ibid 32).

Sai rarely speaks to the cook and their friendship is composed of shallow things conducted in broken language because she is an English-speaker and he was a Hindi-speaker. The brokenness never allowed them to go deep into anything but she always felt tender on seeing his 'crotchety' face and on hearing him 'haggle' at the market. She was full of pride that although she lived with a difficult man he speaks to her with affection calling her 'Babyji' or 'Sai baby'. In contrast to the judge who is insensitive to the hardships that the cook is facing, Sai's heart pains "to see how little he had". She is annoyed with her grandfather's attitude towards the cook and expressing her sympathy for the cook's family she says: "They are the poorest family in the village. Their house is still made of mud with a thatch roof" (Desai 67). Sai's adventurous nature is conveyed at the beginning of the novel. When the gang of boys from Gorkha community enter the judge's house and drag the cook from beneath the table, the cook pleads before them:

"I'm a poor man, please". He held up his arms and cringed
as if from an expected blow...

"Please living only to see my son please don't kill me please
I am a poor man spare me" (ibid 5-6).

On the other hand Sai, although "she feels intensely, fearfully female" (ibid 5) met the boys bravely. Sai, hating cook's self humiliation adventurously says: "He hasn't done anything, leave him" (ibid 5). The boys frighten the judge by their violent behaviour. The boys said to the judge, "Say 'Gorkhaland for Gorkhas'. Say, 'I am fool'" (ibid 7). The judge's fear is demonstrated from his being "in the kitchen, where he had never been, not once" (ibid 6) in order to prepare the table for the boys. Here the judge is presented as weak, submissive and fearful, an opposition to Sai who faces the boys bravely. The retired judge, bereft of any power has an obsessive love for Mutt, an animal, whereas he seems to have no affection for human beings - be it the cook or the hungry beggars. Sai "whom he did not hate was perhaps the only miracle fate had thrown his way" (ibid 210). The judge's "misanthropy and cynicism" gets reflected not only from his treatment of humans but also his indifference towards the growing insurgency in Kalimpong.

The judge's "relationship with Mutt is not a common
relation of a man with his pet dog, nor had he an
extraordinary alliance with Mutt as Jim Corbett had with
Robin. A cynic as the judge was, his cynicism was further
intensified as the Nepalese activities tweaked his nose. He
came to the realization that an animal is better than a man.
An unconscious inversion of Tennyson's concept of man...

as the roof and crown of things! (Mittapalli and Alterno 177).

This is clear in his beating of Pannalal, the cook for not carefully looking after Mutt. The irony is that it was only because of the judge's stubbornness for not giving charity that Mutt was lost. After Mutt is lost, the judge realises that he has lived on false and artificial constructions to uphold his existence all his life. He could not knock down the lies or else his past would collapse and therefore the present. The judge realises his lost power when the officers at the police station do not pay him the desired respect.

He remembered all of a sudden why he had gone to
England and joined the ICS; it was clearer than ever why-
but now that position of power was gone.... Now Jemubhai
wondered if he had killed his wife for false ideals. Stolen
her dignity, shamed hers, turned her into the embodiment
of their humiliation.... He hadn't liked his wife, but that
was no excuse, was it? (Desai 292-308).

Therefore, the judge's loss of Mutt invokes in his mind his violent act towards his wife and her subsequent forced discharge from home as well as his own life. The judge's loss of Mutt, his only connection with the materialist world binds the grandfather and granddaughter in their sadness due to loss of something valuable in their lives. Sai's romantic involvement with Gyan, her Maths teacher leads to disillusionment and the realization that love could never find fulfilment.

Sai's 'sweet and sorrow' dreams get withered in time and space when Gyan gets involved in the socio-political movement for a separate state out of West Bengal, "Gorkhaland for Gorkhas" (Desai 7). She loses Gyan's friendship, trust and love as he gets involved in the militant quest for homeland without either understanding or being emotionally and ideologically involved in the struggle. Sai-Gyan romance grows in the background of GNLF led insurgency. As they roam in their hill town the writings on the walls are clear – "We are stateless", "LIBERATION" (ibid 126). As their romance is progressing Gyan is suddenly gathered up by a procession of young Gorkhas that include many of his college friends shouting "Jai Gorkha" (ibid 159) and they seem to have melded into a single being. Gyan suddenly shouts along the crowd and forgets about Sai. He decides to sacrifice his love for a greater cause. "A feeling of martyrdom crept over him" (ibid 175) and he sought justification for rejecting Sai. The show of politics devours Sai's love of Gyan and he feels a strong hatred for Sai. He is infuriated by Sai's celebration of Christmas as he feels that Sai has a submissive nature towards West. He asks Sai:

Why do you celebrate Christmas you're Hindus and you
don't celebrate Id or Guru Nanak's birthday or even
Durga Puja or Dussehra or Tibetan New Year (ibid 163).

When Sai tries to reason by saying that Christmas is as much a holiday as any other

Indian holiday Gyan gets angry at her and says:

You are like slaves, that's what you are, running after the West, embarrassing yourself. It's because of people like you we never get anywhere (Desai 163).

Gyan feels Sai is 'anti secular' and 'anti-Gandhian' and restores:

Do what you will... it's nothing to me - it only shows to the whole world that you are a FOOL (ibid 163).

Gyan deliberately utters these words “to see that hurt cross her [Sai's] face” (ibid 163). Sai is not, however, a traditional Indian woman who will not react. She asks him to stop teaching 'a fool' and 'leave' and says:

Well, if you're so clever, she said, “how come you can't even find a proper job? Fail, fail, fail. Every single interview ...” You're telling me that I am stupid? Who's stupid? Go put it before a judge and we'll see who he says is the stupid one” (ibid 164).

As such, their relationship is sacrificed in the name of revolution for statehood. Sai loses Gyan's friendship, trust and love. Although Gyan takes out his frustration on Sai by questioning her patriotic sensibilities, he himself lacks the courage to be an active member of the movement. His only contribution to the movement is that he made the boys known about Jemubhai's possession of weapons. When this fact is thrown on his face by Sai, Gyan takes recourse to gendered violence. His masculinity is questioned in the novel when he realises that he will not live up to the expectations of being a male.

He hated his tragic father, his mother who looked to him for direction, had always looked to him for direction, even when he was a little boy, simply for being a male (ibid 260).

Gyan comes to know about the true colours of politics as nothing but a betrayal of masses. He is forced back to his commitment to love. He relents before Sai but she finds him a weak man, not able to stick to one decision. She resolves to be free of past and to stay afloat in the present to carve out her future. On the other hand, Gyan promises to bring back Mutt “with a conviction that had nothing to do with Mutt or his ability to find her (Desai 314). Pernendu Chatterjee in the essay “*The Inheritance of Loss*: Mapping Postcolonial Indian Masculinities” writes:

The author's comment undercuts Gyan's pledge. This is evidence of Desai's gender-bending. Here is a subversion of the masculine stereotype. Gyan was not blind to the self-deceit that lay in his promise; yet, he made the promise because he did not have the psychic potency to accept this

weakness (Mittapalli and Alterno 182).

Desai at several occasions presents Gyan as a dichotomy of Jemubhai. These include their violence against their respective female counterparts and responses to misogyny. Desai shows the failure of their masculinities in their physical and emotional violence towards their women. The dog's loss invokes in the judge's mind his violent acts towards his wife. Gyan's loss of the cause of his resistance fills up his heart with shame. Sai's rejection of Gyan and Nimi's silent resistance of judge's violence put forth the loss of what George Mosse calls the 'dominant masculine stereotype'.

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Antony and Cleopatra and the Elizabethan Era

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Introduction:

Leading authorities on Shakespeare such as Bradley, A. C. (1991); Bradbrook, M. C. (1980); Knight, Wilson G. (1998); Dutton, Richard (2003) and Marjorie, Garber, (1981) and their pioneering critical essays on the playwright are illuminating and seminal. The efforts of these critics cut across psychoanalysis to the thematic and linguistic concerns of the texts. The preoccupations of these critics dwell on various aspects of intellectual interests that might be instrumental in the explication of the texts. However, a possible clue to the intentions of the playwright has eluded critics and this study seeks to provide the missing link by taking a critical look at the foolery of Antony and his submission to the overbearing love of a gypsy above the lure and inducement of power, finding expression in his role as one of the leading triumvirates: one of the three rare dictators that the world could parade at the time.

This study is familiar with the critical tradition and the fact that psychoanalysis might be a useful tool in the examination of Shakespeare and which indeed remains a useful tool of analysis for decades. The earlier efforts of these researchers take cognisance of the useful end to which psychoanalysis may serve in the quest for meanings and papers are written to isolate and discuss the missing links in the deployment of psychoanalysis to the unravelling of significant meanings that might further illuminate the dark threshold of the dramatic endeavours of Shakespeare. Several critics have fallen prey too to the lure of psychoanalysis especially in the treatment of Antony and the examination of his supposed blind love for his Cleopatra.

Two great Queens are juxtaposed: one is in England, a virgin, unmarried, fond of conquests and domination of people. She is named Queen Elizabeth. While she is loved by many, she is devoid of love herself as she has no love for anybody other than whatever may promote her kingdom. At the other extreme end is Cleopatra who is ready to shower her love on great rulers of the world: beginning with Pompeius Maximus on who she showers her love freely till his death and Julius Caesar takes over till the recent onslaught of Antony. Cleopatra represents all that could engender relationship. Without mincing words, Shakespeare is truly aiming at a comparative analysis of both Queens and what seems a tragedy to Antony and his Cleopatra is actually a castigation of Queen Elizabeth and her desire to remain single and deny humanity her own contribution to continuity through procreation.

Synopsis of *Antony and Cleopatra*:

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is the drama of a general named Antony whose responsibility it is to administer a part of the triple pillar of the world before the advent of civilisation. The world is divided into three and Antony and two other triumvirates, namely: Octavius Caesar and Lepidus are saddled with the responsibility of managing the affairs of their allotted empires. However, in the course of time, Antony falls in love with a gypsy named Cleopatra. This development leads to the general's dotage on her to the chagrin of everyone and at the expense of the good administration of the empire.

In the absence of Antony from his domain, a conflict erupts between Lucius, his brother and Fulvia, Antony's legally wedded wife. Fulvia soon passes on. With the resolution of the conflict, Pompeius Maximus's son threatens the empire with civil war. He rallies folks in the rural setting against Antony, Lepidus and Octavius Caesar. The need then arises for a conference among the three triumvirates. The need for amity soon engenders cohesion and understanding in order to tackle the menace of the common enemy, Pompey.

Antony is soon at war with Octavius Caesar because of the activities of Antony in bestowing titles arbitrarily on Cleopatra and her children. A full scale war begins and Antony shows signs of leading, and his superior chivalry is soon brought to the fore. No sooner is this positive consequence than Antony suddenly leaves the battlefield and runs after Cleopatra. Well, to the consternation of all, the battle is lost and won. Rather than bemoan the situation, Antony soon sums up courage by voicing his erotic perception of victory and defeat. All that is lost and won, may not amount to much when compared with the kiss of his Cleopatra.

He confronts Octavius Caesar at sea rather than on land where his strength lies. He fights the war in defence of his love for Cleopatra and Alexandria. He prosecutes the war with the hope of victory and he is determined to be successful. He appreciates a soldier who reports for duty very early: *Welcome/Thou look'st like him that knows a warlike charge./ He sums up his attitude to the war as he says: To business that we love we rise betime/ And go to't with delight.*/(Act Three, Scene Four). Soon, all his Egyptian forces surrender to Caesar and Antony is defeated. He hears news of the death of Cleopatra (though contrived by Cleopatra's attendants) and takes his own life.

Definition of terms:

Three significant symbols are imperative in the unravelling of the intentions of Shakespeare in *Antony and Cleopatra*. They are the symbols of the triple pillars of the world, the choice of an Egyptian and the unparalleled nature of love above warfare, victory and conquest of empires that may easily cave in to the tide of River Tiber.

Historical Survey of the Elizabethan Era:

The reign of Elizabeth's sister named Bloody Mary may have provided the inspiration for the composition of Antony and Cleopatra and with the emergence of Elizabeth, as Queen, emphasis is placed on the acquisition of colonies overseas. The colonisation of America through Sir Walter Raleigh and the defeat of Spanish Armada by the English Navy 1588 bestow the title of world power on the country. The English East India Company receives the backing of the government to have a monopoly of trade in Asia, Africa, and America. In plain language, the expeditions of Sir Francis Drake, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, and Sir Walter Raleigh are geared towards overseas trade. Queen Elizabeth relishes in the conquest and economic exploitations of these colonies. She remains single throughout and could not have the benefit of love.

Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework in this paper shall be an admixture of Ferdinand de Saussure's (1959) synchronic and diachronic dimensions of meaning. This model is suitable in the analysis in view of the fact that significant meanings in the text would be explicated through the use of signs and codes, on one hand and the environment, on the other hand. It is significant that recourse to the past is imperative in view of the need to measure the historical underpinning that might be instrumental in the activities of the Queen and from which the playwright derives significant inspiration in the composition of the play. The interpretation of the signs and codes in the play may only yield minimal meanings because of the inability to present the environment and all that may be salient to the period. The thrust of the claim is that the analysis and quest for meaning in this direction may not be fruitful without taking a cursory look at the environment. In this regard, diachronic dimension of meaning provides the lead to the developments of the era while not losing sight of the place of interpretation of the language as well as the actions and inactions of the characters.

Notwithstanding the controversy about the place of the environment, as well as, the structural coherence of language, for which two critics have been renowned, namely: Hippolyte Taine (1965) and Flaubert Gustave (1965), the study considers both the diachronic and synchronic dimensions of analysis to be imperative in the explication of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. If the ultimate goal in any critical analysis is the search for truth or the reality in the text as opposed to the artistry in it, it is the case that the endeavour may transcend the confines of the text to include a searchlight on the environment from which history may not be divorced. It is this knowledge that informs the employment of the diachronic recourse in this preoccupation.

Taine (1965)

The physical and spiritual components of societies may be instrumental in the composition of works of arts. Art may therefore be considered to be a projection

of the people in the society in relation to their behaviours at the moment of composition. Just as the strengths and weaknesses of the era are captured through the characters, basic ideological thrusts of the period may also be highlighted. Taine (1965) aptly identifies this recourse to the environment and the psychological antecedents of the writer as well as some of the referents in the explication of the text.

The discovery has been made that a literary work is not a mere play of the imagination, the isolated caprice of an excited brain, but a transcript of contemporary manners and customs and the sign of a particular state of intellect. The conclusion derived from this is that, through literary monuments, we can retrace the way in which men felt and thought many centuries ago (254).

A look at the history of the era may reveal the intentions of Shakespeare as the leading personality of the era Queen Elizabeth may have been carefully chosen as a tool of satire in view of the series of correlations and disparities between her and Cleopatra. No one may deny the fact that Shakespeare may have carefully tucked the script on the inordinate quest of Queen Elizabeth on the stage in order to provide a private amusement to the few members of the elite that could discern the intentions from the foolery it pretends to portray on Antony and his Cleopatra.

The truth in Taine's (1965) claim about the plausibility of the environment becomes apparent when viewed under the fact that a shell may not be enough to unravel the mystery of the being that once inhabits it.

On turning over the large stiff pages of a folio volume, or the yellow leaves of a manuscript, in short, a poem, a code of laws, a confession of faith, what is your first comment? You say to yourself that the work before you is not of its own creation. It is simply. It is simply a mold like a fossil shell, an imprint similar to one of those forms embedded in a stone by an animal which once lived and perished. Beneath the shell was an animal and behind the document there was a man (254).

The study adopts Taine's explanation in the quest for meaning as the term colonisation, an event that can be verified in time and space may not be easily understood without the accompanying historical sojourn to the period in history. The search for the personalities in time and space may become a worthwhile exercise. Cleopatra, like the Queen, may be located in time and space just as Antony and

Octavius Caesar and their exploits may also be viewed. Turning to Taine (1965) further in the justification for the diachronic recourse, the desire in every textual analysis is the search for further illumination of the personalities that are otherwise called characters in the text.

*The aim is to reach this being; this is what you strive to reconstruct
It is a mistake to study the document as if it existed alone by itself.
That is treating things merely as a pendant, and you subject yourself
To the illusions of a book-worm. At bottom mythologies and languages
are not existences; the only realities are human beings who have employed
words and imagery adapted to their organs and to suit the original cast of
their intellects (255).*

Shakespeare is renowned for relying greatly on history for the needed information (call it inspiration) in the composition of his dramatic texts. This knowledge informs the desire to explore history as possibly having a cue to the web of meanings in *Antony and Cleopatra* and the effort is not devoid of the expected fruits.

While Flaubert Gustave's (1965) position may not be thrown away with a wave of the hand, it is imperative to understand that different tolls of analysis may be fundamental to the explication of different texts. A poem that is essentially based on the exhibition of language may be deconstructed by paying strict attention to the structure of the words otherwise known as signs, and codes. A historical survey of such a poem may not be meaningful. It is, therefore, imperative that the relevant tool is deployed in the analysis of the peculiar text.

*An artist must be in his work like God in creation,
invisible and all-powerful; he should be everywhere
felt, but nowhere seen. Furthermore, art must rise
above personal emotions and nervous susceptibilities. (132)*

The critical explication of *Antony and Cleopatra* has explored different domains of language, psychoanalysis and other areas that critics may consider salient in the quest for meanings. This study, however, finds the diachronic recourse to be equally instrumental in the search for meaning.

Application/Analysis:

An unhindered critical exploration of a mind-boggling drama like *Antony and Cleopatra* is significant and this may tilt towards unravelling the symbolic connotations in the text above the erstwhile perception of ordinary love for a gypsy (prostitute) to the detriment of the state that stands the chance of being washed away by River Tiber. *Antony and Cleopatra* may provide the critic a leeway to the expression of Shakespeare's disenchantment with the growing quest for empires that

characterises the greater part of the Elizabethan era to the neglect of the much-needed love and brotherliness that could redefine humanity along the path of true civilisation, genuine concern for those in distress as opposed to the mad rush for the partition of the world along diplomatic, religious and economic boundaries.

Antony and Cleopatra is an expression of the desire for love above the warfare that characterises the Elizabethan era. Shakespeare, through Antony ridicules material acquisitions and places love above defeat and relationship above bloodletting as the sudden degeneration of Antony may serve to show. The discovery of the symbol of love and the chastisement of domination where love and brotherliness should hold sway may fire the imagination of critics as perhaps tacitly alluding to the intentions of the playwright.

The symbolic representations of the triumvirates namely Antony, Lepidus and Octavius Caesar may be found in the roles of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Sir Francis Walsingham, and Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester who are synonymous with the reign of Queen Elizabeth. And Shakespeare may have found a reason to document the activities of the trio whose exploits form the basis for the administration of Queen Elizabeth. The trio may be situated within Antony, Lepidus and Octavius Caesar.

Antony and Cleopatra is a sermon against domination. Sir Walter Raleigh, for instance, is sent to the Americas for the sole aim of preparing the ground for the colonisation of the land. His mission, having been accomplished, Sir Walter Raleigh falls out of favour with the Queen. He is incarcerated for sometimes and falls to the overbearing power of the gallows during the reign of King James I. All the settlers on Roanoke Island meet their Waterloo and the whereabouts of many of the people could not be traced till today.

It is the vision of the playwright against the quest for colonies abroad and the only means of expressing his opinion is through the behaviour of Antony whose underlying infatuation would portray as a man that is torn between love and authority. In this quest, Shakespeare can be adjudged successful as he escapes the persecution of the Queen and remains a beloved of the court all through his lifetime while maintaining a critical posture against the Queen and well as her filial shortcomings as may be found in most of the sonnets. It is meet that Antony says: “let Rome in Tiber melt” and “our dungy earth alike feeds beasts as man”. It is the case that Shakespeare is alluding to the disappearance of the first settlers in Roanoke Island whose whereabouts could not be explained till the moment. Rather than a life that is unfruitful as the settlers have come to show, Shakespeare seems to harbour a preference for a life devoid of risks but devoted to the love of humanity, finding expression in Cleopatra and her Egyptian dish.

Antony and Cleopatra is the empirical claim of the playwright about the transcendental nature of love about warfare. This informs the deviance in the behaviour of Antony which negates his erstwhile gallantry and his being considered the world's greatest general. The choice of Antony is deliberate. It is meant to

showcase the realisation of a general that conquest and victory might not be synonymous with happiness. This singular realisation tilts the general against other rulers of the world, namely: Lepidus and Octavius Caesar. The regimented sensibilities of the people in the clime at the time may be responsible for the castigation of Antony and his abandonment of the quest for empires and colonies. This is because the era is significantly tied to chivalry, conquest and domination.

Antony and Cleopatra gives the readers an insight into the nature of love and relationship that would replace the raging onslaught against defenceless people in the name of colonisation of the new world. The truth is that if Shakespeare had chosen to express his views without hiding under the veil of the lacklustre Antony, the court would have persecuted him. Elizabeth, for instance, does not know what it means to love and be loved. All her life, the preoccupation is the search for colonies and allies. While using her virginity as bait for allies, world leaders harbour dream and illusion of love of the Queen with the hope that she may give her love to one of them.

While admitting that various angles may be salient to the unravelling of the mine of meanings in Shakespeare's texts, the discovery that Shakespeare may be campaigning against warfare becomes significant in the analysis of the text. Cleopatra's desire for relationship, for instance, is in contrast with the growing concern for the acquisition of empires inherent in Queen Elizabeth. Cleopatra's enchantment of Antony and two world leaders before him namely Pompey and Julius Caesar shows Shakespeare's critical posture for the annexation of empires and enslavement of vulnerable people the world over when exogamous relationship could be fashioned that might engender global understanding and peace. The ludicrous nature of the imperialistic posture of world leaders becomes apparent as they easily fall prey to the love of Cleopatra, who in spite of being devoid of arms and ammunition can easily enslave them through her charm, love and her appetising Egyptian dish.

Cleopatra's revelation about the nature and acquisitive tendencies of the triumvirates provides an insight into the psychological and physical challenges that may befall people in authorities especially when they are susceptible to the "powerful mandate" of superior officer: Do this, or this; take in that kingdom and enfranchise that; perform 't, or else we dam thee." The romance of Antony with Cleopatra despite her ugliness at a time when world leaders are annexing empires shows that a clique may be somewhere that might be averse to the development. Antony's vision of the stupidity in the acquisition of empires is stirred for the first time through the taunting of Cleopatra and it is not for nothing that Antony renounces the obsession for kingdoms in deference for the overbearing influence of love and when he prays that Rome might be washed away by River Tiber, his realisation of the foolery in acquisition of kingdoms is brought to the fore for the first time.

Antony: Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space.

Kingdoms are clay, our dungy earth alike

Feeds beast as man. (Act 1, Scene 1, Line 33-36).

It is imperative at this juncture to investigate the underlying pleasure in the acquisition of properties. Through the “lascivious wassails” of Cleopatra and Antony, humanity gets the most plausible definition of material acquisitions; which like kingdoms are clays that could be easily washed away by River Tiber at any time. Through the obsession of Antony for the love of Cleopatra, it is evident that kingdoms may not add an inch to the happiness of an individual. Rather than engender happiness, kingdoms may ruffle the peace of mind of the triumvirates except conscious efforts are made to jettison the love for power. The obvious proof is the civil war in Rome as a result of the jealousy of Sextus Pompey, Fulvia and Lucius' disagreements and the collective attack of the warring factions on Caesar. The disenchantment of the folks with the overbearing power of the triumvirates too meets ready ally in Sextus Pompey and they readily subscribe to his desire to sever and annex a part of the empire from the stronghold and domination of the triumvirates.

Another contrast is the expression of the love of Antony for his Cleopatra while equally married to Fulvia as opposed to the desire by Queen Elizabeth to remain single. The sermon seems to be on the need for relationship, procreation and continuity in obvious negation of the need for disenfranchisement, annexation and economic pillage of the fortune of innocent, pastoral folks. Thus, the preference should be love and relationship, and Antony takes humanity through the prompting of Cleopatra to the most honourable pact.

...The nobleness of life

Is to do thus when such a mutual pair

And such a twain can do 't, in which I bind,

On pain of punishment, the world to weet

We stand up peerless. (Act 1, Scene 1, line 36-39).

The subtle message might be a reference to Queen Elizabeth's desire to remain single while she junkets for allies, warfare and the acquisition of territories. Cleopatra and Antony become more relevant to humanity through the indifference in the relationship for empires and whatever might be associated with them. Even when they are considered fools by the milieu in view of the stigma that may be associated with their relationship, the banquets and “lascivious wassails” will be more beneficial to humanity than all the kingdoms and all the warfare.

Strange as the behaviours of Cleopatra and Antony might seem to the other triumvirates as they negate the setting's moral tempo, the duo remains symbols of what will sustain humanity all through time as empires will cease and kingdoms will pass away but what will last for ever is love. It is part of the artistic device and of course the success of the innuendoes in the composition of the text that the message of Shakespeare through the comical and ludicrous behaviours of Antony goes

unnoticed and in this, the mission of Shakespeare may be considered accomplished in view of the penchant for persecuting artists that may be critical of the state during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The thrust of the performance is summed up through Antony's allusions to the need for love and sport which may amount to a negation of the clime's preoccupation with the acquisition of new empires. And Antony has a new message for his Cleopatra as well as the other triumvirates:

*Antony: But stirr'd by Cleopatra.-
Now, for the love of love, and her soft hours,
Let's not confound the time with conference harsh
There's not a minute of our lives should stretch
Without some pleasure now. What sport tonight?
(Act 1, Scene 1, Line 44-48).*

It is not out of place that a gypsy (an Egyptian for that matter) could rouse the greatest world soldier to the uncovering of the utmost need for love and sport rather than the pursuit of incessant warfare and spoilage of defenceless people. It is to the credit of Cleopatra that whatever may be considered a fault in her soon turns to an admirable quality. The excessive display of love by Cleopatra becomes appalling through the narrow views of the moral setting of the milieu and thus considered a negation of the acceptable standard. However, Antony's close romance with her Cleopatra reveals that the society may be wrong after all because in her, “*every passion fully strives/ To make itself in thee fair and admir'd*”.

Cleopatra is human and natural in her exploits while Queen Elizabeth is obsessed with the acquisition of kingdoms. Cleopatra seeks love and boundless love for that matter. She seems to believe that exogamous relationship would take the world to the ultimate realisation of unity among diverse tongues and climes. The inherent message in *Antony and Cleopatra* and the fact that Shakespeare may be addressing Queen Elizabeth and the need for love, birth and regeneration become obvious when the playwright's endeavours in the sonnets are considered. In the sonnets, Shakespeare addresses a male persona who by all standard remains the Queen and the gender-swap might be an artistic device meant to shield the playwright from persecution from the government of the day.

Antony's dual nature is further amplified by Philo. He operates within the realm of love and chivalry. As a soldier, he displays his gallantry with the ultimate aim of victory. His name is synonymous with all that is glorious and profound. He is a triumvirate and the world's greatest soldier. At the other extreme too is Antony whose love knows no bounds; and to reckon the degree of his love, then “new heaven” and “new earth” must be sought. Philo is the symbol of a member of the moral environment whose values can hardly accommodate new sums. He is the symbol of the stereotype and his attachment to parochial claims can hardly be detached. In fact, life's business, ephemeral as it is, is characterised by conquests and the association of Cleopatra with pleasure, love and indifference succinctly portrays her thus: “*Bring in*

the banquet quickly; wine enough Cleopatra's health to drink", says Enobarbus. Even the attendants of Cleopatra fall within the same category of indifference to the social, moral and political climate of the era. The values that the global society holds sacrosanct are nothing but mere laughable, man-made conventions, norms, and elevated individuals should not give them serious attention.

Charmian: *Good now, some excellent fortune! Let me be married to three kings in a forenoon, and widow them all. Let me have a child at fifty, to whom Herod of Jewry may do homage. Find me to marry me with Octavius Caesar, and companion me with my mistress* (Act 1, Scene 2, Line 26-29).

The claims of Iras about a "handsome man loose-wiv'd" rather than constituting a castigation of Antony, reveals the jest and indifference of Antony, Cleopatra and their attendants to the moral tempo of the environment. According to Iras, it is natural that Antony should have as many wives as possible because of his handsomeness just as it is heart-breaking for the same handsome man to have many wives because of the emotional attachment of the women to their man which may be lopsided. It is to be expected that a fool would be cuckolded especially if she is married to a beautiful lady. Statements about the lukewarm attitude of the characters to the business of existence and morality run through the play that the critic may conclude that Shakespeare seems to have a different outlook to life's trivialities especially conquest and domination.

At another moment, Antony recognises the difference between his Roman heart and the attachment to the Egyptian fetters from which he unsuccessfully tries to break loose:

Antony: *...These strong Egyptian fetters I must break*

Or lose myself in dotage (Act 1, Scene 2, Line 116-117).

Antony's associates Cleopatra with idleness, pleasure and love and even this recognition is not enough to sever his love from her: *I must from this enchanting queen break off/Ten thousand harms, more than the ills I know,/My idleness doth hatch...* (Act 1, Scene 2, Line 130-132). On the whole, two different sensibilities are associated with *Antony and Cleopatra*. From the point of view of Cleopatra, it is obvious that a "Roman thought" exists". Whatever that may mean, it is clear that Cleopatra captures the mood that may have informed that conclusion:

Cleopatra: *He was dispos'd to mirth; but on the sudden*

A Roman thought hath struck him (Act, 1, Scene 2, Line 83-84).

The Roman thought would be nothing save the desire for materialism through conquest and annexation of empires. These two inclinations are destructive and may be the reasons for widespread wars during the era.

Conclusion:

Antony's argument about the direction of Silviu's War too may be a veritable

tool in the psychoanalysis of the state of mind of Antony. The truth is Antony's lack of interest in empires and whatever might be associated with it. He seems at home with the expression of his love for Cleopatra and nothing can detach him from relishing in the love of the gypsy. Shakespeare may be making a pronouncement against empires and the incessant warfare that may be associated with it, especially when it is realised that the period is significant in the conquest of empires the world over.

The argument that Silvius does not inform him about the crisis may equally attest to the relegation of the business of governance to the background. Rather than a prompt attention to nip the crisis in the bud, Antony chooses to write a letter to Caesar. One would expect a general to rise to the situation by quelling the conflict. His decision to write a letter when his empire is under the threat of a civil war makes a human possession in the form of a gypsy highly prized above an empire. It is significant that Antony considers love that can be quantified to be out of place. Love to Antony must go beyond conditions. In this regard, love must not be tied to strings and above all, it must be boundless. This seems a metaphor of the wigless love that can fly beyond human conception. Such a love can transcend the limitations of the world and would encompass new heaven and new earth.

The fact that Shakespeare deliberately manipulates Antony as a mouthpiece against inordinate acquisition of empires that characterises the era cannot be denied. While Antony and Cleopatra are busy taunting each other, an Attendant from Rome brings news of the development in the empire. Antony's feelings become distorted and would not listen to whatever may take his mind away from the love of his life. He hurriedly declares: *Grates me: -the sum.* All he wants is the summary of the message. This attitude reveals Antony's disenchantment with chivalry and the exercise of control over empires and kingdoms in preference for love and understanding. All he wants is an avenue towards expressing his love even to the much derided Egyptian.

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The Ethics of Fantasy in Yann Martel's *Beatrice and Virgil*

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Yann Martel in his latest novel *Beatrice and Virgil* seeks to retrace the contours of storytelling to include the vehicle of allegory as a means of trying to capture the Lacanian Real, through the gates of the Symbolic. Partly autobiographical, the novel traces the life of a successful writer Henry, who relocates with his wife to an unnamed city. His recent literary fiasco, a Flip- book on the Holocaust leaves him shattered and he decides to put his literary career on hold. Henry is not recognized by anyone in the new city as the acclaimed novelist, for he has written the novel under a pseudonym and shied away from the press and the media. Thus wielding a cloak of anonymity, Henry begins his new life by doing things he had always wanted to, but had never found the time for. But his failed book on the Holocaust keeps gnawing him at the back of his head and he satisfies his creative thirst for the time being by responding to his fan-mail whenever he finds the time.

Henry's first novel, like Martel's own *Life of Pi*, is based on wild animals as the chief protagonists. The reason for such a literary device according to Henry was not just for an innovative narrative design but to make his readers drop their informed cynicism and simply appreciate the plot. Henry comes up with a light –hearted example and says:

If I tell a story about a dentist from Bavaria or Saskatchewan, I have to deal with readers' notions about dentists from Bavaria or Saskatchewan, those preconceptions and stereotypes that lock people and stories into boxes. But if it is a rhinoceros from Bavaria or Saskatchewan who is the dentist, then its is an entirely different matter. The reader pays closer attention, because he or she has no preconceptions about rhinoceros dentists – from Bavaria or anywhere else. The reader's disbelief begins to lift, like a stage curtain. Now the story can unfold more easily. There is nothing like the unimaginable to make people believe (*BAV*28-29)

As the novel proceeds Henry receives a curious letter from one of his fans with the copy of a short story by Flaubert titled “The Legend of Saint Julian Hospitator.” The Story involves the eponymous hero who indulges in a life of violence but remorse sets in and Julian helps a horribly disfigured leper and is

pardoned by God. However, Julian also has killed hordes of animals in the course of the story and has never once felt sorry for the meaningless violence he had unleashed on the defenceless beasts. Henry ponders over the puzzling aspect of the story thus:

But the murder of the animals made so sense. It found no resolution, no reckoning within the frame work of the story, and religiously it fell into an embarrassing void. Julian's pleasure in the pain and extermination of animals – described at greater length and in far more detail than the killing of humans- is only tangentially involved in this damnation and salvation. (*BAV*40)

Attached to the story, Henry finds a scene from the copy of the manuscript of apparently an Absurd play in Beckettian fashion involving two characters – Beatrice and Virgil. The scene describes the two characters contemplating on the elusive shape of a pear. Towards the end of the manuscript, its author had attached a typed note requesting Henry's help. The nature of help needed had not been specified but an inquisitive Henry soon decides to pay the author of the manuscript (also named Henry) a visit.

To Henry's astonishment, he reaches a taxidermist's shop and is fascinated by the life-like displays that make him all the more interested in the author of the manuscript. Henry soon gets to meet him and finds the author to be an old man who seems to be in his sixties but is actually in his early eighties. The old man seems rude, alienated and enigmatic to the core. He admits to Henry that he is suffering from a bout of writer's block and that is the reason for the missive. In subsequent visits, Henry gets to know more about the play. The lead characters, Beatrice and Virgil turn out to be a Howler monkey and a donkey respectively. To a question posed by Henry as to why he chose these two animals for his play, the old man replies:

Because monkeys are thought to be clever and nimble, and donkeys are thought to be stubborn and hard working. Those are the characteristics that animals need to survive. It makes them flexible and resourceful, able to adapt to changing conditions. (*BAV*98)

The old man seems reluctant to part with the entire manuscript of the play to Henry and does not even let Henry read it on his own, in his presence. He insists on reading it out himself and soon the play emerges before Henry as not just moulded in the cloak of the Theatre of the Absurd, but as an allegory for something much bigger. Henry suspects that it is a creative endeavour to portray the Holocaust in a new light. He is reminded of his own failed attempts at trying to capture the Holocaust through the Flip-book that he had painstakingly worked on for the last five years of his life. His main argument behind the project was that the holocaust had never been portrayed in any genre other than realistic narrations. So he had tried to capture it through the form of an imaginative novel. Not being thoroughly satisfied with the outcome, Henry had also penned a couple of essays on the Holocaust.

Henry realized that the novel and the collection of essays could not be

published separately as they were both representations of the same Tragedy and hence had come up with the idea of the flip-book wherein he could publish the two side by side with two front covers and no back cover. But his publishers and agents had found his idea amusing, but not practical and hence turned down from publishing the unique book.

The old man informs Henry that his play is titled *A Twentieth Century Shirt – A Play in Two Acts*. The setting is in “The province of Lower Back, in a country called the Shirt, a country like any other, neighbour to, bigger than, smaller than, Hat, Gloves, Jacket, Coat, Trousers, Socks, Boots and so on” (BAV101).

As Henry is puzzled by the setting and rightly so, the old man explains that he has selected the word *Shirt* to name his country, as it is found in every country, among every people and has a universal resonance to it. Henry wants the old man to be more specific so that people could identify more with his symbols, when the taxidermist interrupts his arguments by simply declaring that it is a vertically striped shirt. The reference to the striped shirt makes Henry doubt as to whether the play is really about the Holocaust, a curious coincidence perhaps.

The next few scenes seem to reinforce Henry's doubt as the old man reads the scene in which Virgil recalls the origins of his miseries. It happens when Virgil is reading his morning newspaper in his favourite café. The headline announces a government edict that concerns himself as the exact and intended target.

It is the expulsion from Eden! The Fall! In an instant the newspaper is transmogrified into a giant finger floating in the air, pointing at him. Virgil is filled with apprehension that other patrons at the café, many of them reading the same newspaper, will notice him... That's how the events entered his life, he laments, as they had entered the lives of so many others, a vast and varied group that included him and Beatrice and others and others and others. (BAV125).

As Henry does not want to mention the fact that the play deals with the holocaust, he pointedly asks the taxidermist what the play is all about. To this the old man replies that it is all about the animals that are being systematically wiped out by an unseeing and uncaring humanity. He reads one scene where Beatrice and Virgil want to christen what has been happening to them, and they decide to call it the Horrors.

The most important question that keeps recurring in the play is as to how to narrate the Horrors when it is all over. Beatrice and Virgil come up with an innovative inventory that seems to be their creator's pride. The list includes bizarre things (that seem to make sense when explained) like a howl, a hand gesture, a prayer, one long word, empty good cheer expressed in extremis, (sic) dramas and so on.

Towards the end of the novel, Henry realizes that the old man is a Nazi who has no feelings of remorse over his past actions. The story of “The legend of Saint Julian Hospitator” flashes through Henry's mind. Just as Saint Julian seeks

redemption for his sins without true remorse over the countless blood-shed of Hordes of innocent animals, the taxidermist feels no sense of remorse over his own heinous crimes. The graphic violence portrayed in the play and the tragic ending of Virgil and Beatrice at the hands of the cruel boy, bear witness to this.

Trying to interpret this multi-tiered novel through the psychoanalytic theory of 'fantasy' proposed by Slavoj Žižek, the Slovenian philosopher / psychoanalyst / cultural analyst a new dimension of understanding emerges. For Žižek, racism is interconnected with Fantasy. Racism always begins with the question “Che vuoi”? “Che vuoi”, in other words implies, ' what do you want from me'? It is a question that all of us ask of the Big Other. It mainly arises because of the arbitrary nature of the roles imposed on us by the Symbolic Order. They are arbitrary as our roles are not directly related to the characteristics, we inherently possess. So a wide chasm appears between us and the roles conferred on us we might feel that we do not fully account for them.

This is intimately connected to racism, as this question arises in its most pristine form in racism, when we ask the Racist Other, “What do you really want from me?” According to Žižek, the most significant example for this is to be found in anti-Semitism, as the Jew is precisely a person about whom it is never really clear what we want' (*The Sublime Object of Ideology* 114)

It is clearly illustrated in the novel *Beatrice and Virgil*, as the taxidermist tries to understand the inner dynamics of his victims through the intense psychological portrayal of them with the help of the allegorical characters, Virgil and Beatrice. Each scene tries to be a closer interpretation of the “Che vuoi” question. The taxidermist is essentially trying to uncover the mystery behind the numerous Jews he has persecuted and killed, through his play. As Žižek explains the connection between racism and fantasy, he describes how we tend to fill the void in the Symbolic, by coming up with all possible explanations. So the enigmatic Jew all on a sudden becomes a conspirator trying to conquer the world. Thus we tend to explain his so called “hidden intentions” through our own formulations, that ultimately form our fantasy.

Such an explanation makes the preoccupation of the taxidermist with his two characters, all the more possible. In essaying out Virgil and Beatrice, the taxidermist is trying to paint a scenario that could somehow explain the unspeakable cruelties, he had committed when he was a boy. But instead of a hidden agenda or a conspiracy plot, the play is fashioned after the likes of the theatre of the Absurd, where the donkey and the howler monkey seem to be making no sense in a world already meaningless. This can also be explained through Žižek's view of Fantasy, which is in essence meaningless as it has been created in the first place to fill out the inconsistency or void in the Big other. The taxidermist, who has spent nearly most of his adult life, working on the single play like a “di Lampedusa struggling with his Leopard” (*BAV*97) must have hit upon this truth.

This is why we have scenes that seem incoherent ramblings at first, but which turn out to be symbolic representations of the Real. In one scene, Virgil and Beatrice are discussing God and the day of the week:

BEATRICE: Fine Have your godless days. Why don't we say Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays?

Hesitate on Thursdays, and embrace on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays? Does that sound good?

VIRGIL: But there's evil every day of the week.

BEATRICE: Because we're around every day of the week.

VIRGIL: We've done nothing wrong! But speaking of which, what day is today?

BEATRICE: Saturday.

VIRGIL: I thought it was Friday.

BEATRICE: Maybe it's Sunday.

VIRGIL: I think its Tuesday. (*BAV* 103)

Zizek also portrays fantasy as an anamorphic frame through which a subject views reality. Zizek is of the opinion that without our own specific fantasies, we will be left without any access to reality:

With regard to the basic opposition between reality and imagination, fantasy is not simply on the side imagination; fantasy is, rather, the little piece of imagination by which we gain access to reality -- the frame that guarantees our access to reality, our 'sense of reality' (when our fundamental fantasy is shattered, we experience the 'loss of reality'). (*The Zizek Reader* 122)

The loss of the fantasmatic core, which results in the loss of our own self can also be illustrated in this novel. When Henry finally realises the true nature of the taxidermist, as that of a cold-hearted Nazi war criminal, who wishes to attain salvation without redemption, he refuses to have anything to do with the old man. He throws the sheaves of manuscripts on the floor and plans to walk away.

But for the old taxidermist, it's the end of the world as he knows it, as his essential fantasy space -- his play -- has been violated upon. He plunges a knife into Henry and sets himself and his store on fire. This violent reaction, explained in Zizekian terms would be because the destruction of the taxidermist's fantasmatic core has annulled "the difference between reality and fantasy space, depriving" the old man, "of the place in which," he is able to articulate his desires. (*Looking Awry* 9)

This aspect is also clearly seen in the novel, when the taxidermist asks Henry to come up with a number of games that Henry and Virgil are likely to devise,

near the dead body of Gustav. Is it merely a lack of imagination on the old man's part? It is more likely to have originated with his belief that the ethnic Other, in this case, Beatrice and Virgil, would have had access to a strange Jouissance, the doors to which would always be shut on him. Thus, the old man continues to feel excluded, even from his most intimate creations. *Beatrice and Virgil*, is a novel that starts to make all the more sense, when viewed through the Zizekian Ethics of Fantasy. Otherwise, it remains an ordinary novel with a very predictable plot, depicting an event that moulded the psyche of the Post-War generations.

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**Disseminating Discrimination and Inclusivity in Children's Fiction:
Harry Potter Series and the Fat Acceptance Movement**

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The worlds of *Harry Potter*, both wizard and muggle, are not as innocent and non-political as the children's fiction prior to it. With strong views against racism, oppression, class distinctions, political games of partisanship, the sensationalism of the press, societal isolation; the texts champion free speech, have a strong female lead, and recently the author declared, “the best wizard of all times”, Albus Dumbledore to be gay. *The Harry Potter Series* is credited as a representative of the multicultural, multiracial and globalized world with the memories of the holocaust, the presence of terrorism along with the equally inhuman torture used to counter it, hoping for a world sans slavery, persecution and social discrimination. The anti-establishment and non-partisan trio of the novels champion the questioning of the rules and defying the norms of the authoritarian and orthodox wizard world.

For all the championing of the other through the rallying against the class and racial distinctions of “pure blood” and “mud blood”, against the slave labour of the house elves, against ostracizing of the werewolf infected Professor Lupin, *Harry Potter* is not without the flaws of old school children's fiction. It is guilty of furthering socially sanctioned discriminations and stereotypes; from the studious and rule-mongering girl who had to undergo a makeover to be desirable and the affable minion saved to be killed off instead of the hero. This dampens the otherwise inclusive notions the books aspire to disseminate. This paper looks at one such discrimination and stereotyping in the depiction of the fat / 'oversized' persons against the rising awareness about fat-acceptance and equal opportunity for all since the new millennium. The fat acceptance movement began in the 1990s and sensitises people about discrimination on the basis of shape and works towards removing the stigma attached to fatness. The paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach by reading the *Harry Potter Series* against the human rights covenants on equality for the individual and for the child and by gauging the influence of the discriminative subtexts in a popular literary text for children.

The first book of the *Harry Potter Series*, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was published in 1997; the last and seven book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* in 2007. The series by Joanne K. Rowling was a paradigm shift in children's fiction. The *Harry Potter* phenomenon saw books written for children topping adult best seller lists, long queues outside bookshops on their days of release, hugely successful movies based on them and opened the doors to a plethora of similar books.

It won generations of kids lost to simulated realities back to reading. J.K.Rowling became one of the first authors to join the millionaire's club from the revenue of her books and the successful movie franchise based on them. The success of the series revived the fantasy wave in children's fiction, the age of their reader demographic spanned from the seven year olds to persons well into their early adult lives, opening the floodgates to the genre of young adult fiction with *Percy Jackson*, *Artemis Fowl*, and the *Twilight Saga*. *The Hunger Games*, *Inheritance Series*, and *Divergent* is riding this wave that refuses to die down and churn out best sellers. The books were criticised for their dark tone, glorification of witchcraft, and theme of death in a book for children. Unlike the moralistic tales of *Narnia* and the puerile dorm tales of Enid Blyton, *Harry Potter* presented a parallel world which is murky like its real counterpart and fought for one free of oppression, stereotypes and is inclusive. When texts like *Twilight* disseminate an apparently racist, sexist, and moralistic code though the ever-dependent Bella Swann and getting facts wrong about the Native Americans, Hermione Granger establishes J.K.Rowling as the writer who championed equality.

The influence of the books is continued through spin-offs, fan fiction, theme parks and social and cyber networks and will continue to be felt for a few more generations. With the immense hold and wider reach her books have over generations, the embedded texts in *Harry Potter* are pivotal, especially if they furthers intolerance and discrimination. It is in this light that the verity of its mammoth influence and the social constructs and values it disseminates should be viewed and comprehended, and the representations of the fat persons problematised. References to other books of the genre too are made to inspect their collusion in this practice. Other texts of the genre too are perused for the stigmatisation of the fat people.

The fat acceptance movement fights for removing the size discrimination. NAAFA, an organization working for this movement lists how society sanctions overt expression of bias in social situations and through mass media. *Naafaonline.com* says that society falsely equates obesity to failure as a person. Characterizing fat people as gluttons and undisciplined may lead to health problems and fewer attempts to reduce weight. The slandering goes so far as to laying guilt trip on them for taking up more than their fair share of food and even space in public transport are highly discriminatory. This affects the mental health of the children creating dropouts and individuals with a poorer sense of self-worth. They ignore contributing factors such as environmental, heredity, and medical condition and stigmatise fat people as unambitious and slovenly. This results in fat persons to be left out from physical activity at school, hiring and promotion at job, and even in less medical attention. The girl children face the additional discrimination on the basis of gender as thinness is more desired in a girl, a notion she is constantly reminded of through Barbie dolls, slim and slender celebrities and the constant pressure on her to crash diet to achieve the perfect BMI. This leads to self-deprecation and depression

which may lead to a reclusive personality and suicidal tendencies. Advocacy and sensitising have helped to create inclusive spaces to reduce the discrimination and stigma on the basis of shape.

“Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world...” starts the “Preamble” to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. This document accepted by member countries of the United Nations recognises and ensures equal opportunities for all. Human rights awareness campaigns call for ensuring equal rights to all irrespective of any differences. Yet the world of children's fiction continues to be hesitant to lose its homogeneity and violates this inherent right, the foundation of freedom.

The Harry Potter Series introduces Harry as a thin, dark boy. The books trace the coming of age of Harry Potter and his two friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger and their attempts to defeat the dark wizard, Voldemort. The first book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* begins with the description of the Dursleys. Mr Dursley was “...a big, beefy man with hardly any neck (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 1)”. If one were to dismiss this as a mere character description, it will be proven wrong as soon as one learns about his son, Dudley Dursley. Dudley is the foil to Harry's archetypical loner boy, orphaned, and fated to live with his aunt and uncle. As the boys grow up, Dudley comes across as a mean fat boy whose favourite pastimes are bullying his cousin, throwing tantrums and reaching across Harry's plate at dinner. Dudley reminds of the old idiom, “more brawn than brains” every time. This profiling of the fat child is continued with and expanded to include more stereotypes. Though the studies into discrimination on the basis of shape are not common in Asian countries, the status of the victims is similar in the east and the west. *Naafaonline.com* quotes National Education Association of America on how this discrimination starts at a very young age:

For fat students, the school experience is one of ongoing prejudice, unnoticed discrimination, and almost constant harassment....From nursery school through college, fat students experience ostracism, discouragement, and sometimes violence.

When statistics and studies find the fat children at the receiving end of bullying, they are stereotyped as the actors of violence in the magical world. These stereotypes are used to accentuate the cruelty of the Dursley's towards Harry,

Ten years ago, there had been lots of pictures of what looked like a *large pink beach ball* [emphasis my own]wearing different –coloured bobble hats – but Dudley Dursley was no longer a baby....The room held no sign at all that another boy lived in the house too. (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 19)

This stereotyping and discrimination add to an already existing discrimination towards fat kids and people, furthered by many a literary text. The

increasing awareness of human rights have sensitised activists to discriminations that were approved by tradition. The *UDHR* Article 2 states: “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” The profiling of people on the basis of their size or appearance negates this right. Though sanctioned by tradition, this discrimination and its toxicity is pointed out by the fat acceptance movement. When popular literature does nothing to check this discrimination and instead furthers its propagation, the sub-text in play should be identified and rejected. That is why the depiction of Dudley, Crabbe, Goyle and even the lovable Hagrid need to be problematised.

Dudley Dursley is further ridiculed as the bad bully to Harry. Though Harry's anger is just, the comparison he draws pertains not to Dudley's character but his appearance: “Aunt Petunia often said that Dudley looked like a baby angel – Harry often said that Dudley looked like a pig in a wig” (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 21). He is dumb as the social misconception of fat kids is: “Two more presents. Is that alright? Dudley thought for a moment. It looked like hard work. Finally he said slowly, 'So I'll have thirty...thirty...' 'Thirty-nine, sweetums', said Aunt Petunia”.(21) He is then referred to as the school bully (22) and this stigma is worked up further, “Harry thought...as they watched a gorilla scratching its head and looking remarkably like Dudley, except that it was blonde” (Rowling 24). All these comparisons are strengthening the social stereotype of the fat kid as a mean bully and reinforcing the banal practice of associating fat people to huge animals. This characterisation of the fat kid as mean and the hero's foil does not stop with Dudley. Even in the world of wizards, Harry is bullied by two fat kids, Crabbe and Goyle. Their introduction says, “Both of them were thickset and looked extremely mean. Standing either side of the pale boy they looked like bodyguards.” (Rowling 81) They appear to be Dudleys of the wizarding world with their lack of intelligence and gluttony and bullying. This discrimination is continued in the other books in the series. Harry and Ron use their love for food to trap them and get their hair for polyjuice potion in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, “How thick can you get?” Ron whispered ecstatically, as Crabbe gleefully pointed out the cakes to Goyle and grabbed them. Grinning stupidly, they stuffed the cakes whole into their large mouths.” (Rowling 160) The effect such stigmatisation that can have on a fat kid and the low self-esteem it can induce in them are caustic. Their characterisation as Draco Malfoy's sidekicks and reducing them to bodyguards are adding insult to injury, implying that the fat kids cannot be evil enough to bully the hero on their own. Dudley, though a bully, is a mere muggle to dominate the “boy who lived” and Crabbe and Goyle are two mean simpletons, parasites on another boy for establishing themselves.

This discrimination and stereotyping of the fat kids and fat people continues in every book in the series through characters like the hateful Aunt Marge, the wily

Peter Pettigrew, the snobbish and selfish Horace Slughorn, and the cruel Dolores Umbridge. The names of some of these characters, Crabbe, Goyle, Pettigrew, and Slughorn are connotative. Though Slughorn and Alastor Moody are essentially good, the first tries to save his own skin in a calamity and is parasitical for power and the second is nicknamed “Mad-Eye” for his grotesque appearance and almost eccentric nature.

In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry makes Aunt Marge, already a “large, beefy” woman to inflate into a balloon, alluding to her bigger size, increasing her apparent *flaw* into something grotesque (Rowling 22). But it is in Hagrid, the lovable gamekeeper of Hogwarts that this size profiling is more subtle yet strong. Hagrid is the favourite of Harry and his friends but is ostracised by many. The ever kind and trusting Albus Dumbledore gives him his station at the wizard school. Though Harry and friend insist on Hagrid's goodness, and Dumbledore stating “I would trust Hagrid with my life”, he is the quintessential 'dumb-fat' guy (Rowling *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 16). Though he was wrongly accused of Voldemort's crime and banished from Hogwarts, he couldn't prove his innocence on his own but needed Dumbledore's help. Though a good game keeper, he is ostracised by the wizarding world and foolishly protects creatures that can harm him. He is a bad cook as his rock cakes “almost broke their (Harry and Ron's) teeth” (Rowling *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 104). All he can offer is love for Dumbledore and Harry and the knowledge of exotic creatures that others are too afraid to befriend. When Harry protects Hagrid from the bullying of Malfoy and others, Hagrid is reduced to someone who cannot defend himself. Though the hero is trying to be inclusive, the writer in the characterisation of Hagrid is not necessarily so.

This equaling of fat kids and people to evil, mean, hateful, dependent and dumb people is disseminating a discriminative discourse. It imparts a prejudice to children who are too young to differentiate between the right to dignity of their fat counterparts and the adult approved discrimination that pervades even the otherwise inclusive children's fiction. When the kids the world over reads the same books or their translations thanks to the globalized world of quick paced information dissemination, the range of the demographic influenced is unfathomable. The association of fatness with the other, the bad or the bully is to be purged of from the psyche of the young to quell low esteem and ensure an atmosphere of dignity. Being big should lose its negative connotations. A sensitising of the children against the pitfalls of popular literature is necessary to check this dated and derogatory practice.

Though *Harry Potter's* perpetuation such discrimination is hugely damaging due to its wide reach, one can not dismiss the similarly heedless discrimination in the popular American children's book series, *Percy Jackson*. It is about a young boy born to the sea god Poseidon and a mortal woman in America and his adventures in the Greek mythological world and at Camp Half-Blood that house similar children of gods. In *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*, the war mongering children of the

war god Ares are depicted as “all big, and ugly and mean-looking (Riordan 89)”. They are the bullies that Percy has to fight with at Camp Half-Blood, bullies that try to push his head into the girl's toilet. Though unaware of his powers then, he magically succeeds in dousing them with the toilet water, thus bullying the bullies.

The Artemis Fowl Series and its underground world of fairies have a nerdy Foaly, the technical expert of the fairy police, the LEPrecon. His fatness is attributed not just to his disregard for fitness but also to his being half a horse. The thieving and conniving goblins and dwarfs too are fat and grotesque as opposed to the slim and fit Artemis and his manservant, Butler. In *Twilight*, the undead vampires are embodied as perfect specimens of people often mistaken for ramp models. It is the sculpted thin body of the vampire that Bella Swann acquires with her vampire status. With Bella's obsession of the 'Adonis' like Edward, *Twilight* is a paean to the propagation of thin, anorexic and unrealistic body images. In their treatment of fat kids, neither the magical nor the muggle worlds are very inclusive. The fat people in magical worlds come across as bullies, underachievers, dumb, selfish people who cannot take care of themselves and play second fiddle to others for survival. The fat kids in fiction continue to be targets of ridicule and are constant foils to the archetypal loner hero and his side kicks. The stereotyped portrayal of fat kids and fat people in children's fiction finds these parallel worlds guilty of planting seeds of low self-esteem in children while encouraging bullying masked as counter-bullying in their peers.

Article 2 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* says:

States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

By perpetuating the discrimination and stigmatisation of kids on the basis of their size is thus a clear violation of the equal rights it is entitled to. The writers and readers of children's fiction should be advocated to check the dissemination of such discrimination through the sub-texts of popular children's fiction. It is only through identification and rejection of such traditionally sanctioned discrimination that equal opportunity can be achieved. For dignity, the right to self-worth and appreciation, and good self-esteem are essential to a healthy childhood, and child is the father of man! The child may be fat, let's stop thinking that fat is 'bad'.

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**Replacing the Holy Grail: Politics of
*Asura, The Tale of the Vanquished, a Postmillennial Meta-narrative***

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Myth and history are the artefacts demonstrating the interdependence of culture and civilization, as myth invariably constructs the foundation of culture, and history, the basement of civilization. Among the umpteen numbers of definitions of myth ranging from the story circulated orally, of anonymous authorship to factual history spreading a vision as to how to deal with the possible tenets of social equivocations, this study particularly focuses on the aspect of myth as the producer of culture and the product of history of invincible power plays. Modern use of the term myth connotes it to be a fable which is more inclined to unreal than real. But if the intellect thrives in this direction to methodically, scientifically and historically, searching the reliability of the mythical stories as the stories really happened at a historical point of time and arriving at the easiest conclusion that unless it happened it is of no value to the present that study, it will be a superfluous view on the complex structure and narrative of mythical tales including alternate polarities which combats each other and survive or decay depends upon the culture where it exists. Myth has now turned to be a part of our belief system which guides us, orients us towards what is legitimate or illegitimate in our current existential sphere, which validates our ethics, constructs our moral codes and eventually crowns its own heroes as our divine powers. Even if we undermine myths as primitive folk stories, by the very presence of and belief in religions a survey of the myths made and the ongoing process of myth making through revisionary reading and writing have already begun. Laurence Coupe in his book *Myth* emphasizes this view:

In literary and cultural studies, 'myth' is frequently used as synonymous with 'ideology'...in entertainment it is used synonymous with 'fantasy'...while it is true that there is some overlap between myth and ideology and myth and fantasy, it is not helpful to use them interchangeably...there is a lot more to myth than deception and distraction. (Coupe 1)

Mythic stories when survive the test of time, at times by the magic wand of exceptional story tellers would be elevated to the status of legends and the hero of the myth may be sacralised with divine auras and the myth itself become a sacred narrative transcending the spatial and temporal obstructions. This observation may be true of *Ramayana*, the great epic, the legend of Rama, the Ancient emperor of Ayodhya, a Hindu God, and the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Though *Ramayana* tells the story of titular hero Rama, the technique of polyphony, which is the characteristic of all mythic and epic narratives, seemingly propagate the views of inclusiveness of the voices of the marginal. But the politics inherent in the mythological story of Rama in *Ramayana*, the Great epic, is to exercise the stock monotonous tale of the victor. A.K. Ramanujan in his provocative essay "Three Hundred Ramayanas" estimates the presence of revisionary writings on *Ramayana* where the characters are humane and hence not free from emotional surge and follies. The concepts of virtue and vice as explained in terms of the character types found to be irrelevant if they are prone to feelings. Thus when consistency of men in action in the myth is in question, the seemingly vicious will turn to be more just than the seemingly virtuous. This opens up new vistas of alternate readings and many Malayalam writers such as Kumaranasan with his poem, "Chinthavishtayaya Sita", C.N. Sreekantan Nair with the play *Lankalaksmi* and Sarah Joseph with *Kanchanaseetha* have already paved the way for Anath Neelakantan, the author of *Asura, the Tale of the Vanquished, Ravana and his People*.

As the other postmillennial narratives, *Asura* also emerged into the section of international novels written by Indian writers. Indian mythical and spiritual tradition has served ample provisions for the writers to acquire and reshape the earlier tales having spiritual and religious significance in addition to their existence as stories for their own sake. The profusion of the stories and their popularity may be one of the several reasons which marks the Indian novels sprouted on the ground of myths as the global appetizer. By the constant writing and criticism the field of mythical narratives has reached some sort of saturation and this might be one of the many reasons why the recent Indian writers such as Shashi Tarur, Amish Tripathi and so on. The story is written both in historical and anthropological perspective. What makes it typically a post millennial meta-narrative is :

It is a text, written after a Yuga, i.e. the millennium, according to English Calendar, reflecting on the earlier epic *Ramayana*, revealing new revelations on the earlier story.

Being a text published after the God proposed period, it proposed a testament proper for the cotemporary existence of the individuals and re-formed history accordingly.

It puts hyperlink in between the earlier and the later within the Ramayana and outside and celebrates intertextuality by incorporating earlier versions of Ramayana and the texts based on Ramayana.

It discards the earlier gaze upon the natives of specified regions by the invaders from the superior standpoint.

It reciprocates the interconnection between the concepts of virtue and vice as connected with the lifestyle of race.

It acts as a Meta narrative including the existing narratives and thereby impart authenticity to the narrative.

It legitimizes the concepts of living together and questions the validity of arranged marriages.

It voices the feminist questions against the barbarianism of the so called intellectually elite for using 'Agnipareeksha' to test the purity of women

It not only considered the subaltern male or marginalized female but also considered the subdivision categories ugly female, ordinary male, widow, impotent etc.

Asura, the Tale of the Vanquished, Ravana and his People tells the story, Asurayana, a remarkable tale told by Ravana, the Asura emperor and Bhadra, an ordinary Asura. The novel written in the retrospective format i.e. beginning with 'The End' develops through the technique of flashback. The technique serves two purposes: firstly, it provides the reader a time to adjust with the myth retold since the reader is commencing the reading from a tale he/she might have heard from childhood and secondly it allows the reader to launch deep in to the details as the end is already given. As far as the initial narrator is concerned, he is at his death bed and the reader cannot but help believe him as these are his final words. So the story, would not only serve the purpose of an alternative myth but searches the rhetoric of *Ramayana* and argues out the logic of stamping Ravana as purely vicious by bringing out the subaltern voice of Ravana, ten headed, twenty –armed antihero of the great myth.

The writer approaches the myths as they are rather than addressing them from the religious ground. The fancy elements of these myths, especially in the pictorial representation of Ravana is overthrown in the author's note explaining that the faces of Ravana stand for basic emotions: anger, pride, jealousy, sadness, fear, selfishness, happiness, passion and ambition. Anand put forth the rationale for excluding Ravana from the heroic as the legitimized technique of Indian spiritual tradition where Intellect is the supreme and denial of the Self is the zenith of worldly life.(Neelakantan 5). As Macbeth or Hamlet Ravana is a complete man with ambition

or confusion. That may be the reason why he is evil and the man on the opposite pole, Rama is the God. Thus the writer creates an atmosphere for reading *Asura*. By including the voice of Bhadra, the enigmatic common man, the un heroic character whose thought the reader would be forced to follow than that of Ravana, Anand deconstructs the hero/ villain, hero/ anti hero, Deva/ Asura, virtuous/vicious duals and contributes his novel to the academic sphere of cultural studies, a critical space of the canonical creative and critical, popular and notorious narratives.

Ravana's story is the story of the replacement of beliefs. It was about the attempt of the Vaishnava cult, lived in Northern part of India to conquer and wipe out Asuras, the original inhabitants of Southern part of India. In some sense it was the story narrating the history of the foul play of Brahminical culture that established the casteism in the South Indian regions, by subjugating the Asura's calling them, as Sudra, the lowest among the caste hierarchical structure. Their God Shiva, the God of fertility, has been reconstructed to be the God of destruction among *Trimurthy*-Brahma-Visnu-Maheswara, where as the newly arrived worshippers crowned Vishnu as the supreme deity of life. Obviously with their God, Shiva, the devotees Asuras are also labelled to be destroyers, threatening peaceful existence. Thus the intellectual clan of Brahmins surpassed the emotional clan of Shudra-Asura, who being closer to nature, being prone to deadly emotions categorised to be invaders, by the intellectual deceit of the real invaders. Anand argues that this hidden tale of imperialism is the rhetoric of the scripture cum mythic narratives, telling the monotonous monologue of parrot. The major landmark of Asura civilization was the culture they held which was completely obliterated by Devas under the God, Indra.

Ravana, according to this narrative, is a half caste. He says:

Our father was a famous Mahrshi, but had little use for us ...My mother was an unknown Asura caste. He kept the relationship open secret. He knew enough of Sanskrit Vedas, which the Brahmins claimed contained all the learning of the world...our sense of justice differed from what the learned and privileged considered right. We decided our righteousness and defined our rights in our own way.(16, 17)

In this way, the Ravana-Kubera kinship myth intermingles with the Pakanar-Vararuchy myth enlightened Kerala folklore tradition, and the myth about the beginning of hybrid culture in Kerala.

Asura, the tale of the Vanquished essentially ties and unties its coil around the God's own Country, or in other words Parasurama's country. The myths of Mahabali and Vamana is also said to denote the injustice and jealousy that Asura clan suffered at the hands of Deva, otherwise Brahmana, caste. Myth of Onam, the festival is retold emphasizing the Goodness of Mahabali, the great Asura King, who conducted *Rajasooya* to proclaim his prosperity all over India, who allowed Brahmnas to preach their religion in Asura kingdom. His goodness is returned with treachery and he had to live in his legend the rest of his period. In this way the subversion strategy works on the fifth Avthar, Vamana who deceived Mahabali. A further retrograde can be seen

when the writer argues for Hiranyakashipu, the king murdered by Narasimha, the fourth Avtar of Visnu and crowned Prahlada, a meek emperor, who accelerates the decline of Asura dynasty. Then the focus is briskly shifted to the seventh Avthar Parasurama: “a new menace had entered, the scene-a mad Brahmin called Parasurama-Rama with axe to grind, who formed a group of thugs to start a series of terror raids in the south.”(30). The Avathar, in the new myth of Anand is represented as the harbinger of Anarchy, which led to the Brahmin upheaval not through intellect, but through sword. Thus the tale speaking the plight, reasons and explanations of the Anti hero of the Popular myth of Ramayana has turned to be the estimation of the *yuga* (ages) passed before, brought the seed of revolution from Ravana, and his people, the vanquished cult.

The myth of Ravana and the Asura caste told in the perspective of the marginal reveals the justifications, dilemmas, trauma and helplessness of Ravana, the learned, pious, musician, the loving but shy husband, the loving brother cheated by his brother Vibhishana, led to death by the deeds of immoral sister Shoorpanakha, humiliated by Ananya, the King of Ayodhya, who told Ravana in an arrogant manner on the verge of failure: “Toy untouchable, if your mother is castles so too are you.” ... “I will not surrender to a Sudhra”... “I will not demean myself by fighting a Sudhra.” (210). Ravana combated this shame with his sword roaring “Then die at the hands of Sudhra” (210). Thus his voice acquires the strength of the subaltern, who was repeatedly humiliated, silenced, threatened, butchered and made slaves. If he failed in his mission in safeguarding Lanka and its culture from the barbarian Devas and treacherous Asuras like Vibhishana, who wanted to impose caste hierarchy, he is not fully responsible for the rot of Asura dynasty. One reason was that their chances to succeed in the midst of treacherous group are grim. Secondly, the Asuras' view on good and evil is ambiguous and their confidence in themselves as well as their belief diminished by constant struggles and failures as Bhadra rightly remarked:

We were sure that Mahadev Shiva would not allow evil to triumph.

However, in the deepest corner of my mind, I knew we were lesser children of Gods, and even a compassionate and all powerful God like Shiva would look at the colour of our skin and flinch. Perhaps we had been born with the wrong skin colour.(345)

Yet another point, the twenty first century retelling of the myth raises is the anti feministic nature of the earlier myth. Ravana, though his wife was violated accepted his wife. But the exemplary figure Rama, when the subjects spread rumours against his chaste wife abandoned her even after the deadly ritual Agni Pareeksha. Also, another folk tale saying Sita as the daughter of Ravana, and an attempt has been made to establish that no incest but the pure love is what took place in between them in the novel. Comparing the ends of Ravanayana and Ramayana, the ordinary man Bhadra, the mouthpiece of the narrator, tells a new myth of the man, not God who had been cursed for being born as half caste, for his legitimate ambition to rule his kingdom peacefully and to live his own life without shame. Thus the novel with its politics of

inclusion and subversion tells a new story which is a not a postmillennial myth in the conventional sense, but a montage of postmillennial perspectives:

Its hero, if it has, is a recognized antihero.

It deconstructs the existing concept that the titular hero should be victor, as it tells the whole story through the mouth of Ravana, the marginalized, who was defeated to prove the destiny of Rama, and Bhadra, doubly marginalized in the strata, the mastermind behind Ravana, gained nothing for his deeds.

It portrays Gods as men and uses the logic as the argument strategy.

It talks about the confusion and the emotions as against the intellect in spiritual narratives.

It portrays the race war as against the war between good and evil, produces issues in new light and thus ties the theme with the existential issues of the present.

In this way, the writer suggests that the myth of Ravana in Ramayana is only a myth i.e. unreal and his modern myth closer to the history can be more inclined to be true. Thus he suggests the layers of knowledge about the existence of the virtue among the group so perceived vicious and vice in the professed virtuous and thereby call forth a new discussion on the discourse which is pro-subaltern-the uncivilized, occupying the frontier territories in the mythical and religious tales of Ramayana and thereby establishes the view of Rudolf Bultmann, who estimates myth in a novel perspective in the article, "New Testament and Mythology":

The real purpose of myth is not to present an objective picture of the world as it is, but to express man's understanding of himself in the world in which he lives. Myth should be interpreted not cosmologically, by anthropologically or, better still, existentially. (Bultmann 10)

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Collage Literature: Its Form and Structure in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*.

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The genre collage emerged in painting, especially in the paintings of Picasso around 1912-1914. Later writers like James Joyce, Italo Calvino, Robert Coover, Thomas Pynchon and Raymond Federman applied the techniques of collage in their literary works. The world 'collage' in literature implies the disruptive narrative techniques; and 'spaces' between the narrations.

In fine arts the term 'collage' is profusely connived in Dada art work and in literature the genre amplifies its voice especially in post modern literature. The genre collages in literature as a medium of narration break all the linear thoughts in the readers mind through its chaotic structure and fragment narration. It means that mixed media, interdisciplinary and inter textual collage is an organic expression, bringing the viewer/reader closer to the artist/writer's intention, or truth. The concerned research article is aimed to bring out the collage elements in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and shows the fact that oriental existence is in their own identities, with their myth, cultural practices and linguistic forms, not in the identities of the applied identity by the Western norm. the death of Sophie Mol, as a crypto secret, and Velutha's brutal end in the police station; all these abysses in the collage structure, should be looked up on the way of colonized existential power and the colonizers colonial administrative power as we read a collage. The following diagrammatic representation visualizes the form and structures in a collage.

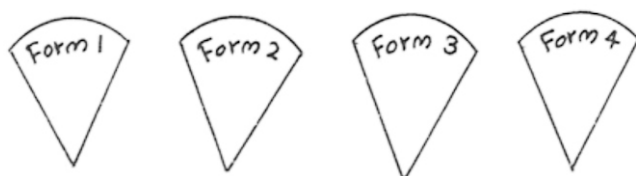


Figure 1

Here, these four forms represent four separate forms in its separate entities. In literature, these four forms represent themes, stories, scenes or incidents in the wholeness of the whole literary work. When a literary artist clubs these four forms in his/her literary wholeness (literary text), he/she can use different “structural” approaches. Some follows the following structural approach:

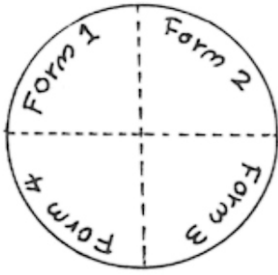


Figure 2

Here the literary artist is structuring a concrete structure of a literary form. It is the sequential arrangement of the mentioned above four forms (figure 5). Here the literary artist is producing a text (literary wholeness) without any void and spaces between the clubbed four forms. However, the readers are getting a clear cut idea of the 'structure' and 'form' of the literary art. A literary artist can also produce an entirely different 'structure' and 'form' out of these four forms (stories, scenes and incidents) without any voids and spaces between the clubbed forms (literary wholeness). Its diagrammatic representation is given below:

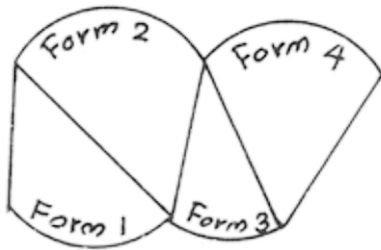


Figure 3

Here the literary artist produces a different form because of the different approach in “clubbing” and “blending”. However, the individual forms (stories, scenes and incidents) are the same. In 'flashback technique' narration, literary artists produce this kind of form and structure. The structure and form of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* exemplifies the mentioned above form and structure (Figure 7). The rearrangement or clubbing and blending of the same four forms in another structure and form(structuring structure and forming form) gives birth to an another entirely different form and structure. Its diagrammatic representation is given below:

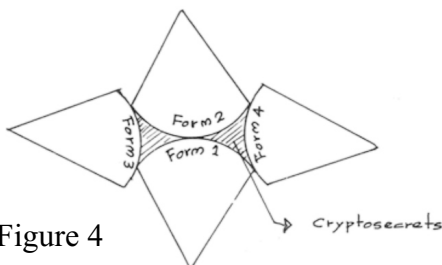


Figure 4

Compared with figure 6 and 7, figure 8 has a peculiar quality in hiding some form (crypto secret) between the clubbing and blending of four forms. As the individual forms follow a peculiar form and structure, the crypto form also follows a peculiar form and structure. Its existence in collage literature is based on the artistic technique of 'blending and clubbing' of different individual forms. These crypto secrets also margin with the structure and form of the individual forms. However, a collage literary artist can present different forms and structures by profusely utilizing the available forms and structures. Its artistic quality is depending up on the capability of the literary artist in artistic blending and clubbing. This is represented in the following figures forms and structures.

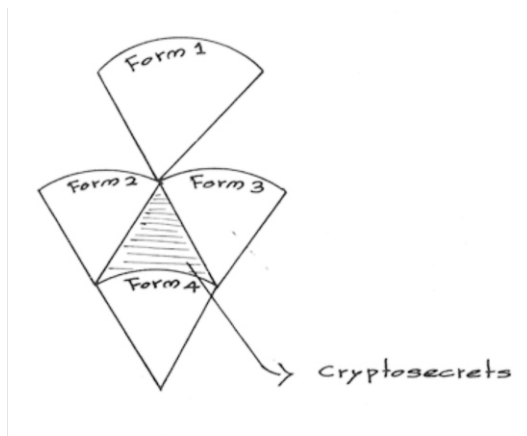


Figure 5

Here, the artistic blending and clubbing of the same four forms in a peculiar structural manner caused for the emergence of an inner form (crypto secret). This 'inner form' is very much important in contemporary literary analysis, for in which the writer (creative artist) is hiding literary truths. However, the analysis and interpretation of this 'inner form' is only possible through the realistic analysis of different forms (stories, themes, incidents and scenes) structured around the 'inner structural form'. However, in some cases this collage technique of 'blending' and 'clubbing' causes for wide 'gaps' and 'spaces' (crypto secrets) between the different structural forms. In such a condition, 'the reader' or 'the art critic' will apply a form and structure of him/her in concern with his/her schematic perception of the literary artist's form and structure. Its figurative representation is given below:

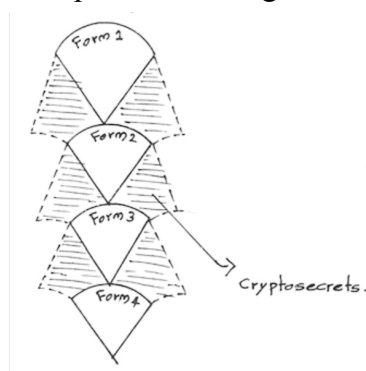


Figure 6

Here the forming and structuring of those same four forms (figure 5) in a peculiar descending order causes for a parallel form and structure in the literary wholeness. Even though the marked areas (form and structure of crypto secrets) are the construction of readers, critics and viewers, they connect with the real form and structure of the literary artist. Hence, in collage literature, the literary artists' 'form' and 'structure' are not the real 'form' and 'structure' except that they are the 'structuring structures and forming forms'(see page) of the literary artist. In short, in collage literature, the incomplete 'forms' and 'structures' of the literary artist is known as 'forming form' and 'structuring structure'. However, the application of the readers', critics', and viewers' forms and structures in the spaces and voids of literary artist's forms and structures make literary work of art a complete one with its proper forms and structures. The study of collage and its form and structure is important in the study of modern literature in deciphering cryptographic truths and realities inherent in the text.

Through the technique of collage, Arundhati Roy is abysse plenty of cultural knowledge, like the Oriental's strength and potentiality through the extinction of Sophie Mol, and practices available in colonies. A collage never tells the truth until it is penetrated on the basis of its form, structure, shade and colour. The process again needs the familiarization of the images and symbols available in the collage structure, as it meant by the author. Roy's Velutha and his Paraya culture are specific to Kerala alone. It may be correct to say that all colonies feeling may be same, but all the cultural form and practices in different colonies are entirely different. Hence the generalization of Velutha's cultural power and potentiality with other post colonial nation or culture is neither practical nor impractical. It is the existential power of Velutha and his sect alone at the time of threat and threatening. Instead of presenting this surrealistic of Ayemenem, in the 'historical' manner, Roy represented' it in a collage art to attract and enchant the readers towards the real realm of cultural knowledge available in the 'spaces' of the novel. The novel is an attempt to break from the Western notion of 'logo centrism' in the human discourse.

Collage technique has the power to usurp both the opposite of 'binary' and bringing an eternal evaluation on the perspective mind of the readers/viewers. It shows the power of telling stories by breaking linguistic rules like grammar, word pattern, structure and rules. The novel's collage techniques also prove the importance of visual story telling [visual linguistic narration] in the world of multi visual media..

Cryptic Secrets and Symbols (spaces) in Collage literature

Roy abundantly used crypto secrets and symbols in the novel in order to reach in the world of 'things'. It is one of the prominent features of collage literature that by blending and clubbing of two or three elements, bringing an extra element apart from the clubbed elements

One of the striking form and structure in the novel is the presentation of Velutha's (Paraya, untouchable) characterization.

He left no foot-prints in sand, no ripples in water, no image in mirrors (265).

This description of Roy about Velutha inherently shows the inherent manly qualities of Velutha. However, Velutha's inherent qualities reflected in the exterior world of the novel remained as a crypto secret. Roy as an artist of collage, brought three impending themes together, as a form of collage; the (un)holy union between Velutha (untouchable) and Ammu (touchable), Sophie Mol's death and Velutha's tragic end in the police station, in order to hide the main secret amidst the 'blending' and 'clubbing' form and structures.

He stepped onto the path that led through the swamp to the History House. He left no ripples in the water. No footprints on the shore. He held his mundu spread above his head to dry. The wind lifted it like a sail. He was suddenly happy. *Things will get worse*, he thought to himself. *Then better*. He was walking swiftly now, towards the Heart of Darkness. As lonely as a Wolf..

Naked but for his nail varnish (290).

About Velutha's structuring structures and forming forms Comrade Pillai also made a comment:

'I noticed something strange ... the fellow had red varnish on his nails ...' (288).

In the chapter "A Few Hours Later" Roy illustrated the "structures" around Sophie Mol, in the following manner:

They (Sophie Mol, Estha, and Rahel) seemed to trust the darkness and moved up and down the glistening stone steps as sure footed as young goats. Sophie Mol was more tentative. A little frightened of what lurked in the shadows around her (291).

Roy described the death of Sophie Mol in the following manner:

A spongy mermaid who had forgotten how to swim (251).

The structuring structures and forming forms of this sentence hide some code or secret. The spongy mermaid, Sophie Mol, on that particular night forgot how to swim along the Meenachal River. The word 'spongy' semantically represents meanings of 'soft' and 'an object which has the power to usurp water'. The word 'mermaid' means 'a creature with a woman's head and body, and a fish's tail instead of legs'. Roy's structuring structures and forming forms shows that Sophie Mol is good at swimming. Then how she is drowned? Arundhati Roy presents Sophie Mol's death in the first chapter itself:

Inside the earth Sophie Mol screamed and shredded satin with her teeth. But you can't hear screams through earth and stone.

Sophie Mol died because she couldn't breathe.

Her funeral killed her (7).

In short, it is the 'burial' which killed Sophie Mol, not the Kottayam Police's version of 'drowning' in their FIR (First Information Report). This incident, the centrifugal force of Roy's Novel clubs with Velutha's concealment in the History House. Sophie Mol felt, just before her death, a lurked shadow around her which makes her a little frightened (291). Roy presents this structuring structure and forming form around the background of Velutha's presence in the History House.

They (Estha and Rahel) didn't see someone else lying asleep in the shadows. *As lonely as a wolf* (prominence mine) .A brown leaf on his black back. That made the monsoons came on time (294).

In short, the 'nail-varnished wolf-like Velutha' stood behind the background of Sophie Mol's breathless stopping end. Roy as a creative artist and also as a constructive reader of typical Paraya myths and beliefs conjures these elements in Velutha:

He held his mundu spread above his head to dry. The wind lifted it like a sail. He was suddenly happy. *Things will get worse*, he thought to himself. *Then better*. He was walking swiftly now, towards the Heart of Darkness. As lonely as a wolf.

...

Naked but for his nail varnish (290).

Roy as a creative artist conjures this crypto secret in the title of the novel itself. The Novel reflects the creative and destructive powers of Velutha, the Paraya man (Paravan). Velutha's (un) holy union with Ammu and his destruction of Sophie Mol's identities are the two cultural elements in the novel. Velutha, through his rejuvenating action of union with Ammu, is the action for rejuvenating 'Ayemenem culture' by destructing the destructive cultural elements of Sophie Mol.

Sophie Mol's funeral scene is filled with secret codes and forms which Rahel – the vigilant observer – catches up as a magic girl. Roy narrates this scene with peculiar artistic form:

She noticed that Sophie Mol was awake for her funeral. She showed Rahel two things.

Thing one was the newly painted high dome of the yellow church that Rahel hadn't ever looked at from the inside. It was painted blue like the sky, with drifting clouds and tiny whizzing jet planes with white trails that crisscrossed in the clouds. It's true (and must be said) that it would have been easier to notice these things lying in a coffin looking up than standing in the pews, hemmed in by sad hips and hymnbooks.

Rahel thought of the someone who had taken the trouble to go up there with cans of paint, white for the clouds, blue for the sky, silver

for the jets, and brushes, and thinner. She imagined him up there, some one like Velutha, bare bodied and shining, sitting on a plank, swimming from the scaffolding in the high dome of the church, and painting. Silver jets in a blue church sky.

She thought of what would happen if the rope snapped. She imagined him dropping like a dark star out of the sky that he had made. Lying broken on the hot church floor, *dark blood spilling from his skull like a secret*.

By then Esthappen and Rahel had learned that the world had other ways of breaking men. They were already familiar with the smell. Sicksweet. Like old roses on a breeze.

Thing two that Sophie Mol showed Rahel was the *bat baby*.

During the funeral service, Rahel watched a small black bat climb up baby Kochamma's expensive funeral sari with gently clinging *curled claws*. When it reached the place between her sari and her blouse, her roll of sadness, her bare midriff, baby Kochamma screamed and hit the air with her hymnbook. The singing stopped for a 'whatisit? Whathappened?' and for a furrywhirring and a sariflapping ...

The baby bat flew up into the sky and turned into a plane without a crisscrossed tail (5-6).

Both these two 'things' shown by 'died Sophie Mol' to Rahel connects with Velutha and Parayas cultural mythical-secrets. When the magical girl, Rahel, observes the *spilling of dark blood* from Velutha's skull, in another scene, in reality, the Kottayam Police is Spilling Velutha's dark blood from his skull. Roy blends these two incidents with a single -line narration: even before Sophie Mol's funeral, the police found Velutha (31). After the funeral of Sophie Mol, Ammu, Estha and Rahel visited the Kottayam police station in order to protect Velutha's life. However, Sophie Mol's "showing" had already happened there:

The lockup was pitch-dark. Estha could see nothing, but he could hear the sound of rasping, labored breathing. The smell of shit made him retch. Someone switched on the light. Bright. Blinding. Velutha appeared on the scummy, slippery floor. A mangled genie invoked by a modern lamp. *He was naked*; his soiled mundu had come undone. *Blood spilled from his skull like a secret* (319-20).

And the baby bat had already taken its form in the yellow church:

That afternoon-while in the bathroom the fates conspired to alter horrible the course of their mysterious mother's road, while in Velutha's backyard an old boat waited for them, while in a yellow church a young bat waited to be born in their mother's bedroom, Estha stood on his head on Rahel's bum (224).

Here, Roy as a collage literary artist presented the spilling of the dark blood of Velutha and the baby bat scene with a tremendous form of blending and clubbing. In short, the infusion of blood spilled skull of Velutha and the image of the baby bat create a collage of postmodern “strangeness” (defamiliarization). These two “stripes” are again connected with Sophie Mol, because she shows these 'things' to Rahel. Sophie Mol, the polished cultural entity of Ayemenem House, shows the exact “mythical transformation” of Velutha. Sophie Mol's authoritarian institution knows that Velutha, the Paravan, keeps a secret-power-knowledge in his 'skull' and it is better to batter it (skull) and to destroy him. Roy illustrated it in a peculiar way:

Man's subliminal urge to destroy what he could neither subdue nor deify (308).

Roy in the chapter “A Few House Later” clearly and succinctly presents this matter:

They seemed to trust the darkness and moved up and down the glistening stone steps as surefooted as young goats.

Sophie Mol was more tentative.

A little frightened of what lurked in the shadows around her (291).

Just before the beginning of this narration, in the end of the chapter “The Crossing”, Roy structurally structures Velutha's structure and form in the following manner:

He held his mundu spread above his head to dry. The wind lifted it like a sail. He was suddenly happy. *Things will get worse*, he thought to himself. *Then better* he was walking swiftly now, towards the heart of Darkness. As lonely as a wolf.

...

Naked but his nail varnish (290).

It reflects that Velutha's “naked body” with “varnished nails” and “lonely wolf – like form” structures along with the “tentative” and “frightened” condition of Sophie Mol. She is frightened, only in this particular scene, because of “the something lurked in the shadows around her”. The 'lonely wolf' lurks in the shadows around her. Velutha lurks in the shadows around her. The naked body of Velutha with varnished nails lurks in the shadows around her.

Roy typifies the “creative” and “destructive” power of Velutha beyond the world of opposites in the following manner:

If he touched her, he couldn't talk to her, if he loved her he couldn't leave, if he spoke he couldn't listen, if he fought he couldn't win (217).

This description of Velutha is the same as the description of Robert Oppenheimer about electron:

If we ask, for instance, whether the position of the electron remains the same, we must say 'no'; If we ask whether the electron's position changes with time, we must say “no”; if we ask whether the electron is at rest, we must say 'no'; if we ask whether it is in motion, we must say 'no' (166).

The “animist beliefs” of the Paraya community reflect in the actions and deeds of Velutha. His typical Paraya's ethno-cultural identities reflect in his inclination towards 'nature' and 'creativity'. In '*Odimarichil*' typical Paraya's mythical- artistic forms, the artist perform the “pain” of the Paravans, as the mythical character Pulimaranja Thondachan felt in his tiger form. In Roy's Novel Velutha realizes the same 'pain' because of the unity of him with Ammu, the touchable woman. Thondachan, the Paraya intelligent and courageous man, turned as the scapegoat of touchable community's ire and contempt in the myth of Pulimaranja Thondachan, which is filmed in Priyanandanan film Pulijanmam. He in his ferocious artistic form, in the form of a tiger, vanished amongst the thick forest because of his wife's failure to transform him into the real form of him by beating him with broomstick (*adimachil*) and pouring his face with rice-water (*chinmathakkuli*). In traditional *Odimarichil*, a dance form prevalent in Paraya community in Kerala, the artist performs this mythical story by bringing the element of 'pain' felt by Pulimaranja Thondachan. Later, Paraya community began to use “the spirit” of Pulimaranja Thondachan in order to destroy the higher class subjugation and segregation towards them. Mythically, an 'Odiyan' is not the real one; he is only the “spirit” of Pulimaranja Thondachan in another body. The myth says that “Pulimaranja Thondachan was an intelligent man and good at martial arts”. (Paraya Myth 26). Hence, the “spirit” of Pulimaranja Thondachan will only take his “spirit-metamorphoses” in the body and mind of those people who had already got the same one. Velutha, in Ayemenem, is such a character. His body-mind correlation made him as a Paravan above “force” “matter”, “particles”, “waves”, “motion”, “rest”, “existence” and “nonexistence”. Roy's description of Velutha shows this “reality” of Parayas myth and tradition:

He left no ripples in the water.

No foot prints on the shore (290).

The description shows that Velutha had transformed into a “non-existent” form and structure in the 'time' and 'space' bound reality. In *Odimarichil*, the typical Paraya dance form(the dance of destruction) also the artist performs the same 'reality' with grotesque 'form' and 'step'. in their dance. Roy's description of Velutha's transformation into an 'animal (the Parayas believe in 'animist beliefs') is vividly described in the following manner:

'Out!' she (Mammachi) had screamed, eventually. 'If I find you on my property tomorrow I'll have you *castrated* like the pariah dog that you are! I'll have you killed!'

'We'll see about that', Velutha said quietly.

That was all he said.

And that was what Baby Kochamma in Inspector Thomas Mathew's office enhanced and embroidered into threats of murder and abduction.

Mammachi spat into Velutha's face thick spit. It splattered across his skin. His mouth and eyes.

He just stood there. Stunned. Then he turned and left.

As he walked away from the house, he felt his *senses* (emphasis mine) had been honed and heightened. As though everything around him had been flattened into a neat illustration. A machine drawing with an *instruction manual that told him what to do* (emphasis mine). His *mind*, (emphasis mine) desperately craving some kind of mooring, clung to details. It labeled each thing it encountered...

The machine drawing began to blue. The clear lines to smudge the instructions no longer sense. The road rose to meet him and the darkness grew dense. Glutinous. Pushing through it became an effort. Like swimming under water.

It's happening, a voice informed him. *It has begun*.

His mind, suddenly impossibly old, floated out of his body and hovered high above him in the air; from where it jabbered useless warnings (emphasis mine).

Though the rain washed Mammachi's spit off his face, it didn't stop the feeling that somebody had lifted off his head and vomited into his body. Lumpy vomit dribbling down his insides. All his organs awash in vomit. There was nothing that rain could do about that ... (287).

Roy again narrates about the transformation of Velutha:

And there it was again. Another religion turned against itself. Another edifice constructed by the human mind, decimated by human nature...

'I noticed something strange ... 'comrade Pillai said as he peeled his banana. 'The fellow had red varnish on his nails....'

Standing outside in the rain, in the cold, wet light from the single streetlight, Velutha was suddenly overcome by sleep. He had to force his eyelids to stay open.

Tomorrow, he told himself.

Tomorrow when the rain stops.

His feet walked him to the river. As though they were the leash

History walking the dog (287 – 288).

The narration clearly shows that Velutha's transformation from a 'pained' Paravan into a ferocious 'form' with "leash" and the form of a "dog". However, Roy hides this "reality" of Paraya myth behind linguistic expressions. The expression '*its happening*' and '*it has begun*' are only the subconscious expressions of his metamorphosis. His body-mind correlation is expressing in the form of his 'mind's hovering high above him in the air'. From the air, the mind jabbered useless warnings.

In the next chapter 'The crossing', Roy describes Velutha 'as lonely as a wolf' (290). His form as 'naked but for his nail varnish' (290). In *Odimarichil*, (the turn of destruction) according to Paraya myth, the Parayan will seek the form of naked body. In its artistic form, *Odiyan Thullal*, the Parayan uses/applies thick red colour on the whole body as an appareled dress. In his dance form, the artist gets power, form, and strength like the real mythical character in the myth. Later, after the performance, they transform into their real nature.

Roy structured a “structuring structure” and formed a “forming form” of the incident in the following linguistic ways:

Sophie Mol died because she couldn't breathe (7).

Her funeral killed her. Even before Sophie Mol's funeral, the Police found Velutha (31).

Only one, her mother Margaret, had escaped to England (239).

A spongy mermaid who had forgotten how to swim.

A silver thimble clenched, for luck, in her little fist (251).

Sophie Mol was more tentative. A little frightened of what lurked in the shadows around her (291).

This 'structuring structure', the process of 'structuring' itself as a 'structure', and forming form, the process of 'forming' itself as a 'form', interconnect with the following expressions of Roy about Velutha and his cultural identity.

The machine drawing began to blur. The clear lines to smudge. The instructions no longer made sense. The road rose to meet him and the Darkness grew dense. Glutinous. Pushing through it become on effort. Like swimming under water.

It's happening, a voice informed him. *It has begun*.

His mind, suddenly impossibly old, floated out of his body and hovered high above him in the air, from where it jabbered useless warnings (285).

His feet walked him to the river. As though they were the leash and they were the dog.

History walking the dog...

He held his mundu spread above his head to dry. The wind lifted it like a sail. He was suddenly happy. *Things will get worse*, he thought to himself. *Then better*. He was walking swiftly now, towards the Heart of Darkness. As lonely as a *wolf* (emphasis mine).

Naked but for his nail varnish (290).

Later, in the next chapter entitled 'A Few Hours Later', Roy presented the incident of Sophie Mol's death. There, Roy in a succinct manner presented the “conscious

structure” of Sophie Mol in the following manner:

Sophie Mol was more tentative. A little frightened of what lurked in the shadows around her (291).

This collage technique of Roy about “structuring structure” and “forming form” has a peculiar quality of hiding 'secret realities'. Here, by blending and clubbing the incident of Sophie Mol's death, her mental consciousness and her standing on the Meenachal River along with Velutha's “Naked but for his nail varnish” and “lonely as a wolf” form, Roy hides the mythical or superstitious “Odiyan” form of Velutha. Odiyan is a typical Paraya 'black magic man' who has the capability of “destruction” of their 'opponents'- whether psychic or bodily. Amongst the Paraya community, this 'enigmatic powered' man is called as “Odiyan”. Instead of creating this 'structure' and 'form' in the novel, Roy only created a 'structuring structure' and 'forming form' of this mythical reality-in the novel. Roy has succeeded in hiding this crypto secret because of the collage technique in the novel. Its diagrammatic representation is given below:

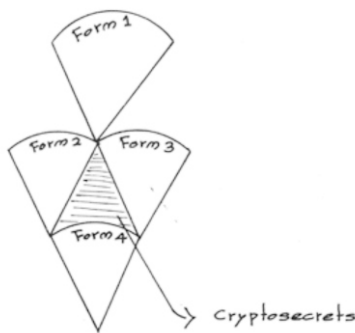


Figure 7

Here the four forms (incidents, stories, themes and scenes) are the explicative form of Arundhati Roy. She narrated it in a collage way by 'blending' and 'clubbing' of four forms: they are

Sophie Mol's death

Velutha in his naked but nail varnish form

Velutha's Paraya cultural identity

And Velutha's mental condition at that time (dejected and pained because of Mammachi's inhuman treatment of him)

As a collage artist, Roy blended and clubbed these four 'forms' (incidents, scenes etc) in a typical collage way. But this 'clubbing' and 'blending' created an 'innerform' in the wholeness of the text. It is an 'unsaid' form in the concerned text. But, the “unsaid” form is conveying its message to the 'readers' because of the collage technique in the narration. The collage literary artist hides this kind of crypto secret behind the “structuring structure” and “forming form”. Collage literary artists create this kind of structuring structure and forming form in order to conceal the real form

and structure of crypto secrets and codes. Roy's presentation of Sophie Mol's death and Velutha's 'enigmatic form' during that period cast a light on the myth of Parayas and their destructive power. In short, this “unsaid” mythical reality charms all the readers towards the Novel. The Novel is a typical collage art form of both blending and clubbing.

Sophie Mol died not because of the Zebra- Crossing, but because of the 'Crossing' of Velutha along the Meenachal River during that particular night in a particular 'enigmatic' form. The appearance of that particular unknown old lady during Sophie Mol's funeral ceremony indirectly pinpoints the fact that it was an “unnatural” death.

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**Voicing the Feminine Within:
A Journey through the Life Narrative of A. Revathi**

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Throughout the years the dominant class and canon have been challenged by different minority groups protesting their gender, racial, sexual, caste, and class bias. Writing is essential to effective resistance. Writing exposes the many challenges marginalised people are resisting in the world today. By writing one become more aware of the values, believes holding us back, as well as those that can move us forward. Writing is a process of discovery, emancipation, and reclamation. It is about emancipating themselves from historical, structural, systematic abuse of oppression and discrimination. And finally it is about discovering their inner strength, uniqueness and independence on another people. Writing provides opportunities for resistance that may be largely unavailable to marginalised people in their day-to-day lives. Thus writing can become a safe place for resistance. Essentially the social movements launched by Tribes, Dalits, and Black are based on the ethos of protest which has been directed against their socio -economic, religious, cultural and legal oppression and exploitation.

Transgender autobiography is a recent phenomenon which explores various dimensions of transgender lives and struggles for reclaiming their identity. A. Revathi's autobiography *Truth About Me* reveals how a Transgender insist on speaking about and naming their own experiences instead of succumbing to the cultural definitions imposed upon them. She voices the emotions, frustrations and triumphs of their respective people to those who are not exposed to the realities of their life world. It represents the indigenous life style, resist dominant/colonial acts of authority and oppression through their textual transmission.

The unrecorded life, words, locales and beings proclaim their freedom of movement through the writings of Hijras. Their works mark the pain and pressures of oppression, marginalisation, and alienation caused by socio-political institutions. When the languages of Adivasi, Dalits, and Blacks entered the mainstream literature, it upset the dominant mode of writings in a significant departure from the traditions of mainstream writing. Revathi wrote narratives that employed a raw and sometimes brutal authenticity. Her work brings the 'other' in to the forefront of the society. Such

works focus on their genuine search for love and identity as well as their need for creative expression and freedom to assert their identity in an outside world.

According to the census conducted in 2011, it is estimated that the population of India is 121 crores out of which 5 to 6 million are hijras.

India is a country of diverse cultures, traditions, religions and languages. Even Indian people differ from state to state. Men and women differs; in their physical appearance, attire, behavior, customs, tastes, rituals, and religious outlook. A Keralite can never identify any similarity with a Kashmiri, not even with his neighbour Tamilian. But every Indian readily accepts the differences of another Indian. Therefore amidst the plurality unity stands out.

But what has happened to the Indians in the case of hijras? The hijra community in India, has a recorded history of more than 4,000 years, and was considered to have special powers because of its third-gender status. They enjoyed royal status in the courts and were confidants to the Kings. But when the Kings and courts were replaced by the political leaders and Parliaments, hijras got pushed into the margins.

In a democratic country like India where our society speaks the language of rights loud and often, what about the rights of hijras? Even today in India people are denied their rights in the name of sex, sexuality, caste and religion. One has to struggle or compromise to achieve their rights. Hijras, one of the most discriminated and disempowered groups in India are recently visible in the limelight asserting their rights to live in this world just as any other human being. Towards the end of the 20th C many hijra activists and NGO's worked together for official recognition of hijras as a kind of third gender or third sex. The lobbying worked out well with fruitful results. Hijras are gradually getting accepted in the society. They dare to appear in the media, fashion shows, write and talk explicitly about themselves in the autobiographies and interviews. Revathi's autobiography is a product of this new consciousness. Born in Tamil Nadu, she has been marginalized because she was born a male and wanted to live her life as a female. Her autobiography is the first of its kind in English, heralding towards a new line of attack by the sexual minorities. The book is about the everyday experience of discrimination, ridicule and pain. It is also about the endurance of her joys. Revathi is a fairly known activist working in Sangama, a Bangalore-based NGO for sexual minorities facing oppression.

In India hijra is an umbrella term used for those men who are transgender, eunuch, transvestites, bisexuals or homosexuals.(Nanda, cited in Humaira Jami). Hijras are physiological males who have feminine gender identity, women's clothing and other feminine gender roles or as in Revathi's words 'a woman trapped in a man's body'.

'Hijra' is an Urdu and Hindi word and is generally considered derogatory in Urdu. For which there are a number of synonyms used in culturally and linguistically diverse Indian Subcontinent. Revathi points that she was called *Ali*, *Aravani* and

Number Nine in general in Tamil Nadu, hijra in Delhi and Mumbai and khojja in Bangalore.

Hijras trace their origins to myths in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Rama, while leaving for the forest upon being banished from the kingdom for 14 years, turns around to his followers and asks all the 'men and women' to return to the city. Among his followers the 'hijras' alone do not feel bound by this direction and decide to stay with him. Impressed with their devotion, Rama sanctions them the power to confer blessings on people on auspicious occasions like childbirth and marriage, and also at inaugural functions. This set the stage for the custom of badai in which hijras sing, dance and confer blessings.

The legend in the Mahabharata is that Aravan, the son of Arjuna and Nagakanya, offers to be sacrificed to Goddess Kali to ensure the victory of the Pandavas in the Kurukshetra war. The only condition that he made was to spend the last night of his life in matrimony. Since no woman was willing to marry one who was doomed to be killed, Krishna assumes the form of a beautiful woman called Mohini and marries him. The hijras of Tamil Nadu consider Aravan their progenitor and call themselves aravanis.

Revathi was often called by the names aravani, ali and number nine by his brothers, friends and villagers when she was a small boy. Born to an upper caste Gownder family, in a small village in Namakkal Taluk, Tamil Nadu, Doraisamy was the youngest boy child of his parents. She developed a desire for girls at a very young age. She grew up shy, culturally effeminate, with an inclination to dress as a girl and do traditionally female activities around the house. Her parents feared about her degrading the family name. At first she couldn't understand about her parent's fears and her becoming a butt of ridicule in the village. But gradually she experienced a growing sense of irrepressible femaleness which haunted her day in and out. The woman inside her developed an attraction and desire for other men. This confused her totally. "Why did I love men? Was I mad? Was I the only one who felt this way?"(14). The natural effeminate nature often dragged him to perform female roles on the stage. She says "To the world, it appeared that I was dressing up and playing a woman but inside I felt I was a woman" (12). Cross dressing as a woman was an opportunity for Revathi to express her suppressed feelings. "In my kurathi garb could express all those female feelings that I usually have to suppress and so felt happy for days after" (14).

Revathi admits that she does not want to miss any opportunities to attire herself in women's cloths and use the social spaces like festivals and theatre to act out socially repressed gender behaviour. For a transgender performing the repressed 'self' on an accepted platform opens up the opportunity for acceptance in the mainstream, atleast for a short time span.

During the Mariamman Festival as Revathi was effeminate enough she was compelled by her neighbours to make up herself as a kurathi. Even though deep down

she wanted to cross dress, she rejected it out of fear that her parents and brothers would come to know her disguise. But she couldn't stop herself from becoming a kurathi. Her fear melted out when one of the companions persuaded by saying "Look, we are dressing up and dancing for the goddess, and to make our village people happy. If your brothers ask we'll explain" (12). Also Revathi never forgets to tie a thali to Aravan in the Koothandavar temple in Villupuram. The temple entry restricted only to males and hijras. They dresses up in female attire and puts heavy make up like a bride. The hijras consider themselves as the brides of Aravan. Cross dressers are accepted by people during festivals as it is a ritualistic practice and divine in nature. So by doing/undoing gender a transgender does not break the social norms directly in such occasions. As the festival ends their acceptability too ends.

Born in a family where every flaw is punished by physical violence, Revathi was brutally beaten by her brother with a cricket bat for cross dressing. Even her mother did not try to protect her. To escape the constant violence and abuse from the family and village Doraisamy ran away to Delhi and then to Mumbai to join the hijra community. But whenever she came back both her mind and body were shattered. No one could completely accept a hijra in the family. In her new avatar Revathi maintained only a fragile relationship with her family. She was not allowed to participate in any family gatherings and was forced to wear men's cloths when she goes out. People came to her house and behaved as if she had some dreaded sickness. Even though some accept her as women they were not ready to call her Revathi. Her brothers frequented her to sign off the papers for being a hijra she has no right to the ancestral property. She was denied her portion for which she had to undergo many violent struggles with her parents and brothers. "Families respect you only if you have money, look modern wear nice cloths and jewels. If you are a hijra and poor you must expect to be abused and humiliated." (186).

Hijras in North India do not have the same culture as that of South India. In north there is a complex and closed community for hijras which follows a unique set of customs borrowed from Hindu and Islamic faiths. Being centered on the strictly hierarchical guru-chela relationship between a senior hijra and a new entrant to the community, it provides an alternative family. "A guru is like a mother, she would allow her chelas to share her home, and would clothe and feed them. Like a daughter a chela was adopted by a guru according to tradition." (22).

A chela can be accepted into the community only if the jamaat agrees to it. A jamaat is a meeting of sari-clad elders. They discuss matters of importance to them and others like them agree to take on chelas, and so on. Doraisamy was accepted in the jamaat and became a chela of a senior hijra by accepting the name Revathi. Born as a hijra or pottai one cannot go and carry out the Sexual Reassignment Surgery (SRS) in India. One has to go through several phases in the hijra house, and only if they survived those hardships they could hope to get the nirvaanam done. (To undergo nirvaanam is to submit to castration and turn into a full woman). If born a pottai, and when living among them one has to pierce her nose and grow her hair.

Merely putting the press button earrings and wig will lose your respect. One is suppose to cover their chest and respect the elders and never be seen without bangles, earrings, nosering and anklets. All this more are expected from people belonging to the hijra community.

In India hijras are supposed to do only certain jobs and not all works. If we consider their occupations many of them go to shops, and go for badai (public performance of dance and music to celebrate the birth of a male child). Many also engage in sex as there are houses devoted specifically for that purpose. Hijras have a unique hierarchical structure which no other transgender community can claim for. This structure is unique. It gives the hijras a home, relatives, love, care and quarrel. No hijra is left a destitute once a part of this hierarchy. In India a younger hijra is bound to look after her relatives. As mentioned earlier, to accept a chela, a guru needs to put the proposal in the jamaat. There is no rule or law that tells hijras to do so but hijras have their own rules, culture and rituals. In the hijra community there is no high or low –hijras do not observe caste or religious differences and there are hijras from both poor and rich homes. Revathi never failed to go to her favourite shrines every week to the Haji Ali Dargah on Thursdays and the Mahalaxmi temple on Fridays. There is no caste among hijras, there are houses or clans only. Revathi says

“There are seven clans or houses and each has its own name. Hijras can choose their guru from any house and sometimes shift their allegiance to another house. This is allowed. Each of these seven houses had its own elected or chosen head, known as a naik. A naik's parivar comprises of sister, younger sister, daughter, and granddaughter. But they don't necessarily live together and meet only occasionally” (62).

Hijras had evolved a culture of their own to enable them to exercise order and restraint and also to exercise their rights. Revathi was taught the hijra kin terms by her guru after she was accepted in the jamaat. The kin terms are as follows - Badudaali – great grandmothers guru, Dadaaguru - grandmother's guru, Nanaguru -guru's guru, Guru – mother, Kaalaguru - guru's sister, Gurubai –sister, Badagurubai – elder sister, Chottagurubai – younger sister, Chela – daughter, Naathichela – grand daughter, Chandichela – great grand daughter, Sadak-naathi – great granddaughter's daughter.

Being a dutiful and disciplined chela Revathi was sanctioned the permission from her guru to fulfill her dream to transform into a woman. Instead of sending her for a thayamma nirvaanam (surgery by another hijra), her guru gave her money and made arrangements in a hospital. Revathi requested the doctor. “I want to live as a woman, which is why I wanted this operation. Please make it like it is for a woman. I did not know how woman peed, but I wanted to be a woman.”(73). Surviving the ordeal Revathi transformed into a woman with an artificially constructed vagina.

Castrated hijras enjoy a special status and respect in the community. Sexual Reassignment Surgery is usually done stealthily in India. It is an excruciatingly painful surgery but surprisingly a hijra would happily tolerate the pain to get rid of the male genitalia to see herself as a complete woman. Nirvaanam is a sacred ritual

among hijras. There are many customs associated with it. An operated hijra should abide certain rules for forty days. They have to abstain from having milk and fruit. They were not allowed to look into a mirror, to see men or to comb their hair. Strict menu is practiced. On the fortieth-day hijras young and old clad in colourful sarees come to the operated one's nanni's house. Revathi was presented a jok by her guru (jok comprises of a green sari, inner skirts, nosering, anklets etc). At two in the morning they were anointed with mehandi and turmeric. Jai santhoshi maa was made happy with sacred chants, songs and dance so that she showers all her blessings upon the operated. Hijras believe that Mata has to descent on you otherwise it would never happen. Revathi was made to carry a pot full of milk on her head and pour it into the well. She had to again draw water from the well and the same process is repeated twice. It is only on the fortieth day she was allowed to see herself in a mirror. Nirvaanam has completely changed her physique and she felt herself as a newly blossomed flower. Different varieties of food were served to the congregated hijras and the operated is asked to take her favourite food at first. Hijras believe that for those who choose sweets and fruit, life would be pleasant.

Whether chosen sweet or sour a hijras life is always bitter. The hijra elders forbade her from taking a husband, or a steady man. Proscribed from marriage, unable to work, unrecognised by the state bureaucracy, Revathi had only three options to make money – she could beg, she could bless, or she could do sex work. Initially, she begged, in the flamboyant, utterly recognizable hijra style; but she felt restricted and constrained by the rules and demands of her hijra House, with her guru and her sisters.

A large part of the autobiography is taken up with her steps into sex work – it's hard to understand, to remember how limited her choices within the hijra Houses were, but in essence, at the age of twenty Revathi decided to take up sex work in order to fulfill her sexual desires. This was the only way, at the time that she could come close to sexual satisfaction. Some hijra parivar believed prostitution would desecrate their position in the society. On the other hand some others earn their living by entering into prostitution. Revathi got into prostitution, expecting a life full of money and happiness. But she cringes at the thought of getting into prostitution.

In the sex workers hierarchy hijras are placed right at the bottom. Violence is an everyday reality for hijra sex workers in India. Literally having no place to do their job Revathi says she had to resort to public toilets and parks to satisfy her clients. They are often raped by the customers and are also at risk of violence from police. Hijras often fall prey to night patrolling by police and prisons often become witness to the police brutalities on hijras. When Revathi was caught by the Bangalore Police she was stripped off her cloths and her private parts were prodded and were made fun off. They made her to clean the prison floors and did all sorts of menial jobs. She was taken to the court, but was never allowed to enter there. The police took all the money but she could not complaint it. Revathi could find no difference between Police and Rowdies.

Unable to bear the brutalities of the Police and rowdies Revathi decided to leave prostitution. But who would give a job to a hijra?

If we're to employ you, you'd be the ruin of all the boys here. If you worked for us, we'd have to shut shop, and steal away, a towel on our heads!' 'We can't employ people like you. What do you know, anyway? Get lost, go to Mumbai or Delhi and be with those like you. You're all fit dancing on the roads and having cheap riotous fun (161), a shopkeeper shouted at Revathi when she was in a hunt for a respectable job in Chennai.

While in Bangalore, Revathi found daughters of her own, who were three young people from educated and fairly well to do families. The difference between these three hijras and the others of Revathi's acquaintance are startling. They are not comfortable with the hijra houses, requiring more freedom and space and they did not dress conservatively outside of sex work. Revathi sympathised with their desires and gave them the freedom they wanted. One of the tree daughters was Famila – another recognisable name. She was a dynamic hijra queer activist who drew grief - stricken Revathi into the realm of social activism by introducing her to Sangama - NGO working for the upliftment of sexual minorities. She defied hijra custom by taking a paying job at Sangama, where she learned about her rights, about what could be done to educate other people about those rights. Sangama gave Revathi the language to express her dissatisfaction and her desires, her need for her hijra sisters as well as her discomfort within their confining homes.

Being a part of Sangama, Revathi had drastic transformations. She gave interviews and talks disclosing the saga of hers and the lives of other hijras. She was often questioned by her fellow hijras for shaming them in the public but Revathi did it to uproot the stereotypical notions about hijras among the public. The courage she had drawn from years in Sangama lead her to scribble her life. She believes that publishing her life story would bring in larger changes in the society. *Truth About Me* is the first of this kind in English. The book was given wide media coverage and publicity. The responses from people were highly satisfactory. In an interview with 'The Hindu' Revathi shared her experience of positive response from the people. Few months after the publication of her work once Revathi received a call from a woman who collected her number from her hijra friends to say how the book helped her rid herself off her prejudices and fear of hijras. This proves her success and shows that through her art Revathi was capable to touch people's heart. The book had lend a hand to break the stereotypical notions that hijras are capable only of sex work and begging. It is the societal attitude that often covers their talents in the deep unfathomed caves – unseen. Revathi's intention was not to seek sympathy from either the society or the government but to show that hijras do have the right to live in the society just like others. Thus the study shows that the emerging literatures of the marginalised are powerful weapons which could drive changes in the society.

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The Dialectics of Being and Belonging: An Analysis of Ampat Koshy's Poems

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The literary world of the twentieth century saw a revolutionary rise in fiction-writing, sidelining poetry the once acclaimed genre. However, with the onset of the new millennium and the phenomenal spread and popularity of social networking sites, poetry writing and reading has gained renewed impetus. This one-time 'endangered species' which was limited to the syllabi of schools, colleges, universities, and probably to the few die-hard fans of poetry has found a productive platform on cyberspace, reclaiming its fading glory. A number of poets have stamped their marks with a repertoire of excellent poetry in the rising number of online poetry groups and literary hubs. Such groups also stand witness to some mediocre stuff, but, what remains significant is that poetry is now read, enjoyed and critiqued like never before.

One of the most prominent poetic voices acclaimed and acknowledged by academicians, writers and laymen alike is Dr. Ampat Koshy an Indian writer in English. He is one contemporary writer who has carved a niche for himself in the literary world of networking sites with his prolific outpour of poetry and a commendable collection of prose works. His published collections of poetry include *Soul Resuscitation* and *2 Phases 50 Poems*. His book *A Treatise on Poetry for Beginners* as the name suggests is a delightful discourse on the nuances of verses and verse-writing, and was chosen by Butterfly and the Bee as one of the best reads in India in 2012. His monograph of essays called *Wrighteings: In Media Res* and his doctoral thesis *Beckett's English Poetry: Transcending the Roots of Resistance in Language*, both published works are proof enough of his astounding scholarship and erudition. A short story collection awaits publication by Lifi and his poem "A Shayira of Sorts" was nominated for the Pushcart Prize for Poetry for 2012. His poems have also found prominence in many poetry journals, magazines, e-zines and anthologies in different parts of the world like USA, UK, Canada and India. He regularly contributes to The Camel Saloon where three of his poems have become editor's picks, including "Africa" and "Hurt". He is presently teaching English Language and Literature in Faculty of Arts, Jazan University, Saudi Arabia as an Assistant Professor. A versatile genius, he dabbles in art, music and literary criticism as well.

Writing is the quintessence of his existence and this passion for writing is well articulated when he states: "I write, therefore I am. When I am no more, I won't

write anymore, of course, but when I stop writing, even if I am, I am no more” (*terrestrial*). Though he has experimented with various genres and has excelled in probably all of them, it is his poetry that has attracted a wider readership. His verses are marked by a rare elegance that results from a blend of unmatched scholarship and eloquent simplicity. The poetic themes are variegated and are the products of a highly complex personality. His poetry also showcases experimentation in form and structure. Most of his poems deal with love, family, death, alienation, existential angst, meta-poetry and social issues. But mostly it is about a 'quest' for something: probably a quest for the self, a search for wholeness, an insatiable desire for perfection both in art and life or an attempt to relocate his roots through memories from the past that probably provide him anchorage in foreign lands despite his rootless identity. The most intense of his verses spring mostly from his solitary life abroad, far from family and friends. This partly self-imposed exile and its ramifications find expression in most poems of Dr. Koshy. The title and the opening line of the poem “I do not know what I seek” speaks volumes of his sense of nostalgia and his passionate yearning to be with his loved ones so as to add meaning to his exile:

I do not know what I seek.
In the midst of my island
This spreading pool of loneliness
widens
engulfing every green thing
on this auspicious day,
overflowing its borders.

His sense of longing is triggered by his inability to belong and the resultant attempt to find meaning in a converging experience defines his sense of being. The overflowing 'pool of loneliness' and its consumption of 'every green thing' evokes in the readers poignant images of seclusion and emptiness. The image of the lone rock jutting out like an ugly tooth emphasizes the dilemma of the diaspora on alien shores. The recurring images of nostalgia and dislocation that reverberate through his poetry are also indications of his ambivalent identity. Again, the poet's attempts to escape or seek respite in fleeting ties are actually thwarted by his firm bonds of permanence that form the basis of his essence:

The fish too escape.
Only a lone rock remains
jutting out like an ugly tooth
splashed by black waves
in the dying rays of the setting sun.
It's another love I spay.

The poet's identity is marked by his multicultural exposure. The series of

poems published in Brian Wrixon's anthology *Tripping on Words: a Literary Atlas*” is a mosaic of his variegated experiences that lie scattered over differing points in the space schema. The long poem is an attempt to recreate meaning out of a disjointed, disintegrated and dilemmatic life and personality. Each poem acts as a fragment of a coherent whole and at the same time exhibits an identity of its own. This poetry of assimilation is an exercise in the process of acculturation, integration and identity formation.

The section “Trivandrum” takes the readers to the by-lanes and alleys of his childhood and adolescence. Memories of immaculate nature and a non-corrupt world remain etched in his “mnemonic memory's cartography” (*ToW* 112). A world of smells and tastes haunts the poet who is still on the lookout for “the elusive answer” to a question that he never framed, that has none (*loc.cit.*).

The section “India” (*ibid.* 113) is the product of his indisputable love for his homeland – 'Kafka's father,' as he states. The ambivalent attitude that he displays in the poem is the objective outcome of his deep love that comes from an insider viewing his world with an outsider's lens. The reference to Kafka is also an exercise in intertextuality, probably indicating the poet's quest for the Kafkaesque womb!

“Bangalore” (*ibid.* 112-113) for him does not offer the idyllic charm of the Trivandrum mapped in his memories. It is only a world marked by disparities where the poet enjoys watching and critiquing the “rich lap up luxuries,” though he admits that he too was at times lured by the glitz and glamour of the 'jaded metropolis', when he states: “at such times/ you were the lover/ I wanted/ to rape/ surreptitiously.” “Jeddah” (*ibid.* 113-114) recounts the love-hate relationship with the royal port city. The ambivalence is marked probably by the ordeals of his professional life there and the brief hiatus of measured happiness in the company of his family and friends. “Al Khums” (*ibid.* 114) is a poem where the poet calls to mind his dear and near ones even in moments of extreme happiness, anticipating them to partake in his joy in absentia.

Stuart Hall points out in his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” that cultural identity in the diasporic existence “undergoes constant transformation” (435). Consciously or unconsciously the poet's self too undergoes constant transformations, and that is probably the reason why the poet appears more composed and stoic in the section on Jazan. Perhaps the theme of longing here harps on the desire for change and movement. The eponymous city Jazan provides him with more hope:

...maybe you will be
my Alexandria
in Arabia Asia,
you let me wander your crevices
the why yet to be revealed
amidst your minarets and muezzin calls
as if I'm waiting for my Damascus

The last line of his poem “Hope” from *Soul Resuscitation* sums it all up: “Hope is what we live on.” These different fractions of poems fit in like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, framing the 'whole' of the poetic persona where the joints bear reserves of some elusive meaning. These series both in texture and structure reflect the fragmented self and its attempt to attain completeness through unification or the multiples selves that seek to converge into a single purpose of existence. The scattered presences of the 'self' without belonging to any particular place interrogate his sense of being. It is striking to note that his idea of being and becoming is rooted in the quest for meaning underlying the very fluid nature of his existence where the only waterfront seems to be love and duty. These fractions also assert the poet's liminality as a diaspora and his endeavour to assimilate his present and past; his host and home; the conscious and the unconscious and his self and the other. It is in these liminal spaces that the poet undergoes the individuation process of self-realization, i.e, “the process of strengthening, differentiation and assimilation (integration) into consciousness of the various non-egoic parts of the psyche...” (Fiumara 178). The unified structure of this poetic montage is also a metaphoric assertion of the fact that “Individuation begins with a withdrawal from normal modes of socialisation, epitomized by the breakdown of the persona...liminality”(207)..

The cultural plurality of his homeland reflects in the expansive use of his language and expresses itself in the sublime and grotesque array of words. The poem peppered with abuses strongly underlines his frustration and inability to coerce with the new cultural ethos. Simultaneously a part of him is sensitive to the changes and makes a constant effort to fit in. Self-imposed or not, displacement does act as a stimulant to Koshy, as some of his best verses spring from his diasporic sensibilities.

The lines from the poem “Birds” again emphasize the intensity of the poet's sense of nostalgia and grief at the thought of his separation from his beloved ones:

I never knew the face of death
has lips one longs to kiss
give death a miss!

and,

next year die of surfeit never stop
even an instant to think
of how those faces that face
you lost are tearing you up

The reader may be taken in to believe that the poet actually seeks to forget those bonds from which he finds no escape by indulging in the 'cup' of copiousness. But it is again his 'childhood dreams,' the 'blue sky' and 'white clouds' that he seeks solace in. A deep sense of *hiraeth* marks his poetry and the poet in fact tries to brace up his ties by embracing his pain and anguish that keep his dreams and memories animated: “sleep and dream/ and mayhap find peace.” The poem redirects us to childhood memories and questions of being that the poet is now conscious of and inspired by.

“(After Rilke): An Explanation” the first poem by Koshy in *Soul Resuscitation* is one of his best and as the connection to the German poet implies, is a fine exercise in “impassioned monologue.” The obvious take off is Rilke's first Duino elegy which takes Koshy's theme of alienation and isolation to existential dimensions, attempting to make occasional penetrations into the phenomenon of existence. The poem which abounds in symbolisms and allusions is characterized by an ontological chase creating meaning out of residues nonentities.

In the poem, memory and past images accentuate the poet's solitude and it is his sensitive consciousness that compels him to seek answers to his existential dilemma. His philosophy of living is rooted in love and faith and this forms the essence of his being:

you are that being
each atom beyond grasp
unexpected sweetness pierces him
occasionally
when he passes a window
and hears them play “in summertime”

The allusions to Bob Dylan's “Covenant Woman” and “In the Summertime,” in fact, unveils man's desperation to achieve anchorage through the sublimity of love which he often feels eludes him. The mystery and elusiveness of love is as obscure as the phenomenon of existence itself. The oxymoron “murderously sweet” reminds one of Yeats' “terrible beauty” which again is highly eloquent in Rilke's line from his first elegy- “beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror.” Love for the poet does not rest in the magnetism of physical forms of elegance but is something transcendental, a sublime entity that may even find expression in little acts of kindness and unstinting commitment to causes as the men in Yeats' poem. It is through this medium that he aims to find answers to his ontological quest and connect to the Unknown.

On an autobiographical note, it could be argued that the poet's self- imposed exile which may partly be pecuniary in disposition, something not driven wholly out of materialistic ambitions, and as the introduction to *2 poets 50 poems* suggests, is something nobler: “His greatest desire is to build a village for people having autism where all their needs are met. He runs an NGO called “Autism for Help Village Project” with his wife for this dream to come true.” The poetic persona waits for the Lord to “rebuild” him and “fill him up” so as to save him from the vacuity of a purposeless life. The line separating his becoming and being seems to grow fainter at times. The idea is elaborated in the poem “When I consider how my life is spent” from the anthology *2 Phases 50 Poems*:

I beat my wings against a pane of glass
behind it the light that would kill me of

this is living death. I neither die nor live
only one thing is clear. there is nothing called love.

To begin with, the pun on the word 'spent' is striking and antithetical. The idea of spending one's life points directly to questions of ontology and the meaning of spent when taken as 'wastes away' reflects on the possibilities of damnation. The paradoxical nature of existence is conveyed by the clever play on words.

Again, in the poem “(After Rilke): An Explanation” physical beauty is merely transient and lacks essence as the hair that “false/falls across your face,” just a symbol of terror that points to the pseudo existence that mankind generally indulges in. The war images of “a cobbled street full of dead bodies” and the “small white wild flowers” littering the street take the readers to world of futility and terror. Man is obsessed with self-love and such narcissistic tendencies propel him to revel in a sense of false security, which eventually culminates in his own destruction –both physical and spiritual:

it only wants security to establish what one calls love
this is the secret
fear rules the city and her
and me and him (*After Rilke*)

Death and destruction leave man with residues of meaning to rebuild and reform his sense of being. The poet, probably see in 'nothingness' and 'void' the rationale of reformation that may carry one to the metaphysical realms of purpose and being. But man is yet to come to terms with the essence of his existence and penetrate into the secret of eternal happiness:

the little robin red-breast sings outside her wings
each and every atom of hers
is still beyond his reach (*After Rilke*)

The speaking persona, unable to comprehend the selfless song of the robin red-breast cries out in existential angst:

why do you love when such terror inhabits the world
of objects
that horrify us with their longevity? (*After Rilke*)

The bird is reminiscent of Hardy's “Darkling Thrush” with its “full-hearted evensong/ Of joy illimited.” For both the birds, hope in humanity and love forms the basis of their living. The resilience of the birds, not altered by corrupt thoughts is contrasted with the “crumbling” humanity which disintegrates into a state of nothingness. Koshy demeans human life and diagnoses the limitations of mankind by the contradictory images of the selfless bird and self-obsessed man. The references to Kahlo and Diego implicate the 'false' notions of love as perceived by the

ordinary. Kahlo's liaisons with Josephine Baker (*Hubpages*) and Diego's infamous and incestuous relationship with Kahlo's sister Christina (*Fridakahlo fans*) reinforces the images of Eliot's moral wasteland where love is mechanical, vacant and transient. Man's inability to find real love, to move beyond superficial sexual gratification and his obsession with momentary indulgences are congruous to the dissolution of his very essence, his purpose of life and his sense of being. The ethical degradation and moral decay prevent man from attaining *ubermensch* or 'superman' status. Violence, war and power are all consequences of man's self-oriented objectives that further belittle his existence, forcing him to degenerate from nothingness to nothing:

like kahlo
outcast other killed forever voices stilled
gone under the earth forever
will mine too?

In addition to the theme of existential angst, this poem can also be taken to be an artist's hunt for meanings, his/her attempts to trap "abstractions" in the permanence of his/her art and his/her urge to be heard. The bird mentioned earlier is as mortal as the speaking persona but it is its song that becomes the insignia of its essence and permanence. Perhaps the poet's intentions in alluding to Kahlo are manifold. As writing is living for Koshy, painting was Kahlo's essence. She states: "...I am happy to be alive as long as I paint" and "The only thing I know ... is that I paint because I need to" (*Fridakahlo fans*). The act of painting and writing can be translated as the essential media for achieving what is 'beyond their reach' (*After Rilke*).

The poem "Son and father" is yet another poem that borders on the quest for ideal love. The poem set in a conversational mode begins with a question posed by the father: "why does your heart ache, my son?" The failure of the son to meet his soul mate is deftly drawn in the son's answer:

I longed to meet someone
in the journey who'd make me blossom
and someone I'd do the same for
I still haven't come across such a one.

The title is fraught with biblical connotations and definitely, on a more sublime level deals with the discord and disparity that mankind is doomed to be in. The mistrust, guile, deceit and treachery behind the crucifixion, now operate at a wider level and the poem ends on a note of dystopia. The same theme is extended in his poem "Nirbhaya" but his philosophy of life rooted in Christian existentialism is more hopeful of the consequences:

then what a good thing
heaven and hell are separate

and a great gulf is fixed in between

His poem “Yekaterina: A Russian folk story retold in verse,” at the outset, comes across as the poetic adaptation of a simple Russian folklore. The poem recounts the tale of a poor girl who was alienated by her stepparents and given asylum by the moon. The moon which acts as a saviour in this poem is shorn of its mask in the sequel poem “the girl in the moon.” The ‘moon’ here functions as the metaphoric representation of the illusory gleam offered by his life abroad:

till later her laughter
suffused
by the orange
of a rising sun, changed to sorrow

Loveless reality on alien shores dawns on the persona as the ‘moon’ finally melts away “hiding in the sky’s forests.” Even though he finds respite in divine faith, it is not done at the sacrifice of his worldly duties. It is love, duty and conscientiousness that form the core of his existence. As he sings in the poem “O Rumi”:

O Rumi
intoxication with the divine
is not the only way
O Ghalib
the way of the senses
is not the only one

It not sensual love either, but a love of a higher order, borne out his sense of trust and responsibility that opens the “unending vistas / of Keen Delight.”

The poem “Hunger” is powerfully intense in its portrayal of the poet’s sense of exile and solitude. The reference to Marcel is noteworthy, especially in the context of this study. The allusion to the Christian existentialist and philosopher is obvious. “What defines man are his *exigencies*” claims Marcel (34) and the poems of Koshy as portrayed are the products of his ontological exigencies. If the first name is to be considered, the ‘Marcel’ in question may be a reference to the French novelist and critic Marcel Proust. This leads one to the intertextual conclusion that the indication may be to his famous work *In Search of Lost Time* (previously translated as *Remembrance of Things Past*) which recapitulates certain past events as an attempt to anchor on to memories, which, again is a recurrent theme in Koshy’s poems.

The process of rememoration found in many of his poems often functions as an antidote to his sense of isolation and aids in his strong urge for belonging. It is in his sense of belonging that he finds meaning. In addition to his endeavour to accommodate change and movement, he also makes an attempt to come to terms with his hybrid sensibilities – postmodern, diasporic, Indian and sometimes even feminist. Milton Singer had remarked about A.K. Ramanujam’s poems as having “double self” composed with the components of Eastern and Western epistemologies

(Singer xiii), but Koshy's poetry points to the "multiple selves" that compose a complex personality. In spite of his sense of diaspora, it is not the physical places that matter to him but the "Real Spaces of the Mind" (*ToW* 114) where "places become driftwood" and residual experiences shape his being. "I did not find you in mandir or masjid" (*2 Phases* 30) is yet another poem that explores the inconsequentiality of physical spaces.

While most of his poems are retrospective in nature, the poem "Heart" is introspective and reflects on the desertion within. While his physical form experiences a floating existence, it is his heart that chains him to a 'shape' and this probably alludes to his love, his roots, his past, his God, his ideals or even his ideology. The ambivalence reflected in the line "I hate you for chaining me to a shape" echoes his heightened sense of existential angst. The dialectic of being and belonging is seen to run through most of his poems, sometimes explicit and at times implicitly woven.

Koshy's is a voice resonant with the anguish of living and loving. In an interview to *Copyleftwebjournal* he states : "I bleed red tears on to paper, mainly, and they become words and birds and fly away." The flight of his imagination and poetry is triggered by the politics of his identity, pain of separation and the recurring memories of a past that provide leverage to a conflicting present. It also marks a consciousness that is in constant struggle with the self and the external world where he tries to spin meaning out of the ensuing pain, anguish and dilemma. The adroit use of arresting allusions and images also points to the multi-layered nature of his verses and the possibility for further exploration of themes and forms. Borrowing the words of another noted poet and author of *Ekalavya* Prathap Kamath, it can also be said that Koshy's works are "the products of a mind that is restless and vibrant, with a micro-fine sensibility, down to earth humility despite its mind boggling scholarship and an eye that sees a detail always left unnoticed by others." He is definitely a distinctive and potent voice in the sprawling FB literaryscape. His postmodern sensibilities, adept use of English language, ever expanding intellect and sensitive approach to life put him across as a writer of extraordinary calibre.

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**The Impetus of Ecofeminist Perspective in
Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green***

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Contemporary life is a manifestation of many a crisis. These adverse conditions are the consequences of the destruction of nature from fertility to aridity. This is a global problem. Man's greed to conquer nature has resulted in a deplorable state of humanity. In such a critical situation, when the world is facing depletion, a thorough eco-consciousness is necessary for its survival. Mankind with its unique literary talent, bears the great responsibility to influence human behavior so as to enable him to maintain a healthy relationship with his natural environment.

Eco-feminism, which is an amalgamation of ecology and feminism, is a concept which questions the patriarchal oppression and the exploitation of nature. The term was introduced by Francoise d' Eaubonne in her book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* [Feminism or Death] published in 1974. It is simultaneously an environmental critique of feminism and a feminist critique of environmentalism. As Greta Gaard puts it, the basic premise of eco-feminism is that the “ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, sexuality, physical abilities is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature” (“Living Interconnections” 1). Oppression of the natural world and of women by patriarchal power structures must be examined together or neither can be confronted fully. In *New Woman/New Earth*, Ruether, states:

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this [modern industrial] society (204).

As far as ecofeminism is concerned patriarchal structures justify their dominance through dualistic hierarchies such as mind/body, male/female, human/animal, spirit/matter, culture/nature and so on. Ecofeminism argues that as long as any of the dualisms exist as an integral component of societal structuring and justification, they will ever continue to serve as starting points to justify patriarchy.

When the consumerist human urge to up root the fundamental basics of life like soil, air and water became so strong and uncontrollable, an ecological rethinking was initiated on a global level and ecological thoughts were widely discussed in the realm of literature unprecedentedly. We are on the verge of an oblivion- that neglects those myths, stories, traditions and folktales imparted to us through generations.

Eco-critical discussions began in the western world with the publication of Rachel Curson's *Silent Spring* in 1962. Vylopilli, P. Kunjiraman Nair and Sugathakumari are the staunch proponents of eco-conscious writings in Malayalam literature. *Aathi*, the recently published work of Sarah Joseph, translated to English as *Gift in Green* by Rev. ValsanThampu is a continuation in this genre. As a literary approach, ecofeminism provides a reliable frame to analyze cultural as well as literary texts which are directly or indirectly concerned with ecological concerns and contexts.

Sarah Joseph is one of the most renowned contemporary writers in Kerala. She occupies a unique position in Malayalam literature through her writings permeated with the impetus and beauty of feminist perspective. Her creative writing, embellished with a genuine language, remains unparalleled - a language that confronts the patriarchal authority and encourages even her fellow beings to speak against the atrocities inflicted upon them. She is a feminist, writer and an environmentalist too. Her writings pay due heed on the women, environment, marginalized and the deprived.

Gift in Green is steeped in eco-feminist concerns. *Gift in Green* is an unconventional novel about the relationship between a people and the land they inhabit. The structure of the novel is refreshingly unconventional in the canon of Malayalam fiction. The twists and turns of Sarah's plot - ride through the landscape of Aathi make eminent sense from a holistic perspective. Aathi, in the *Gift in Green*, is a lagoon. It lies, cool and sense, in the womb of an inviolate purity. Aathi is not a utopia, but it is a land cherished by everyone- a land of beauty, pristine serenity and a rich repertory of natural resources. The inhabitants are innocent to their cores. Agriculture is the traditional occupation there.

Aathi, the lagoon and its very existence is so connected with Thampuran and his shrine. In Prologue, "Except for Thampuran's shrine we had no other refuge in Aathidesham" (2). People believe Thampuran guided the backwaters and their whole lives. Thampuran gave up his life for sake of his fellow beings.

In *Gift in Green*, Sarah Joseph depicts a heart rending picture of how the consumerist urge rapes the virginity of the soil; ruthlessly kills the purity and existence of water, the basis of life. The mangrove forest, that the people of Aathi affectionately call Green Bangle, encircles Aathi. It is an enchanting world in itself, its waters cool and serene. The people of Aathi are the children of soil. They have woven their life in the mystery of Green bangle as well as in the magnitude story telling.

Watching the sallow leaves fall noiselessly on the water, then float towards and accumulate at the bank, he would weave the tapestry of his life – interpretations. He would listen to the blessing of flowers, watch the moss dance, the glow worms emerge from their hide outs, and read the trails of tiny worms. His mind would clear; his lungs fill with a new vitality and his stomach with heavenly happiness..... (25)

Gift in Green is abundant with such depictions which manifest connectedness of human beings and nature. Aathi is bestowed with the boon of Thampuran; the prime cause of its prosperity in the form of rice, crab, fish etc.

Kumaran is the vicious character in the novel. In the pursuit of material advancements he forsakes Kunjimathu, his beloved. He abandons the water – life and often looks down upon it. Kumaran is the epitome of modern capitalist and consumerist tendencies. He is the representative of new generation which does not pay heed to emotions but neglect one's own values for pomp, luxury and enjoyment. After many years Kumaran returns to Aathi and the place starts plunging into doom for ever. He wants to exploit the fertility of Aathi and thrives ahead. Kumaran turns his pristine motherland into a jungle of concrete profits. The people who have moulded their lives in the virtue of the soil succumb by selling their lands to Kumaran, the corporate landlord. The imminent fall awaiting them has never dawned upon them. Kumaran turns a lion – portion of Aathi's youth folk his puppets. They hate soil. They forget the virtues of life. They feel so self-secured in the dresses of pimps, spies and party men. A new bridge is erected for luring them in to the fancies of the outer world and dumping the wastes of outer world to Aathi.

Science, with its reductionist policy has discriminately exploited nature for its benefit. Deforestation, industrialization and other technological advancements many fetch far-reaching material prosperity, but only at the cost of this vast ecosystem. Vandana Shiva states in *Ecofeminism*, that the reductionist policy of science reduces complex ecosystems to a single component and to a single function. It exploits the ecosystem in a ruthless way. She states, “Reductionist science is at the root of growing ecological crisis, because it entails a transformation of nature that destroys its organic processes and rhythms and regenerative capacities” (25).

Under the pretext of changing Aathi into a land of unsurpassed glory and material prosperity, Kumaran turns Aathi into a sewage dump. Kumaran has laws on his side, he is always accompanied by an elaborate menagerie: policemen, a private army, a retinue of personal staff etc. Dinakaran and Ponmani, who consider Aathi their heart and soul, smell a rat in the strategies of Kumaran:

They sensed that certain schemes and clandestine activities were under way. Strangers came, assessed, assented or dissented, and went away same came and tarried in the tent and roamed the mangrove forests. But why, and what it was all about, remained wicker. An air of uncertainty and anxiety pervaded.... (41).

The female characters share an intimate connection with nature. When nature is at risk they feel their last refuge is gone.

Thampuran's shrine is a thatched one. As far as Kumaran is concerned, a thatched shrine does not suit, he wants to build an edifice of gold for Thampuran, the savior of Aathi. The youth of Aathi is mesmerized, flabbergasted by the proceedings of Kumaran.

Dinakaran and Ponmani are against such enterprises. When they start quarrelling over these matters, the inner spirit of women saves the land-they demolish the shrine of Thampuran. The prophetic perspective of women; their pride and strength; their perseverance- all are brought into light through this action. They do not like people getting divided over this. Though they reel in intense mental anguish, they can't help destroying the shrine, for the sake of Aathi and the people. They have every right entitled upon them because they had built it.

Fertile land and fertile women are equally exploited by the capitalist patriarchy. Exploited women and exploited land suffer the same impoverishment. On the day of departure, Kumaran, being materialistic to the core, deliberately ruptures the hymen of Kunjimathu and takes her virginity away. Similarly Kayal, a young lovable girl is physically and mentally wounded by the patriarchal society. Geetanjali, her mother fetches Kayal to Aathi, only to get her recovered. Soon she has to face the fall of Aathi.

Green bangle is the cynosure of Aathi. The cradles in the mangrove forest are green in colour. Green bangle contains crabs, frogs butterflies, grasshoppers and snakes – all green in colour. As the forest virtually encircles 'Aathi', it is affectionately called green bangle by the people. It remains a full-fledged ecosystem until the huge tongues of flame destroy it.

Green bangle is a powerful symbol similar to the 'Amarappandhal'(Bean-stalk) in *AalahayudePenmakkal*. The deliberate attempts by the author to depict the intense exploitation of ecosystem become so intense and clear in Aathi. When we go through the novel, we feel conspicuous presence of total greenery, cool water and that pervades our every vein. It is explicit when Noor Muhammad says, "Water is not merely a means of washing away dirt. Since the inscrutable mysteries of life are encoded in it, we must deem water equal to God."(257). Sarah Joseph imparts an exquisite significance to green bangle in Aathi. Green bangle is so capable of bringing about variegated colour and richness to the narrative.

Women's intimate affinity with nature is expressed splendidly by Sarah Joseph. Not a single female character does harm to nature. Kunjimathu, jilted by Kumaran, pursues the water life steadfastly. Kunjimathu, being confronted with many an adversity, never succumbs before anything. She stands for the nature and its well-being. She has a blissful communion with nature. It was the women of Aathi who built Thampuran's shrine. Every year they come to thatch the roof a new. After breaking down the walls of the shrine, they feel quite unsecured. An inexplicable fear

grabs them. They grope in darkness lamenting on the ill fate of being left without any place to light the lamp at sundown. Women believe in God. They worship nature. Nature is venerated as goddess. Any violence on nature is indeed a violence on themselves. Her perseverance, and indomitable spirit to save her land are depicted in a heartrending manner in the novel.

The Octopus's hands of Kumaran do not omit even a single thing in Aathi. In the disguise of 'development', he trusts the last nail on Aathi. Kumaran wishes for a wonderful Aathi where no signs of innocence and primordial virtue should be left. He wants to build new hospitals, schools, factories etc. He teaches them to dream a city life with new facilities which may enable them to lead a splendid and carefree life. All the social, economic and cultural invasions ultimately result in changing a place from its natural habitat to an artificial environment.

Another shining character is Shailaja. She is married to Chandramohan of Chakkamkandan. Shailaja can't cope with the filthy nauseating atmosphere of ChakkamKandam. She discovers the unmeaning secret that none would eat a morsel of food or drink a drop of water in that house. The wells, the ponds, the channels, the streams and backwaters, which spread like an ocean upfront of the house, are covered with layer upon layer of shit. Shailaja, being self-determined returns to her own home. She never likes to adjust in a maladjusted environment. She is in the forefront when people decide to destroy the bridge built by Kumaran. She tries her every nerve to save nature from getting depleted.

Gitanjali and Kayal are visitors to Aathi. Kayal has been inflicted with a strange disease. Gitanjali arrives in Aathi seeking a remedy for Kayal's ailment. The terrible account of how a metropolis had snatched a little girl and played havoc with her moves Markose to a great extent. Eco-feminism throws light on how female body is treated as a territory to be colonized by patriarchy. As Shiva states in Eco-feminism, "Colonization of seed, reflects the patterns of colonization of Women's bodies. Profits and power become intimately linked to invasion into all biological organisms" (29). A woman's body is her terrain. It is her environment. The entire right over her body is entitled upon her. A woman is completely objectified and alienated from her body thus. "Know the water"- was the remedy prescribed by her Guru(61). Aathi, where the air is light, the water pristine and the wind pure will catalyse the recovery. Gitanjali tells a moral story to the people of Aathi.

Aathi has its own codes and norms. A land abounds in rituals, traditions and specific customs. The plot is designed with a double focus. There is, on the one hand, the life and struggles of the people of Aathi, specific to the context and quite earthy in its portrayal. The plot pivots the decay, death and phoenix – like regeneration of Aathi. The inexorable progression of the plot is seemingly interrupted by the periodic ceremony of storytelling nights. Diverse stories are narrated. But all of them reflect profoundly on the plight and destiny of the people of Aathi. The combination of the mundane & the mythological serves two important purposes –

The nights of storytelling, and the palliative solemnity this confuses into the narrative, encapsulate the artistic and spiritual aspects of the life of a people. The story tellers offer hem lace and rekindle their witting will to live. They often tell stories with a moral message to be inculcated in their lives. The story telling begins with some exclusive rituals.

After the introduction is over, the introducer would take off his head gear, emerge from the water, and stick the burning torch on the stem of a plantain tree. Only then the story teller will begin the story. The story of Hagar and her son reveals how dedicated women are especially in preserving nature. All those stories are abundant in nature images. One story is told by Gitanjali. The mesmerizing magic by the magician captivates the people in Aathi. The fancies of the new world are open before them. They are coerced into a war against the water and the earth, which sustain their lives. They are torn between two worlds – Kumaran's world – so luring and Aathi - the primordial land. Aathi, eventually is degraded into a carrier of pollution and putrefaction.

The destructive tendencies are strongly opposed by a minority group consisting of Dinakaran, Ponmani, Markose, Shailaja and Kunjimathu. They are characters created out of historical crisis. Porinchu Chakramakkal and Advocate Grace Chaly offer a strong support to this minor group. A girl is often referred in the novel – who comes to Aathi and takes away all the plastics and other wastes dumped on the land.

Sarah Joseph depicts a heart – rending picture of the poisoned Pokkali land. Nineteen children have died of Cholera. Only then the people are ready to undergo a rethinking and realize their faults. Dinakaran is accused by all in the end. He dies for the sake of his fellow people in Aathi. He reminds us the same fate of Thampuran.

Sarah Joseph is not against development. She can't help opening her eyes to the cruelty that underlies every development. She discusses the evil effects of endosulfan, the filthy conditions existing in the premises of Guruvayoor temple and contagious diseases like Cholera. Almost all the environmental issues are dealt in the novel. Eco-feminist discourse attempts to expose the metaphors which keep women, nature and animals bound together, there by revealing their collective subordination – “The darkness churned like placental fluid. It throbbed with birth pangs. In the twilight hours before the crack of dawn, it would give birth to light...” (120).

A culture which extols nature as mother is exposed towards the end of the novel. “To Aathi's children, even though they walked without a thought on Aathi's bosom, she was like their own mother who, standing up to her neck in water...” (278).

The strong eco-feminist perspective is made explicit through these lines:

No human hand was allowed to touch that water, for the goddess of rice and fish dwelt in it. For the delicate water goddess to survive, the ceiling of the marsh had to remain wet. The water mansion would collapse if the marsh

were to go dry. If and when that happened, the goddess would go in search of a wet marsh through the deep, underground water paths: a journey full of hardships. Her anger, more destructive than fire, would rise in proportion to the difficulties she faced... (102)

Here the author views nature and women are one and the same.

The people of Aathi organize themselves and decide to reap harvest. Thus *Giftin Green* ends with a new eco-consciousness being imparted to the people of Aathi. The novel becomes a canvas on which the author paints the intense agony of a community, the inevitable result of the horrendous consequences of man's cruelty and atrocity to nature. The novel being one of the most evocative accounts of a contemporary issue, steals the hearts of the readers. It is a new land mark in environmental studies. It is quite impossible to this novel simply and remains unchanged at the end of it – That transformative capacity itself is the unique quality of *Gift in Green*.

Women can bring about a sea change in the society. They often share an intimate relationship with nature. Be it patriarchy or capitalism, they share the common male dominated practices that are biased and unjust. An ecofeminist perspective will bring about many positive changes as far as nature, women and the deprived are concerned. Such an alternative can certainly make our world a better place to live in and grow towards the development of the nation. Ecofeminists hope for a better future and a new society endowed with the equality of men and women and will surely make their relationships and interactions more just and fair.

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The Mystic Woods: An Upanishadic Analysis of Eco Mysticism

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Introduction

May Wind blow Sweet

May Rivers flow Sweet

May Herbs be Sweet

May Night and Day be Sweet

May Dust and Mire be Sweet

May our father Sky be Sweet

May the Woods be Sweet

May the Sun be Sweet

May the Milk be Sweet.

(Madhumathi Manthra, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, VI chapter)

The *Upanishads* are considered to be the sum total of the ancient Vedic wisdom of India. For the last four millennia, they have been here as the light beacon for India's splendid cultural, social and literary scenario. They have tremendous influence upon almost all the Sanskrit literature, including Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavat Gita, Kalidasa, and then King Akbar (Allaoupanishad), Dara Shikov, Sufi Mysticism, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, American Transcendentalists, Einstein, Maxmuller, Paul Deussen etc.

Though there is a general tendency to view them as a corpus of mystical works preaching the denial of the material world, a close reading will provide us a different dimension. We can see them closely related to nature and ecological reality. In many of the *Upanishadic* hymns, there are emphasis on the need for sustaining good relationship with environment on the outer layers, and in the inner layers they find nature as the source and guide line for the spiritual atmosphere, which we can call *Spiritual Ecology* or *Eco Mysticism*.

Upanishads are , usually that part which appears usually at the end of a section in each Vedas. Among them, Ten are considered to be very important, authentic antique and special. They are *Isa*, *Kena*, *Kata*, *Prasna*, *Mundaka*, *Mandukya*, *Chandogya*, *Brihadaranyaka*, *Thythireeya* and *Eythareya*. Even though they speak about something beyond this world, about the sophisticated concepts like *Athman*(soul) and *Brahman*(Supreme Soul), they speak of it in connection with

ecology. Several prayers are offered to the nature itself and they seek spirituality in nature. The Manthra mentioned above is such a one from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

As far as the Vedic sage is concerned, the ultimate goal of him is experiencing the mystic Brahman, it is the only reality for him. And where does this process of supra-experience occur? The rishi will answer you with a mysterious tone, wrapping it with some mystic atmosphere, which may sound abstruse and ambiguous and may be beyond our ken. But the fact is that, in no other way one can tell this mystic experience. That might be the reason for the inter relation between nature poets and mystic poets. The former relies on some sort of mystic language in order to depict the 'experience he draws from nature (Wordsworth, Thoreau etc.) and the latter relies on nature in order to exhibit their transcendental experience (Tagore, Blake etc). But in a Vedic Rishi, both are mingled in a perfect ratio.

In 2010, Carl Von Essen, in his magnum opus 'Eco Mysticism' elegantly and elaborately discusses the concept of Eco mysticism. After the evolving of Eco Criticism, one of the most striking theories of the previous millennium, that is the nature related studies are much afoot. People are realizing the importance of nature, more than ever now. In literature too nature and the eco system, now a days find a significant role and, are arguing favourably for the preservation of nature.

In the Chapter titled The Poet and The Artist, under the subtitle *Poetry and Nature*, Essen says:

“In a way, poets are mystics: they attempt to put into words the feelings that are difficult or impossible to express in everyday prose. These feelings extend beyond the bounds of the spoken or written word, beyond the range of the 'discursive intellect.'

To our surprise, the same idea was mentioned by the Vedic sage in Kena Upanishad, when he says : Yad vacha na abyuditham yena vag abhyudyathe

Thad eva Brahma tvam viddhi, neydam yadidam upasathe.

Kena,i,4

That which is not uttered by speech, that by which the word is expressed know that alone to be Brahman.

And also –

Yasya Amatham, thasya matham; matham yasya na veda sa:

Avijnatham vijanatham, Vijnatham avijanatham...

-Kena,ii,3

That is, it Brahman is known rightly to him, who holds the view that he is unknown.. he who has the notion , by me is Brahman known; does not know certainly he does not Brahman.(Panoli:113)

We are living in a space where nature and its balanced, divergent biodiversity is in crisis and yoke. Though eco mystical studies are getting prominence in this age we

cannot call it as the very first attempt . Almost all the religious scriptures, ancient pre-romantic and neo-romantic poets used nature as a specimen to describe the transcendental feelings. But the gravity of this concept is much more dens in the ancient Indian scriptures. Here i am going to analyse Isa Upanishad in the light of Essen's Ecomystical theory.

Isa Upanishad and Eco mysticism

This is one of the shortest Upanishads- only in length. The profound thoughts it provides is huge and sky- like and attracted many great scholars including Sri Sankara, Aravinda, A.C.Bouquet, Mahatma Gandhi et al.

“It may be poetic metaphor that approaches most clearly the expression of transcendent states of consciousness. In essence, the syntax of poetry seeks to express the inexplicit, as do music and visual art.(Essen,85)

As we go through Isa Upanishad, we can see this idea becomes more and more clear. The metaphorical way of describing supra natural things are so common with Vedanta. The first and second manthras of this Upanishad describe a single supreme power- Isa, who leads this universe. From these mantras , it's very clear that Isa does not dwell in some distant heavens but in this world, in this nature itself(Jagath).

In the third manthra the world of those who do not realize themselves as the part and parcel of Isa (hence of nature), is described as a Sun less one, surrounded by pitch dark.(Asoorya nama te loka:). Sun is the symbol of knowledge in the Vedic literature. This indicates how their mystic thoughts are deeply rooted in nature. In the next two mantras the mystic way of language touches its zenith. Brahman is beyond the reach of gods, mind and water and wind. It is mobile as well as a fixed. It dwells inside this universe as well as outside of it.

Here, we should notice the fact that the gods in the Vedas are nothing but the representatives of this nature. Indra,the king of gods is the rain and thunderbolt; Agni the fire, Varuna the ocean, Vayu the air and so on. They also represent the sense organs, mind and the soul. Thus by saying that the supreme one is beyond the gods, they mean that one has to transcend the very nature which created him/her in order to understand the total cosmic energy of the same nature.

Essen says:

“the poet tries to strip the outer foliage of everyday life to reveal the bare structure of what nourishes our inner selves, without which,as without food or water,we spiritually die. To increase the understanding of ourselves in this tiny biosphere shared with every cell of every microorganism, plant, or animal in the vast incomprehensible space of the universe-that is the nature poet.(86)

How can we achieve the knowledge of the self? Isa Upanishad has no doubt about that. By living in this nature. The following two mantras declares that if one wants to know his inner self(which is the same self of this nature), one has to identify himself with the nature. One should see him/herself in the nature, and nature in them as well. Then they would consider each and every living and non living creature equally,

without any kind of discrimination. The Eighth mantra calls Brahman as a poet himself.(Kavirmaneeshi).

Essen continues by referring to the experience of *Sublimity and Delightful Horror* provided by nature, by which poets draw in divine inspiration. Poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge and Ted Hughes and Heaney are the best examples for this. As we take a glance at the following mantras of the Isa Upanishad we can find that the vedic sage also uses this. They warn those people who do not ready to acquire knowledge. It also warns those who are over-joyous in the knowledge they have acquired. In both case, the pitch, deep darkness awaits them. Here we can see how darkness becomes the symbol of ignorance.

The following mantras are invocations to both Surya and Agni (Sun and Fire). The rishi prays to Surya to show him the Truth which pervades the Whole nature while his prayer to Agni is to lead him through out his ceaseless journey for the Truth.

In a nut shell, the entire essence of Isavasya Upanishad is that the truth lies in this universe, unnoticed. In order to achieve the knowledge about the Self, one has to understand the nature, has to dissolve in it. This is the best way to reach Self-reliance. To our surprise, Isavasya Upanishad is that one which declares the main essence of Ecomysticism, more than that of any modern eco-based theories. A better understanding of this ancient wisdom may provide better solutions for the prevalent ecological problems which are completely anthropogenic.

Conclusion

The ten major Upanishads, otherwise known as *Dasopanishads* are a deep reservoir of knowledge, which always attempt to make an inseparable relation with nature. This angle of 'Spiritual Ecological Literariness' and the elements of this concept are very evident in several Upanishadic Scriptures. A dip into these deep waters will be a different experience for the readers of the Post Millennial era.

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**A Sense of Senselessness in Crafting Senses :
A Scrutiny of Ethical Standards from the Perspective of
Humanoid Robots in the light of
Spielberg's “Artificial Intelligence” and Shankar's “Robot”.**

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Abstract : It seems fascinating to know about a human being who is immortal, forever young with no aphrodisiacal powers but works with a complex network of wires and chips. The crack of dawn of the new millennium has resurrected countless potentials of Homo-sapiens including meticulous innovations, flawless skills and sky-scraping technological advances. The humanoid robots which were only at a stone's throw in the past millennium fluttered its wings in many new-fangled ways in this new eon. The creation of a robot with human sentiments can be measured as the most beyond-belief accomplishment of mankind. Though this kind of a robot has not been kicked off till this moment, the situation which may be placed in the near future has been dealt with in many science fiction works and movies. The acceleration of Artificial Intelligence in the realm of cybernetics has pushed apart many mind-boggling concepts and raised the query of ethics and credibility in the most controversial manner. Both “Artificial Intelligence” and “Robot” portray a sordid saga of an artificial human being left alone in wilderness, alienated from the entire world in a miasma of disillusionment. The creation of an artificial being in fiction and theatre dates back to Mary Shelley's “Frankenstein” though the dream of a creative power struck to be a truth only recently. A human being – sleep-less, food-less, family-less ,blood-less and even death-less can be threatening and dodgy to the world. But on the other hand, stepping to the heart of these robots, we realize that they had been embedded in the same world as we dwell in, with the same emotions we endure, but with an awful, perfunctory fate attached to them. Both the humanoid robots David in “Artificial Intelligence” and Chitty in “Robot” meet a tragic fate despite the immortality blessed on them. It isn't a single step process to analyze and assert the pros and cons of an artificial human being. While Chitty gets dismantled physically, David is mentally dismantled with a mother-less life. To a great extent they are turned down by others on account of their mechanical strategy. The cadences and nuances of the robotic emotions are forever overlooked by humankind as we perceive them only as technological devices. The paper focuses on the three levels of

trials and tribulations of humanoid robots such as biological, psychological and technological. In spite of the robotic works meted out by these robots, we habitually fall short to distinguish the camouflaged tears and fears scuttling through the core of these humanoid robots.

“His love is real. But he is Not” dished up to be the poster caption of Spielberg's smash hit movie “Artificial Intelligence” released in the year 2001. Human beings have indefensibly been declared as the tremendous authority of this planet scoffing at all other creatures around him. The manufacturing of an 'artificial intellect' materialized during the nineties when computers started performing inexorably by crushing man's discernible rationality. The year 1997 witnessed the defeat of the great Chess master Garry Kasparov when the computers did triumph over man's foreseeable brain. Computers and technological expertise set open a marvelous space by overriding man with its analytical, ingenious and imaginative mode. Technological skill has pressed forward to such an extent that they hung back in all dominion except as competitors in our biological food-chain. Technology has perverted human intelligence to such a length that the handling of the term Artificial Intelligence has turned out to be too widespread currently. The trance of crafting an artificial brain, scattered with human sentiments, is not quite a thorny deed which is under construction in our contemporary world. Thomas Jefferson once said “I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past” (Jefferson, 1816.). What the directors had rendered through these films is only a peep into the dreams of the future prospect of this world where we subsist today.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the intelligence exhibited by machines or software, and the branch of computer science that develops machines and software with intelligence. John McCarthy, the American scientist coined the term “Artificial Intelligence” in the year 1955. Since then, there are frenzied deliberations and hullabaloo going on in the name of re-creation of human life. Though Artificial Intelligence has been a topic of remarkable buoyancy, it has also suffered stunning slow-down. Emotions and social skills are two vital roles for an intelligent agent. In the opening phase, it must be capable of perceiving the actions of others by understanding their motives and intentions. This again involves game theory, decision theory, and the emotional dynamics of human interactions. Kismet was the first of its kind with rudimentary social skills, created in the late 1990's at Massachussets Institute of Technology by Dr. Cynthia. Science has already gifted us with Robots like Topio, playing Ping Pong, Nao, a robot for companionship and Enon created as a Personal assistant with limited speech recognition and synthesis. Thus the road to a Humanoid Robot with human emotions is not too far and the coercion and logic at the rear of creating such robots are dealt with clearly in both these movies. Much of the analysis done in the field of AI focuses on the threats and dangers posed towards humanity through an artificial intellect. But the question of “What happens to the Robotic mind with emotions?” is remaining obscure and oblivious. Both the movies mentioned above intensely portray the tweaking of the

minds of these created robots and what crops up to them eventually in a world of human self-centeredness and constructed double standards.

David, the male protagonist of the movie “Artificial Intelligence” is an eleven year old humanoid robot belonging to the new class of Robots called “Mecha” (Mechanical) created by the Cybertronics of New Jersey as a prototype model. An eleven year old child robot was intended for childless couples and at the outset itself, the first model is tested with one of the Cybertronics employees named Henry Swinton and his wife Monica. Although artificial, Swinton stumbles on a relief in David since his biological son Martin is under suspended animation until a cure can be found for his rare disease. Swinton believes David can pacify the distressing spirit of his wife Monica but the terrified Monica takes an elongated interval to get set with David – the Mecha boy. In due course, she imprints the protocol with a set password which triggers the robo-boy David to love his mother perpetually. David, unacquainted of his artificial existence becomes a part of the Swinton-world until Martin, their original son comes back. The sibling rivalry which ensues between David and Martin sets forth in returning David to Cybertronics for dismantling. Monica, who is powerless to think of David being dismantled throws him and leaves him in a forest and the rest of the story tables around David's wish to recapture his mother, Monica. In the case of the movie “Robot”, Chitty- a humanoid robot is created by a scientist named Vaseegaran. Chitty locates that it is intricate and complex even with his high bound wisdom to stay alive in a world filled with treachery and hypocrisy. He fails to realize the implications of certain abstract concepts like respect, sacrifice, love, hatred etc which generates a number of troubles around himself and his creator. This promotes the scientist to think of a humanoid robot blended with human emotions. Hence a new Chitty with human sentiments and emotions is fashioned which unfortunately falls in love with Sana, the creator's (Vaseegaran's) lover. The later events thrash out the disparaging deeds of Chitty when a red caustic chip is being installed in him by a rival of his creator. Ultimately, the story ends with Chitty surrendering before Vaseegaran and asking for forgiveness as the Court issues the order to dismantle Chitty forever.

Accordingly both David and Chitty are fictitious examples for a futuristic era where we can position these humanoid robots moving hand in hand with human beings. The struggles undergone by them biologically, psychologically and technically are yet to be discussed in detail. Whenever a robot is created with human emotions, the emotions of the robot remain unobserved or unexplored. Both the movies are showcased from the perspective of David and Chitty and the feelings they undergo in a far-fetched world of ruin and riot.

Both David and Chitty suffer biologically since they are not born, but created. Both lack their parental figures and their whole life is an endeavor to plug this crack. While David strives to bridge it with the presence of Monica, whom he believes to be his mother, Chitty tries to associate it with his Creator Vaseegaran and later with his love towards Sana. They are at variance biologically with other human beings since

they are made of wires and chips rather than flesh and blood. At certain occasions Martin mocks David by calling him “Mecha” (mechanical) and terming himself to be Orga. (Organic). The difference of this Mecha and Orga runs all the way through the movie. Both David and Chitty turns out to be outcasts in all realms of human life when they remain food-less, sleep-less and death-less. An attempt made by David to be like Martin – the organic boy, by having a bowl of dinner with him, lands him to utter turmoil where his entire chips get trampled with garlic and oil. Thus, once more the difference flanked by mechanical and organic seems to be analogous. In the case of Chitty, Sana questions him indirectly of his sexual powers and his incapability to become a father. Both David and Chitty are seen with surprise by the populace around them because of their extra ordinary brilliance and their absolute semblance to human beings. But in a convoluted comportment, the outward manifestation of being a human and the internal incapability to be a genuine human is the first and foremost challenge faced by these humanoid robots.

From time immemorial, Human race has been proud of one distinct aspect – that all of us are unique - only one of its kind. But the humanoid robots have no such dreams to share with, since scores of the same models can be created and recreated if required. The rapid shock comes to David when he finds innumerable Davids before him set apart for trade. He realizes the verity that he is no more unique which is yet another psychological blow. Chitty too is not different though he himself channelizes the core of destroying his uniqueness. Thousands of Chittys are launched in the second half. Thus the loss of identity and uniqueness is again another defeat they face in the voyage of their life. While David longs for his mother, Monica, Chitty wishes to be with Sana, whom he intends to marry. Thus the mission of the journeys of both David and Chitty is to locate their love and relationship, which crumbles them down sequentially. Both of them face a foe in their relationships – the biological son Martin in the case of David and Vaseegaran the real lover of Sana in Chitty's case. They furthermore lack the amazing experience of the primary phases of infancy and childhood and they remain stagnant at one specified age – the age in which they have been created. As a result they cannot stir back or forth in their age and are in a way trapped within an age bar according to the whims and fancies of their creator. In due course they are ruined psychologically and they hold this awareness with ruthless pain and disenchantment.

In an E-world where electronic commodities last for not more than one or two years and in a globe where new innovations make rooms for the previous ones to be obsolete each second, a technologically well equipped Mecha – a humanoid Robot can within no time turn out to be an outdated one – ranging to the new developments. The Flesh Fair, depicted in Spielberg's movie is a vivid testimony of bidding adieu to old electronic devices. All the outmoded robots are identified with a unique code and are cracked in the most ferocious manner in the Flesh Fair. The Flesh Fair again counts to be a part of entertainment to the human world where they take pleasure in the annihilation of the earlier robot models through hot water dunk, shooting and

immolation. Thus the robots with human emotions are not cosseted or ensured safety even by the technology which has once crafted them. Ultimately they become puppets or a source of pleasure-world for the human race. They become outdated technically and are abandoned at every stance in regular human life.

Hence, these humanoid robots evince a traumatic experience in three dimensional ways where they are over-powered and channelized once again by the human environment. Thus the query still remains bizarre whether to craft this kind of humanoids in gratifying the purpose of human beings. Humanity has ever been cruel and anti-sentimental towards his treatment of nature. The very same crux of an unsentimental attitude is displayed even through the design of these artificial humanoids. “Part of the inhumanity of the computer is that, once it is competently programmed, it is completely honest”, says Isaac Asimov (Asimov, 1960). The creation of an artificial human being with a sheer self-seeking idea is pretty unethical when seen all the way through the perspective of a robot. Imagining an individual with high scale knowledge, skilful, dexterous and calculating is highly feasible. But on the other hand, the same individual is created with no family background, no ancestry and no roots of his/her own. A humanoid robot is an artificial being, almost an orphan, incapable of many human powers – eating, drinking, sleeping or reproduction – who can love anyone with his full heart but is never, loved back for his artificial origin and who is going to outlive his loved ones into the amorphous future. We find David returning to his life after his long prayer to the Blue Fairy and the moment he is back to earth, he recognizes that two thousand years have passed and his entire loved ones had been vanished from this globe. Moreover, the error fixation in a robot requires the aid of the scientist who created it with the specific configuration and passwords. Accordingly, the fate of a Humanoid Robot so as to fix an error without its creator is not again viable. However, scientist Allen Hobby's claim that David can be a bestselling robot for childless couples and Vaseegaran's wish to hand over Chitty to be a part of the Military group fail to recognize the threats faced by the humanoids individually. Even at the moment of stating the threats posed by the humanoid robots against human race, we quite skillfully and deliberately forget the pains and gloom behind a crafted soul just as we once forgot the mind of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.

More than fitting into the key concept of being unethical, it is far more brutal in placing a technological gadget with a string of emotions attached to it where no other humans feel responsible to reciprocate the feelings towards this mechanical device. The new being – the humanoid robot is created only to bear soreness and to be left alone and alienated from a human world where he/she is categorized as an extraterrestrial figure by everyone including his creators. Thus, in a world of inhuman humans plundering the earth around him, the need of an artificial human designed only to serve the mankind, with no heart of its own, rings to be a pure reckless and impulsive idea. The above said movies are in fact, an authentic eye-opener to comprehend the consequences that will be faced by those humanoid robots

if created with human sentiments. Hence, beyond a shadow of doubt there is a sense of meaninglessness and ludicrousness in creating senses when humans consciously consign to background the inner fusion of passions in the created androids.

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**Eco Dystopias/Apocalypses; Environmental Concerns in
Futuristic Genre of New Millennium - A Study of Cormack McCarthy's
'The Road' And Disney, Pixar's 'Wall-E.'**

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From time immemorial, man was fascinated by the possible images of future. Desire to know future has taken various forms. Clairvoyants lent their versions to us through soothsaying; prophets gave us visions and so on. But these images of future were not so pleasant always. Many of our literary geniuses has attempted their hand in futuristic writing and many a times it made us remember that we have had enough nightmares regarding the time to come, quite unlike stories which dealt with 'far away and long ago', which had 'once upon a time' phrase as a beginning- the past always brought forth images of that ideal pastoral life and nostalgia. We had our share of utopia but times have given more space and heat to hatch the eggs of dystopian/apocalyptic visions of the future. Our concerns of each age gave birth to more and more complicated versions of future. During the war times it was the fear of totalitarian government while the cold looks exchanged between US and USSR were enough for the world to think of a nuclear war fare. But times have changed further. And with the growing awareness on environmental concerns, creative/prophetic heads are turned to create eco-dystopian visions of future.

Ecocriticism emerged as a discourse which pays attention to the rhetoric of development, pollution and ecocide. Though as a concept, it arose in the late 1970s with the contributions of Western Literature Association, it laid dormant until a certain graduate student from Cornell University named Cheryl Glotfelty rejuvenated the term to hug those various diffuse critical discourses previously known as 'the study of nature writing.' The US version took it's bearings from the nineteenth century transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller and Henry David Thoreau With their often celebratory musings about 'the return to nature' while the British side with a nomenclature of Green Studies drew it's inspiration from the British romanticism of 1790 and also claim that many of their concerns are well documented in Raymond William's '*The Country and the City*' in 1973 itself. But the fundamental point they both would like to point out is that nature as an entity does exist, unlike those anthropocentric notions which claim that man

who with his vitruvian image sees his own body as the basis of all proportions in nature and by extension nurtures the belief that everything external is actually socially and linguistically constructed by man, for man. Of course, attitude towards nature may vary and may be culturally determined, but it would be naive to call into question it's reality, simply because the cultural bottles determine the variant shapes the 'the liquid of concerns' assumes. We may rightly blend our social concerns with ecological degradations and it should be done. But they shouldn't cloud our priorities towards nature. Otherwise it would be as Peter Barry half jokingly said, "It may seem like working flat out to secure improved working conditions for the crew as the Titanic speeds towards the iceberg" (Barry 248).

Environmental issues bothering the writers is not a new issue as such. With the advent of industrialisation itself, many authors have voiced such concerns, but with ecocriticism we are given with a systematic- still in infancy though- frame work and theory to read the texts and be alert on the ecoconcern ridden dimension of the texts, which always hovered about the text, but without receiving full attention before. The thinkers of our age have put a new outlook to our theory with new priorities, and it would not be at fault to assume that the same concerns might have encouraged our writers to write more 'eco-consciously', in our era.

Dystopian/post apocalyptic literature is not new to our literary cannon. Elementary Greek will let you know that dystopia (Dys+topia) means a bad place to live literally. It represents a very unpleasant imaginary world in which ominous tendencies of our present social, political and technological order are projected into a future culmination; and when the present system breaks down, possibly due to a potentially existential catastrophe, the resulting chaos may lend to the imagination of an author a post apocalyptic vision. Keith M Booker says,

Imaginative literature is one of the means by which any culture can investigate new ways of defining itself and of exploring alternatives to the social and political status quo...by providing critiques of society on imaginatively distant settings, dystopian fictions provide fresh perspectives on problematic social and political practices that might otherwise be taken for granted or considered natural and inevitable.

(Dystopian

Literature 3)

Actually, many supposed Utopias project a dystopian character by suppressing justice, freedom, and happiness. In Samuel Butler's *'Erewhon'*(1872) sick are treated as criminals while thieves are cured in hospitals, which the inhabitants of Erewhon view right i.e. Utopian. Aldous Huxley's *'Brave New World'*(1932) is about a fascist hierarchy of society, George Orwell's *'Nineteen Eighty Four'*(1949) is about a coercive totalitarian world, and Margaret Atwood's *'The Handmaid's Tale'*(1985) describes a future when North America would be ruled by strict religious rules. But we are here interested in the ecological concerns of those ecologically sensitive authors who may voice the bleak images of ecocrisis ridden future. Writers like Harry Harrison- author of *'Make Room! Make Room!'*(1966) - made into movie *'Soylent Green'*- can be called as a pioneer of 'eco-dystopias', but with the new millennium, lit with growing concerns of nuke wars, climate changes etc. these kind of writing have become more common. An analysis of post millennium scenario will show that the creation of hosts of environmental problems has found it's recognition among creative, both in literature and the visual medium- films. While Cormac McCarthy's *'The Road'* (2006) stands as testimony for literature Disney/Pixar's *WALL-E* (2008) poses as a visual alert.

WALL-E starts with one of the love songs by 'Hello Dolly'- “put on your Sunday clothes” and it highlights the outer space, but as we come closer to earth, we are greeted with towers built with trash, once we get out the outer sphere of space garbage. In these ruins, we come to see WALL-E (short for Waste Allocation Load Lifter- Earth-Class) a robotic trash collector and compactor obeying his directives. Accompanied only by his pet cockroach, he works among the remains of a vanished culture. He is alone, as there is no trace of humans, and there are many evidences to believe that he is lone survivor of his own species. The people are gone to a long cruise-ship vacation so to say, as they have to come to know that the earth is so toxic. Evidently, the world has turned hostile. WALL-E and his pet stay in a private museum turned home to save themselves from dust storms. He is alone and his concerns somehow show how vast, yet empty can world be devoid of nature.

On one of his usual outing however WALL-E discovers something different in a rusty refrigerator, a growing plant and this proves to be a turning point. Later, when the Extra Terrestrial Vegetation Extractor or EVE comes, romance blooms for WALL-E. But when she discovers the plant, nature take precedence over romance. If it was the cultural remains of the lost world which inspired WALL-E, in EVE's case, it is the plant. When he follows Eve to Axiom, the cruise ship on display in the ads, we

come to know how strange man's life can get without the support of mother. Images of obese human figures flowing and staring into video screens are produced. It seems like a vast air-conditioned mall. Everyone is expected to be content and happy, but without the warmth of human relations, it actually becomes a nightmare. Humans have become such isolated consumers that it needs a robotic voice to tell them “blue is the new red” (*WALL-E*, 2008). Here, another robot, WALL-E, enters the scene and established order is disturbed when he turns off one lady's video feed. WALL-E acts as a catalyst in changing her stock behaviour and when she and a man are forced to initiate a conversation once their video feed is broken. Again it's WALL-E who leaves dirt in the captain's hand which ignites the captain's urge to go home even against the plan of autopilot, the captain's robotic co-pilot who works to make it sure any contrary proof to the belief that humans can return to earth must be destroyed in order to keep Axiom in its present stage. It needed a trash collector robot to empower an apathetic lazy and lethargic human race on a long, luxurious 'cruise ship' vacation. The captain struggles to switch the axiom to manual power, and when he succeeds, a course is set for earth and operation recolonise begins. WALL-E is nearly crushed, but humans now care about one another and desire to go home. The captain, with a crowd of children around him, places the plant in soil, the first act of regeneration and when the film continues to its credits, with images of vegetation it seems to highlight the positive consequences of interdependent relations between human and nonhuman nature. Thus the return to earth marks the evolutionary journey in *WALL-E*.

Here we are relieved from a horrific dystopian/mechanic perspective of a world with the help of a robot, quite ironically of course, who transforms the hell of an earth into a home. It is a 'happily ever after' ending, which reinforces the heterosexual, conservative romantic ideology found in classic Disney features. But what engages us most is the underlying critique of over consumption and capitalist economy perpetuating the human's cruise above the planet. It never indulges with 'eco-vocabulary' of 'global warming', 'bio-diversity' or even 'green.' But with its disturbing image of a ecologically unpleasant possible future of the sterile world of axiom, it presents the most powerful environmental statement made by either Disney or Pixar studios, which is evident in the captain's words, as he waters the plant- You “just needed someone to look after you, that's all, we have to go back!” (*WALL-E*, 2008). Now we know that earth too needs someone to look after it.

Cormac McCarthy in his *The Road* unravels the journeys of a father and son

in a post apocalyptic world. Apocalypticism has been described as a genre born out of crisis. It can trace its origins to far past- to 'Book of Revelation', and post apocalypticism deals with a world or civilization after such a disaster. And it is fairly easy to trace McCarthy's message of consequential apocalypse to its roots in the current environmental and economic practices of the world. In the work, there's a small surviving group of human beings- in this post apocalyptic world, there are practically no animals left- who are unlucky enough to have survived an catastrophic event (hints suggest that it might be a nuclear incident). We have a father son duo in the centre and a bunch of cannibals- cultists- on the other hand. Bands of these cannibals do their rounds, in competition with each other for food and material resources. The man and boy, in contrast, do not overtly compete for anything until the resources they have are finished or stolen from them. They have learnt how to carve out on existence, however limited or harsh, on what little food the earth willingly provides for them. McCarthy here seems to argue against the need for expansive material resources in a post apocalyptic world perhaps drawing a parallel with those who are obsessed with luxury in our pre-apocalyptic world. Cannibals possess greater quantities of material goods than do the man and boy and other fire carriers like them- The first band the pair encounters has a diesel fuelled truck with gallons of fuel in it. We can make an assumption here; that the people who would be in possession of the most valuable resources in their resource poor climate – vehicles, ammunitions, diesel fuel- are likely willing to go to unthinkable lengths to procure and process these resources. The contrasts between these people are appalling. The cannibals know how to kill. The young boy, whereas on the other hand knows how to die.

Here, before the backdrop of an annihilated landscape devoid of any familiar natural resources, McCarthy presents to the reader a comparison of two societies, each of which has a choice in how to utilise whatever resources. The father-son pair seems to be more conscious regarding their use of resources than the cannibals. They need little and they have little. When a wheel on their shopping cart breaks, the man is able to repair it fairly easily whereas the cannibal's truck breaks down, repairing could be really problematic. In this way, the cannibals' reliance upon technology and their greed for more veritably enslaves them here. We can here draw a parallel with the obese video driven figures of *WALL-E*. Superfluity and increased used for resources combined with their unsustainable population numbers destroys the already depleted environment. “Old and troubling issues are resolved into

nothingness and night” (McCarthy, 28) in this world, but it seems that people are so used to exploitation that they won't shy away from filtering the very life blood of mother earth. It is not impossible to read McCarthy's cannibals as a representation of the most difficult foes environmentalists face today in fighting against our planet's environmental issues; those governing systems, those tycoons who rely on the harvesting of limited resources for ever expanding profit. But there is always hope. The son begs his father to adopt a young boy pass on the road. He even offers to sacrifice half of his own scarce food. The man refuses. But McCarthy's message is clear - The fire does not have to wane with each subsequent generation, but can indeed grow stronger. But this hope should be qualified by the realization of the gigantic task which lies before the fire carriers; the task of overcoming the brutality of hegemonic, capitalistic systems of the world that rely upon the exploitation of the environment.

Much of the past, in terms of today's environmental issues is substantially lost because of irrevocable global warming, loss of biodiversity pollution and increase in population. Each year people will not remember the same past as previous generations and each generation will expect their tomorrows to be different from their predecessors. Evidently Disney/Pixar and Cormac McCarthy have identified a possible future with a resource-depleted earth. A bleak image of future indeed, but not without hope. The father/son duo and the WALL-E are flexible and adaptable creatures capable of surviving despite the inhospitable nature of environments. They have learned to live in dire circumstances. And they are as a foil for those cultists and capitalists who are slaves of their own selfish ends. These humans and androids as we see them in these dystopias stand as Davids against many greedy Goliaths. They are a ray of hope. But to thrive on hope doesn't mean escape from responsibilities. These authors have given us warnings, and their protagonists have shown us how to be in terms with nature. Be inspired by them, but don't wait for that ghost of future to come near. Let their caring for 'mother nature', pristine and preserved, lead us in these troubled times.

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Gender and Censorship

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Feminist interventions in our national and regional public spheres have made gender awareness an integral part of our creative and critical discourses, be they in the domains of art, literature, cinema, politics, business, household or in every other tiny moment of our everyday lives. Women's movements and gender theories, have tried to foreground and interrogate our gendered assumptions through protest movements and through institutional reforms. But these achievements have not been without their moments of deep self-doubt, despair, defeat and contradictions. This paper is an attempt to underscore these moments of self-doubt as the most vital moments in the maturation of a movement and to explore how the concealment of these moments actually lead to a rigidity and dogma that kills the momentum and energy within feminist theory and praxis.

In spite of gender awareness and gender studies becoming a crucial part of academic and artistic practices in the form of academic programmes, seminars, workshops, training methods etc. we are also living in times that demand incessant vigil from women's groups as far as the rising violence and threats to our dignity and very life are concerned. Even as the neoliberal economic policies are bringing out women across class and caste to occupy the public domain through work, however underpaid it is, India is witness to a staggering rise in violence against women in the form of rapes, acid attacks, threats and domestic violence. Along with the rise in violence we also witness an unprecedentedly passionate display of public outrage in the form of large protest rallies and mass assemblies, candle light vigils and parliament marches in the capital and many other parts of the country. Apart from the activists, theorists and thinkers we see the significant presence of non-specialists like homemakers, working women, children and men in large numbers thronging to support these movements. Television channels and social networks are abuzz with condemnations of attacks against women; but a striking difference to be noted in the nature of this media is that while the television and the print media carry more of a mainstream interpretation of these incidents of violence, social networks like the facebook and Twitter carry out more of a critique of these movements for justice. When there is a selective acceptance of a particular feminist position in the mainstream discourse and a subtle erasure of many others it becomes imperative to reflect deeply on questions related to gender and censorship.

Freedom of speech and expression, we understand, is a hallowed principle of all societies which extol the virtues of democratic values and are sworn to preserve a

democratic culture at all costs. A cursory survey of our political history alerts us to the fact that the history of censorship has always shadowed freedom of expression and the one is as old as the other. Censorship has manifested in different forms down the ages---in the form of state, in the shape of religious heads, in the form of teachers, parents, critics, thinkers, syllabus etc. As early as in the fifth century BC, Plato was emphatic about not tolerating any form of freedom of expression that would be detrimental to the formation of a morally healthy citizenry always ready to serve the State. It may seem ironical that in the eyes of Bertrand Russell, Plato's republic bore more of a resemblance to a modern totalitarian state.

The authorities have always maintained that a censorship they enforce through bans, prohibitions, controls, persecutions, tortures, book burning, interception of private correspondence, witch hunts and burning individuals at the stakes are aimed to protect public good. Very often boundaries between control and protection are seen to blur. Independent and critical thinking has been vital to the growth of a democratic political culture and people's movements. But the intriguing question here is how is it that the very same movements and ideas that were vociferous against prohibitions, controls and negations of freedom acquire the same propensity towards intolerance once they lose their oppositional force and become part of the system they try to change. We realize that feminism too as a movement and practice has not been able to escape this tendency, as is illustrated by the censorship debates within feminist discourses.

The linkages between feminism and censorship are fraught with conflicts and contradictions which are complex and crucial at the same time. Women's movements have made their victorious strides by defying innumerable barriers and by breaking age-old taboos. Subtle differences are bound to exist among the taboos and prohibitions being practised by disparate cultures world over. These taboos have been varied in their gravity and implication---women have been prohibited from going out, from acquiring education, from writing, from public speaking, from beautifying themselves, from dressing in men's clothes etc. Women in different times and different climes made this slogan of freedom of speech their own by challenging these restrictions and constraints imposed on them. They have transgressed to win new territories of freedom, they have trespassed to explore their own possibilities. And when the very same gender sensitive forces try to bridle voices of dissent and critical spirit they raise issues of ethical dilemma.

Feminist consciousness has expressed itself chiefly through two dominant trends---if one shows the spirit of critique, the other moves towards a constructive approach. If the former tries to systematically question an androcentric social apparatus and attitude, the latter tries to imagine a world which is inclusive and accommodative of differences, which assures women a dignified existence. It also works hard to translate this dream into reality through concrete policy formulations, legal interventions and political participation. But it is to be regretted that the critical spirit sometimes is driven to certain disturbing degrees of intolerance that whatever is

deemed insulting to women or sexist in content, intent or form are condemned to be banned, disfigured, mutilated or destroyed. This tendency has resulted in very creative debates and discussions within feminist groups themselves. Of course, this can be looked upon as a very creative crisis so long as there is space for a critical engagement and channels of communication are not blocked. Discontent and differences can actually enrich a movement by complicating the generally accepted picture of things. But how desirable is a feminist spirit that demands a banning or an erasure of any text or material in the name of sexism, misogyny or chauvinism while feminism has itself grown by overthrowing the bans imposed on it? Doesn't such a tendency undercut the basic democratic principles which have actually nurtured and nourished the growth of a movement for gender justice?

A section within feminism has become an advocate of censorship in order to ensure gender justice. Censorship becomes acceptable within feminism as a tool to put an end to the violation of women's rights and sexual atrocities on them. This is based on the unexamined premise that there exists a one to one relationship between the representations of women as sexual objects in books and popular media and the violence inflicted on them. On the other side there are feminists who feel strongly that such censorship will also be instrumental in suppressing the women's right to express their physicality, desire and pleasure in free and unprecedented ways. Lines also blur between obscenity and eroticism here. One has to be aware of the tremendous potential in the uninhibited expression of female sexuality to raze many a bastion of conservative mindset to the ground.

In the Anglo-American context of feminism the issues of censorship have been heatedly discussed on the subject of pornography. A major feminist argument was that pornography sexualized male domination and aestheticized violence on women. It prioritized male pleasure and legitimized sadistic sexual behaviour as pleasurable to women and also found pleasure in paedophilia. The solution to this 'perverted' sensibility, according to them lies in the banning of such books and other cultural texts. But the question that arises at this juncture is whether by banning a thought we can eliminate it. The collective called 'Feminists against Censorship' that was formed as a counter to this position was emphatic that censorship is not the answer to sexual violence or other atrocities on women. Although it was imperative to interrogate into the cultural and psychological factors that gave rise to such depictions and images they pointed out very clearly in their official statement that "Banning bad speech does not mean it does not exist or it will not exist". It continues to flow through the subterranean layers of our social consciousness.

It is desirable to recall how many gifted writers we would have lost if the censorship laws went undisputed. Ismat Chughtai who wielded a bold pen against many a sexual orthodoxy in society was harassed severely by the colonial laws of censorship which the British government strove to impose in the first half of the twentieth century. Those writings unravelled many a repressed world. Today we realize that our sensibilities and experiences would have been far poorer if not for

those imaginary worlds. Scholars and activists like Shohini Ghosh have raised certain vital questions regarding the ways in which we raise questions about obscenity. How do we define obscenity? Does it express itself through the body? Or in the depictions of sexuality? Or does it lie in a particular form of representation? Is it the content, the attitude of the author or the perception and prejudices of the readers/viewers which make something obscene? Doesn't one's perception of female nudity as obscene indicate a distorted understanding of female body and nudity? When one group of feminists accuse the portrayal of female body as debasement of woman, are they also reinstating the orthodox position that a woman's body is sinful and defiling?

We have also seen in the recent past how feminism has been used as a hand maiden to religious fundamentalism. In the protests against beauty contests as sites of commodification of female bodies, we saw an unholy alliance being forged between the Hindu right and the feminist groups. There are also instances of such appropriation of feminist critique by the orthodox religious elements in other religious communities as well. Eminent thinkers like Madhu Kishwar, Ruth Vanitha and Flavia Agnes point towards a similar contradiction within the feminist movement in formulating and endorsing something like The Indecent Representation of Women Act in 1986. It has become quite common to see our National and State Women's Commissions calling for a ban on certain serials, or scissoring certain 'morally offensive' parts in films, paintings etc. Since obscenity can be defined according to their respective political positions, it is liable to be used in the grossest abuse of human rights. According to Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanitha it makes it convenient for any gazetted officer to harass a citizen without any rhyme or reason. Apart from the censorship imposed through an external agency there is the heavy weight of self-censorship that many women writers have often testified to. Through the 'good girl' image driven into us from a very tender age through schools, teachers, parents and peer groups society stifles the creative energy in a woman by waving at her the wand of evil reputation that can destroy her life.

In conclusion i would like to indicate certain disturbing trends in our collective demands for gender justice in the form of public display of rage, grief and indignation. Ironically a movement that began as a sensitive critique of violence is itself passionately violent, baying for the blood of the suspects in the name of gender justice. As politically conscious citizens of a democratic nation, women need to introspect and interrogate this process of being co-opted into a narrative of revenge and violence. In this one dimensional definition of justice other voices of dissent get isolated and persecuted and this results in an erasure of pluralities and differences. If dialogue is not possible between different views in order to ensure the safety of women and if it results in further censorship, surveillance and regimentation, nothing could be more tragic in the destiny of women's emancipator journeys.



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