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## **Editor's Note**

Beauty, as a conception and manifestation, is embedded in the planet of the existence of man. Not only does it signify the essentials of culture, but also it derails the elite aesthetic doctrines of the times by redefining the rules of the game of seeing and living. The epic proportions of beauty, its shambolic accounts, the perennial aesthetic philosophies, relentless battles on splendour, the voyeurisms, competitive politics behind the making and the matter of the beautiful, the handsomely growing beauty industry and the beauty in association with space and power offer food for interpretation and interrogation. The Singularities International Conference is anchoring on the theme of Beauty, to set the momentum that deconstructs the truth around beauty, in favour of truths that beauty entails. This is an extension of the academic culture that the journal set to make the scholars intellectually engaged, not simply through publishing papers, but by means of the dialogues and interactions the Singularities Conferences initiate. We put the current SICON BEAUTY Conference issue as tribute of love to Dr. V.C. Harris, the advisory board member of Singularities, the academic, critic and theatre personality who passed away on 9 October 2017. By presenting Singularities Beauty Conference Issue, we offer a reading platform that will be instrumental in deconstructing the body of standards, in favour of inclusiveness and pluralities.

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



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## An Evaluation of English-to-Yoruba Translations of Some Concepts by Selected Radio News Bulletins in South-Western Nigeria

### Abstract

*This study examines translations of selected official names/titles contained in news broadcasts in the Yoruba-speaking part of Nigeria, interrogating their adequacy and appropriateness. Sixty-five concepts/titles extracted from one hundred news bulletins presented by five radio stations across the Yoruba-speaking states of Nigeria are examined. The study is prompted by an intuitive feeling of inaccuracy and inappropriateness of important words in news broadcasts in Yoruba and predicated upon the fact that misinformation can be as pernicious as lack of information. The renderings of the concepts in Yoruba are compared with their original versions in English, revealing translation weaknesses such as semantic narrowing, expansion, wordiness, sometimes even unwitting distortions. It concludes by emphasising the adoption of appropriate translation strategies and a more rigorous engagement with the texts as a way of guarding against unintended distortions and misinformation.*

**Keywords:** Yoruba, English, translation, news broadcasts, accuracy, distortion,

### Introduction

One crucial challenge encountered by translators involves accurate transfer of worldviews and socio-political ideologies to the receptor language, a challenge arising because no two languages operate or express issues in the same way and especially because language is culture-specific. The task of translation requires not only a bilingual ability on the part of the translator but also a bi-cultural vision. Translators and interpreters, therefore, are mediators, mediating between cultures (including ideologies, moral systems and socio-political structures), seeking to overcome those incompatibilities which stand in the way of transfer of meaning. What has value as a sign in one cultural community may be devoid of significance in another and it is the translator who is uniquely placed to identify the disparity and may seek to resolve it.

Not being a neutral exercise, translation occurs invariably in a context, just as texts emerge in historical contexts. Translations are processed as situation-in-culture exercises. Gentzler (2001: 134) says:

*Subjects of a given culture communicate in translated messages primarily determined by local culture constraints. Inescapable infidelity is presumed as a condition of the process; translators do not work in ideal and abstract situations or desire to be innocent, but have vested literary and cultural*

*interests of their own, and want their work to be accepted within another culture. Thus they manipulate the source text to inform as well as conform to existing cultural constraints.*

A rewarding approach to translation is adescriptive, target-oriented, functional and systemic one that takes more than a passing interest in the norms and constraints that govern the production and reception of translation. In consonance with this, Lefevere and Bassnett (1990: 89) observe that the study of translation practices has transcended a formalist approach and become involved in the more encompassing issues of context, history and convention. Contextualisation of translation involves culture, politics and power. The concern of translation with the broad matters of socio-political structures and the worldview embedded in the target language provides a useful background to this study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Yoruba speakers of English may feel intuitively that certain concepts are not adequately or accurately translated in Yoruba news bulletins. It becomes important to critically examine some translated concepts employed in Yoruba bulletins as a way of interrogating the adequacy and accuracy of the translations. The translation choices adopted by journalists in the Yoruba-speaking part of Nigeria have given birth to such curious interpretations and translations as 'ileasofinagba' (the senior/superior law-making chamber, ie the Senate) and 'ileasofinkekere' (the junior law-making chamber, ie the House of Representatives). There is also evidence of insufficient lexical and semantic discrimination and differentiation in the translations of different military ranks such as 'Colonel', 'General', 'Admiral', and 'Sergeant' as they are all translated as 'Ogagun' (the military boss). This is also the case with the translation of different cadres of Christian religious ranks such as 'Chaplain' and 'Pastor' which are indiscriminately translated as 'OjiseOlorun' (the-person-who-delivers-God's message). These illustrations call to question the adequacy and effectiveness of such translations. There is the need, from the foregoing, to study standard practices and translation strategies that characterise press translations among news-writers in South-Western Nigeria.

### **Language and Culture**

Studies have shown that language and culture are intricately woven together such that any attempt to separate them along parallel lines will only be an exercise in futility. Culture is the totality of the socially acquired knowledge about the way of life of a people and this obviously includes their language. This view enjoys the support of Lyons (1968) when he states that:

*The language of a particular society is an integral part of its culture, and the lexical distinctions drawn by each language will tend to reflect the culturally important features of objects, institutions and activities in the society in which the language operates.*

One of the most classical definitions of culture is that of Tylor (1891), as cited by Tschumi (1978:236), which regards culture as:

*...that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.*

To Oyeneye and Shoremi (1985), Tylor's definition of culture distinguishes between the

acquired qualities of man and his instinctive qualities. Culture not only refers to artifacts but also ideas, technical knowledge, habits, values, modes of behaviour and socialization. Andah (1982:4) submits that 'culture embraces all the materials and non-material expressions of a people as well as the process with which the expressions are communicated. Indeed, man is a culture-creating and culture-bearing being'.

Like culture, language has been defined variously by linguistic scholars. Sapir (1963:8) defines language as 'a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. It is clear from this definition that language is an exclusively a human possession. As noted earlier, language cannot be discussed to the exclusion of culture. In Sapir's (1963:207) view, language has a dual relationship with culture; it is part of culture as well as a major vehicle for the expression of culture. Language is therefore central to culture, and as Adetugbo (1992) puts it, 'the centrality of language to culture is recognized everywhere'. Jessel (1978) also cites Fishman (1972) as saying that language is the medium of culture, both intrinsic and extraneous. Hayakawa (1964) posits that man's cultivated ways of behaving and the internal patterns behind them constitute his culture and are made manifest in his language.

As a consequence of the inter-relatedness of language and culture, bilingualism and multilingualism necessarily imply biculturalism and multiculturalism. Acquiring a language means more than understanding the lexis and structure of the language. It has to do with the knowledge of the cultural patterns of life of the speakers of the language. Our culture influences the way we use language to express reality. Culture is the totality of the way we think and behave, which in turn influences our language and the way we use it.

### **Broadcast News-writing and Translation**

The qualities of broadcast news-writing understandably guide. Given the constraints in length and deadline pressure, it is a routine practice in the broadcast newsroom to resort to gist extraction. In analysing the macrostructures and schemata of news discourse, Van Dijk (1998: 20) writes that source texts are usually summarised in the newsroom on a routine basis and television news can be treated as a summarised version of the print news. Bielsa and Bassnett (2009: 52) also highlight condensation as a major requirement in broadcast media editing. In Clausen's (2004: 12) view, the TV / Radio newscast is misrepresenting itself to conclude that it delivers all the day's news. In commercial television stations, lengthy reports have no place and brevity is the rule. This is probably the reason broadcast news-writing is often criticised for pruning down and presenting virtually only the 'bare bones' of the news story, especially when compared to print journalism.

Translators habitually refine their translations as the production progresses. Schank and Abelson (1977:16) note that 'the conscious element that goes into beautifying language is not present in speech'. Gambier and Henrik (2001: 110) also believe that the conversational style in radio and television news bears semblance to that of ordinary spoken dialogue. As the broadcast copy is translated to be spoken, it is imperative that the style be more conversational but not at the expense of accuracy (HajiMohammadi, 2005: 72). Effective broadcast news translators desire to inculcate the habit telling the story effectively, guided by the understanding that the television viewers / radio listeners have no opportunity go back over the copy.

The source texts are sometimes rough notes based on which target texts are produced;

therefore understanding the logic of the original proves to be of paramount importance, for it facilitates editing and rewriting, as well as routine practices in the newsroom. This brings us to the final product of broadcast news translation where the ultimate goal is to write to speak to people, not read to them and this is the bedrock of the claim that 'newspapers communicate with printed words, radio with spoken words and television with spoken words and moving pictures' (Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009: 52).

### **Strategies for Packaging News in another Language/Culture**

Studies have been carried out on how and why articles and concepts on international news are translated and edited as they are. It should be noted that there are several processing stages between spotting an event in a foreign country and the final news product, printed or broadcast for the readers/listeners. These stages, as we know, involve translation and editing (or rather trans-editing), transforming the language and the structure of the original message by using strategies such as re-organisation, deletion, addition, and substitution (Hursti, 2001).

Earlier, the amount of news flow has been controlled and selected in order to keep the stories or story details which are considered news worthy to be passed to the next gate. This gate-keeping process depends on how much first-hand knowledge the editor has about the event to be reported and at what stage of the process he is assigned to the event/story or decides to follow it up. The gate-keeping decisions are also governed by the news journalism organisation, the news agencies (concerning news style and readability) and the requirement of speed (time being a key element in the whole process) (HajMohammadi 2005: 18). It should be noted that news organisations are embedded in a certain cultural environment. In the light of this, an international news agency cannot pack its news copy with too culture-specific allusions or metaphors. News items must be produced in a way to make a text culturally acceptable everywhere and to all. All the information must be accessible to foreign translators/localisers, regardless of their cultural background.

If we consider the strategies used when transforming news agency source texts, we discover re-organisation as a main tool. It is a means to (re)structure the source text: refocusing the information in a given paragraph, moving or permuting some of the details somewhere else in the story. This implies, for instance, permutation of individual lexical items, but also extensive revamping of information at a higher textual level. The re-organisation can be done partly because of differences between languages, rhetoric traditions, and partly to better serve the needs of the news target readership/listeners.

For instance, Akio (1988) speaks of controlling, transforming, supplementing and reorganising messages. What are important, in our opinion, are not so much the number and the label of the strategies but the awareness that international news communication cannot be analysed merely as a matter of isolated news texts. Translation studies have emphasised, in recent decades, the importance of context and contextualisation in the translating process and, in the decisions made by translators.

## **2.3 Strategies for News Items Translation**

### **2.3.1. Framing**

The media provide frames of reference, or highly stereotyped representations of specific situations, to make the event accessible to the public. They shape other kinds of frames – the

ones that the audience, the individuals use when interpreting information about events. The frame systems consist of stereotypical scenarios, routines, and beliefs, and are based on expectations in a given social situation. They enable each of us 'to locate, perceive, identify and label' (Fillmore, 1977, Dubois, 1997, Goffman, 1974, Schank, *et al.* 1977). Media frames or news frames focus on what is discussed and how it is discussed or not. They are embodied in the keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, visual images used in a news narrative (Entman, 1991).

Through the framing of a news discourse, journalists and their editors create a certain context for the listeners and viewers. News frames make certain facts meaningful, provide a context in which to understand issues, shape the inferences made, reinforce stereotypes, determine judgments and decisions, draw attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements. The media frames in turn create reactions in the audience, relating to diagnosis of causes, attribution of responsibility, and so on (Baker, 2006).

In order to go into detail in analysing news item translation, we must remember that press translation is characterised by the imperative of quickness. The issue of speed that troubles any translator and translation in the real world, in the case of press translation, becomes an essential characteristic and not a secondary one. The issue of speed in the exploitation of translation is strongly linked to the issue of comprehension. This is aimed at giving attention to the target public: the listener to radio newscast needs to grasp it quickly, getting a sense of what the news item says straightaway. A news item is not meant to be re-read or pondered over several times, but should offer immediate comprehension. Unfortunately, in the field of translations, readability, comprehension and speed often end up simply as textual and cultural domestication (Venuti, 1995).

### **2.3.2. Translation Loss**

As Hervey and Higgins (1992: 24) point out, the transfer of meaning from ST (Source Text) to TT (Target Text) necessarily involves a certain degree of translation loss. This is because a TT will always lack certain culturally relevant features that are present in the ST. An important corollary of this concept of translation loss is that it embraces any failure to replicate an ST exactly, whether this involves losing features in the TT or adding them. Hervey and Higgins (1992: 23) explain that this is due to the fact that backgrounds, shared knowledge, cultural assumptions and learnt responses of monolingual TL (Target language) speakers are inevitably culture-bound. Given this fact, SL (source language) speakers' responses to the ST are never likely to be replicated exactly by effects on members of a different culture. Even a small cultural distance between the ST audience and the TT audience is bound to produce a fundamental dissimilarity between the effects of the ST and those of the TT – such effects can at best be similar in a global and limited sense; they can never be 'the same'. As a result, Hervey and Higgins (1992: 22-23) conclude that 'if there is equivalence here, it is not an objective equivalence, because the translator remains the final arbiter of the imagined effects of both the ST and TT.' Under these circumstances, even a relatively objective assessment of 'equivalent effect' is hard to envisage.

Consequently some questions arise as a result of the preceding claim such as: how do the Yoruba news-writers or 'arbiters' make their judgement regarding the equivalence? What ideology makes them choose to 'lose' something in order to achieve their 'gain'? What is their ultimate 'gain'? In order to answer these questions, we have to put them into a specific

environment, taking into consideration the Yoruba culture and world view as a whole.

### 3.0 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical models for translation studies today are a cluster of overlapping perspectives. There is no unified way of approaching the study of translation (Neubert & Shreve, 2003: 6). Current notions of the nature of translation no longer see translation simply as a matter of source to target language rendering of one written text to another. This view is quite prevalent among non-translators and for the purpose of this paper, this view must be tested against our findings for its veracity. In this regard, this study adopts André Lefevere's theory of rewriting (1992) which emphasises rewriting of original text to suit the need and the context in which the listening is taking place and the notions of patronage associated with this. The rationale for choosing this paradigm is that it captures the influence of the cultural environment in which translation takes place, and sees the translator as an involved agent who is influenced by his or her surrounding cultural environment.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Sixty-five concepts/official/professional titles extracted from one hundred news bulletins presented by five radio stations across the Yoruba-speaking states of Nigeria are examined. The radio stations are: The Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS), Ogun State Broadcasting Corporation (OGBC), Radio Lagos, Oluyole FM, and Paramount FM. The lexical items identified and examined are those that occur frequently in news presentations and whose meanings are critically tied to the context of the reports.

The data are presented and analysed as follows:-

#### 1. Table showing translation of Professional Terms

S/N	ENGLISH	BCOS YORUBA TRANSLATION	OLUYOLE F.M YORUBA TRANSLATION	OGBC AB YORUBA TRANSLATION	RADIO LAGOS YORUBA TRANSLATION	PARAMOUNT F.M YORUBA TRANSLATION
1.	Manager	Ogaagba	Ogaagba	Oludari	OgaAgba	OgaAgba
2.	Chief Executive Officer	Alaseagba	Alaseagba	Oldari	Alase	Alase
3.	Provost	Olori/ogaagbailee koekoseolukoni	Olori/ogaagbailee ekoekoseolukoni	Ogaagba fun ileekoolukoni	OgaAgba fun ileekoolukoni	OgaAgba fun ileekoolukoni
4.	Teacher	Oluko-ni	Oluko-ni	Oluko	Oluko	Oluko
5.	Rector	Ogaagbaileekogb ogbonise	Ogaagbaileekog bogbonise	Ogaagba fun ileekogbogbonise	OgaAgba fun ileekogbogbonise	OgaAgba fun ileekogbogbonise
6.	Vice Chancellor	Giwa/alaseagbaile ekofasiti	Giwa/alaseagbaile ekofasiti	Ogaagba fun ileekofasiti	Ogaagba fun ileekofasiti	Ogaagba fun ileekofasiti
7.	Principal	Ogaileekogirama	Ogaileekogirama	Ogaileekogigagirama	Ogaileekogigaga	Ogaileekogigaga
8.	Barrister	Amofin-Akosemose	Amofin-Akosemose	Agbejero	Agbejero	Agbejero
9.	Surgeon	Dokitaoniseabe	Dokitaoniseabe	Onisegunabe	Onisegunabe	Onisegunabe
10.	Editor	Olootuiroyin	Olootuiroyin	Olootuiroyin	Olootuiroyin	Olootu

The concepts in the table above are translated using loaded noun phrases. The word 'Manager' in (item number 1), a single word, is rendered as a noun phrase 'ogaagba' (the senior/superior boss) in Yoruba by four stations. The word 'Editor' (item number 10) is translated as 'olootuiroyin' (the boss presiding over news). The words 'Rector' and 'Provost' (items number 3 and 5) are rendered in wordy noun phrases as 'Olori/ogaagbaileekoseolukoni' (the most senior boss in the College of Education) or 'ogaagba fun ileekogbogbonise' (the most senior boss of the polytechnic). Apart from being long and wordy, the translations lack clarity. The word 'olootu' in Yoruba can be used to signify leadership of any kind. The problem here is that it lacks precision. Other examples in which long-winded nominal paraphrases are employed for translation include 'Principal' (item number 7) 'ogaileekogirama' (the boss for the Grammar School); 'Surgeon' (item number 9) 'dokitaoniseabe' (the doctor who works with the knife); 'Barrister' (item number 8) 'amofinakose-mose' (the professional well-trained in the law).

Vague descriptive phrases such as 'ogaagba' (the most senior boss), 'olori' (the head/leader) 'alase' (the wielder of authority), 'alaseagba' (the most senior wielder of authority) are employed to represent a number of distinctive entities in English. This creates the problem referential confusion. For example, the difference in the referential imports of the positions of 'Manager' and 'Chief Executive Officer' (item number 1 and 2) is blurred by the translation of both as 'ogaagba' (the most senior boss) or of the difference in the positions of 'Rector', 'Provost', 'Vice-chancellor' (items number 3, 5 and 6) translated as 'oga' (boss) or 'alaseagba' (the senior wielder of authority).

## 2. Table Showing Translation of Political Titles

S/N	ENGLISH	BCOS YORUBA TRANSLATION	OLUYOLE F.M YORUBA TRANSLATION	OGBC AB YORUBA TRANSLATION	RADIO LAGOS YORUBA TRANSLATION	PARAMOUNT F.M YORUBA TRANSLATION
1.	President	Oloriorileede/Aare orileede	Oloriorileede/Aare orileede	AlasetabiOlori	Aare	Aare
2.	Vice-President	Igbakeji Aare	Igbakeji Aare	Igbakejialase	Igbakejiaare	Igbakejiaare
3.	Prime Minister	Olotuijoba	Olotuijoba	Olotuijoba	Olotuljoba	Olotuljoba
4.	Commissioners	Komisona	Komisona	Alabojutoiseoba	Komisona	Komisona
5.	Senator	Senato	Senato	Asofinagba	Senato	Senato
6.	Honourable	Asofin	Asofin	Olola	Olola	Olola
7.	Senate President	Aare ileasofinagba	Aare ileasofinagba	Aare ileasofinagba	Aare ileasofinagba	Olori Ile IgbimoAsofinAgba
8.	Speaker, House of Representative	Aare ileasofinkekere	Aare ileasofinkekere	Aare ileasofinkekere	Aare ileasofinkekere	Oludari Ile AsofinApapoKekere
9.	Senate whip	OloriAdamolekun	OloriAdamolekun	OloriAdamolekun	OloriAdamolekun	Akojanu Ile IgbimoAsofinAgba
10.	Re-Run Election	Atundi Ibo	Atundi Ibo	Atundi Ibo	Atundi Ibo	Atundi Ibo
11.	Constituency	EkunIdibo	EkunIdibo	EkunIdibo	EkunIdibo	EkunIdibo
12.	Primary Election	EtoIdibo abele	EtoIdibo abele	EtoIdibo abele	EtoIdibo abele	Idibo Abele
13.	Bills	IweOfin	IweOfin	IweOfin	IweOfin	Aba Ofin
14.	Motions	Aba dofin	Aba dofin	Aba dofin	Aba dofin	Aba
15.	Running Mate	Igbakejiondijedupo	Igbakejiondijedupo	Igbakejiondijedupo	Igbakejiondijedupo	Olubadije

This table displays the items dealing with political ideologies / terminologies.

Concepts like 'President' (item number 1), 'the Senate President' (item number 7) and 'the Speaker of the House of Representatives' (item number 8) are all translated with the modifier 'aare'(the president): 'aareorileede'(president of the nation), 'aareileasofinagba'(president of the senior legislative chamber/house) and 'aareileasofinkekere'(president of the junior legislative chamber). Moreover, the President (ie the President of the nation) is confusingly referred to as 'aare'(president), 'oloriorileede'(the head of nation/state) or 'alaseorileede'(the wielder of authority of the nation/state). It is difficult to say whether the problem arises from an inherent inadequacy in the resources of the Yoruba language or from limited competence on the part of the translators.

The translation of the Senate as 'ileasofinagba' and the House of Representatives as 'ileasofinkekere', contrasting 'agba'(senior or higher or elder or greater) with 'kekere'(smaller, junior, lower) fails to differentiate the functions of the two legislative chambers, thus creating the misconception in Yoruba listeners that the function of law making being performed by the Senate is superior to the one being performed by the House of Representatives, an evaluation members of the latter are likely to find offensive. This translation requires more serious re-evaluation in view of the fact that Nigerians are sensitive to matters of titles and ranking.

S/N	ENGLISH	BCOS YORUBA TRANSLATION	OLUYOLE F.M YORUBA TRANSLATION	OGBC AB YORUBA TRANSLATION	RADIO LAGOS YORUBA TRANSLATION	PARAMOUNT F.M YORUBA TRANSLATION
1.	Head of Department	Olorieka	Olorieka	Oloriekaako	Oloriekaako	Oloriekaako
2.	Course Advisor	Olubanidamorane toeko	Olubanidamorane toeko	Olugbananimorane ko	Olugbananimorane ko	Olugbananimorane ko
3.	Chancellor	Olubewoagba	Olubewoagba	Baba isale	Baba isale	Baba isale
4.	Professor	Ojogbon	Ojogbon	Ojogbon	Ojogbon	Ojogbon
5.	Proprietor	Oludasile	Oludasile	Oludasile {okunrin}	Oludasile	Oludasile
6.	Proprietress	Oludasile	Oludasile	Oludasile (obirin)	Oludasile	Oludasile
7.	Secretary	Akowe	Akowe	Akowe	Akowe	Akowe
8.	Registrar	Akoweagba	Akoweagba	Akowe	AkoweAgba	AkoweAgba
9.	Journalist	Oniroyin/akoroyin	Oniroyin/akoroyin	Akoroyin	Akoroyin	Akoroyin
10.	Justice	Onidajo	Onidajo	Idajo	Onidajo	Onidajo
11.	Judge	Adajo	Adajo	Adajo	Adajo	Adajo
12.	Councillor	Kanselor	Kanselo	Kanselo	Kanselo	Kanselo
13.	Dean	Oloriekaetoeko	Oloriekaetoeko	Ogaagbalekaeko	Ogaagbalekaeko	Ogaagbalekaeko
14.	Doctorate Degree	Oyeomowe	Oyeomowe	Oyeimoeko	Oyeomowe	Oyeomowe
15.	Profession	Iseeniyanyanlaayo/iseise	Iseeniyanyanlaayo/iseise	Iseti a yanlaayo	Iseti a yanlaayo	Iseti a yanlaayo
16.	Accountant	Olusiroowo	Olusiroowo	Olusiroowo	Olusiroowo	Olusiroowo
17.	Nurse	Olutojualaisan	Olutojualaisan	Olutojualaisan	Olutojualaisan	Olutojualaisan
18.	Judge	Adajo	Adajo	Adajo	Adajo	Adajo
19.	Prince	Omooba	Omooba	Omooba (okinrin)	Omooba (okinrin)	Omooba (okinrin)
20.	Chief	Oloye	Oloye	Oloye	Oloye	Oloye

21.	Mister (Mr)	Ogbeni	Ogbeni	Ogbeni	Ogbeni	Ogbeni
22.	Evangelist	Ajihinrere	Ajihinrere	Alufaijo	Ajihinrere	Ajihinrere
23.	General Overseer	Alakosoagba	Alakosoagba	Alakosoagba	Alakoso	Alakoso
24.	Reverend	Eniowo	Eniowo	Eniowo	Eniowo	Eniowo
25.	Minister	IranseOluwa	IranseOluwa	IranseOluwa	IranseOluwa	IranseOluwa
26.	Cardinal	Kadina	Kadina	Kadina	Kadina	Kadina
27.	Comrade	Komireedi	Komireedi	Komireedi	Komireedi	Komireedi
28.	Sergeant	Sajenti	Sajenti	Sajenti	Sajenti	Sajenti
29.	Inspector	Ripeeto	Ripeeto	Ripeeto	Ripeeto	Ripeeto
30.	Deacon	Diakoni	Diakoni	Diakoni	Diakoni	Diakoni
31.	Million	Milionu	Milionu	Milionu	Milionu	Milionu
32.	Colonel	Ogagun	Ogagun	Ogagun	Ogagun	Ogagun
33.	General	Ogagun	Ogagun	Ogagun	Ogagun	Ogagun
34.	Admiral	Ogagun	Ogagun	Ogagun	Ogagun	Ogagun
35.	Chaplain	IranseOlorun	IranseOlorun	IranseOlorun	IranseOlorun	IranseOlorun
36.	Bishop	Bisoobu	Bisoobu	Bisoobu	Bisoobu	Bisoobu
37.	Pastor	IranseOlorun	IranseOlorun	IranseOlorun	IranseOlorun	IranseOlorun
38.	Elder	Alagba	Alagba	Alagba	Alagba	Alagba
39.	Aunt	EgbonObinrin	EgbonObinrin	EgbonObinrin	EgbonObinrin	EgbonObinrin
40.	Uncle	EgbonOkunrin	EgbonOkunrin	EgbonOkunrin	EgbonOkunrin	EgbonOkunrin

There are cases of direct borrowing and nativisation of foreign words by the local news-writer in this section. Rewriting of words like 'Comrade' (item number 28) as 'Komireedi', 'Councillor' (item number 12) as 'Kanselo', 'Sergeant' (item number 29) as 'Sajenti', 'Inspector'; (item number 30) as 'Ripeeto', 'Deacon' (item number 31) as 'Diakoni', 'Cardinal' (item number 27) as 'Kadina', 'Million' (item number 32) as 'Milionu' is an interesting phenomenon.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The paper has subjected the translations of some official titles and concepts by broadcast media in the Yoruba-speaking area of Nigeria to scrutiny against the background of the fact that the two languages involved, English and Yoruba, are embedded in and convey different cultural values. Translations are usually notoriously challenging and accuracy is often difficult to attain. Not surprisingly, many of the translated concepts suffer lack of fidelity to the original versions. Many of the translations betray vagueness, ambiguity, indeterminate reference and even unwitting distortions, qualities that are inconsistent with the principles of mass communication. Ideally, mass communicated messages are crafted in such a way that they display absolute clarity.

This situation places a high responsibility on the news translators, calling for a re-evaluation of the translation strategies adopted so far. Sloppiness and mental indolence must give way to a critical engagement with the texts and an acute sense of accuracy and appropriateness to attain more respectable versions of the translations than hitherto obtain.

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## Resisting the Cultural National : Dalit Literatures as Resistance Narratives

Think of it regret fills within...

Let me add something in my own melody...

- Poykayil Appachan

Narratives that resist and counter hegemonic cultural formations in society may be called resisting narratives. The multiplicity of dalit narratives in various Indian linguistic and literary contexts may be termed as resisting or resistance narratives as they address the inequality in the society and resist the hegemonic culture and its various elitist discourses and its oppression of the people in the name of ultra Nationalism in particular. The hegemonic discourse in Indian society has emerged as a cultural elitism and cultural Nationalism from the colonial era onwards and in recent times it has become a fascism proper by mobilizing the people on a dominant religious line (Sarkar). We have also witnessed organized violence and genocide done on minor groups and marginal sections in the society. This Hindu Nationalism has its origin in the Bengal renaissance and in the writings of Bankim Chandro, Bibekano and Aurobindo (Misra, Sarma, Jaffrelot, Reghu). It is a Vandemataram Nationalism that otherizes and demonizes the people and the minorities in particular as rightly pointed out again and again by scholars, Gopal Guru for instance in the recent JNU struggles. Only the narratives and articulations of the people from the periphery of this Metanarrative of the Nation can counter and check this hegemonic formation which falls back to Brahmanical and Vedic values and images. The narratives of Ramraj and Varnasramadharma unleashed by the dominant Brahmanical mode of mainstream Nationalism is also to be critically pondered here.

Foregrounding the voice and agency of the people through various democratic and peaceful politics of culture; and reclaiming the constitutional democracy is the only panacea at this juncture. The resisting critical voices are silenced systematically as in the assassinations of Dhabolkar to Gauri Lankesh. The critical researchers who resist the Parivar agendas in universities are also silenced like Rohit Vemula. Caste and Varna untouchability and exclusions are coming back to even Kerala that boasts about its rich renaissance culture in which Narayanaguru himself expressed his terror of the Ramraj in his historic articulations on the fate of the Sambuka, the Sudra sage who was killed by the Lord himself (Balakrishnan). Many Vinayakans and Jishas are also annihilated in Kerala in the present on caste and gender exclusionary grounds of institutional and repressed violence. Caste walls are coming back in places like Iringalakuda Kuttankulam. Govt Schools are termed as Paraya schools by the caste Hindu elites in Perambra. Chakliyas in Govindapuram are finding it difficult to fetch water from the wells. Kerala has become a real caste Hindu state in the contexts of cultural and regional jingoisms.

In a metaphorical sense dalit literatures share the legacy of Sambuka, Surpanakha, Mahabali, Ekalayva and other wronged and erased voices in Indian social and cultural history. But some of the contemporary commentators connect it to the Buddhist literatures in various

Prakrit and Pali languages in the peninsula erupting from the time of the enlightened one himself as in the songs of the elder nuns the *Terigadha*. Tharu and Lalita have included it in their *Women Writing in India: 600 BC to the Present*. It was against caste and Varna barbarism and social hierarchy established by the internal imperialism or Hindu colonialism. As Sarankumar Limbale and Valmiki reiterate dalit literature is basically anti caste literature. It can also be remembered that it was a disciple of Nanuguru called Swami John Dharmateerthar who went to Pakistan and published his *History of Hindu Imperialism* in 1942. And it was Pandit Ayyothee Thasar a great neo Buddhist leader of the people in Tamilakam in late 19<sup>th</sup> century who composed his *Indirar Desasaritram* as a Buddhist history of south India and paved the foundation for the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century neo Buddhist movements in Kerala led by Sahodaran and Mitavadi in 1910s and 20s; and later in 1950s in Maharashtra by Babasaheb himself (Aloysius). Asan's *Chandala Bhikshuki* and Tagore's *Chandalika* reveal the accent on the voice and agency of the untouchable woman who becomes a great nun and missionary in the Sangha of the Buddha, who can teach the world as the Manimekhalai of Chatanar in the south. But after the defeat and erasure of Buddhism in its homeland India by covetous Brahmanism by the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries the Bahujan democratic culture has subsided and found partial expressions in the Bhakti school of medieval literatures in various languages, especially in Marathi and Kannada in Hinduized ways though.

The medieval Kannada Vachana literature is said to be the creation of some untouchable saint poets. 12<sup>th</sup> century Madari Chennayya and Dahori Kakkayya are those poets from the underworld. Chokkamela and Karmamela in 14<sup>th</sup> century Maharashtra also created a subaltern popular fervor within this school. Bhakti was flourishing in Namdev and Tukaram who came from the Sudra sections of the society. As Ambedkar has rightly identified later the democratic aspects of this school of Bhakti was a disguised Buddhist Bahujan cultural legacy and the reactionary elements in this school were the hegemonic appropriations of Brahmanism itself. Vaishnava and Saiva Bhakti frenzies were used and rather misused by Brahmanism to propagate its Vedic and Vedantic obscurantism and Varnasramadharma values as religion among the common people.

But this hidden agenda was considerably challenged and resisted by the medieval and late medieval Sufi schools, especially in the mystical poetry of Kabir. Though Kabir was singing through his Dohas about Ram and Rahim he was attacking the priestocracy and Brahmanism in particular through suggestive and metaphorical ways. He was foregrounding the human, like Nanuguru did in his later philosophical and polyphonic poetry. That is why Ambedkar views the Buddha, Kabir and Phule as his great masters. We must also remember here that Nanuguru held the British or the Europeans as his gurus, as he proclaimed in 1914 that it is the British who gave him asceticism and the right to knowledge.

Modern Marathi dalit literature emerged in 1970s after Ambedkar. Ambedkar's own writings provided the foundations for such a historical articulation. Baburau Bagul in 1960s came up with dalit autobiographical narratives. 1980s saw *Upara* and *Uchalya* by Lakshman Mane and Lakshman Gaikwad respectively that broke the conventions of the novel and autobiography in many novelistic ways. Dalit Panthers under the leadership of young revolutionary writers like Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale, Arun Kamble... They created the dalit panther manifesto in the model of the Afro American black panther movement.

Daya Pawar has written poems like “Harlem” and “Blood Wave.” It reminds us of Leopold Sedar Senghor the national poet and the first president of Senegal writing about “New York” as he pays homage to Harlem the happening place for the black arts movement and the African American cultural and political revolution. Daya's Harlem is a love poem to his own wife. But on a greater cultural and political plane it is also a tribute to the Afro American literary and democratic tradition. His “Blood Wave” is on the hostility of the external and historical reality in India that makes impossible the birth and growth of a dalit child here. We are reminded of Chullikadu's poem “Lokavasanam Varekkum” while we read this blood-dripping composition by Daya. Even procreation seems impossible for a dalit poet in India. Dhasal in the 1980s has written about the Kamatipura sex workers. Ambedkar's own speech at Kamatipura in early 1930s is a case in point here. It was Ambedkar who went to the most wretched and ostracized underdogs in Indian history and society to create radical democratic change in our society. The legal reforms and the constitutional activism were supplemented by his grass root level social activism. It should be remembered that he also wanted to visit the shrine of Chokkamela the 14<sup>th</sup> century Chamar saint poet and he was not given access by caste Hindu Vaishnavites by saying that he is an untouchable. From Marathi dalit literary fervor reached Hindi, Bengali, Odiya, Telugu, Kannad and Tamil languages. It is flourishing in Kannada and Tamil. Writers like Meena Kandsamy in Tamil Nadu and Chandramohan Satyanadhan from Kerala are writing dalit literature in English directly now.

We in Kerala would also remember our own untouchable poets who can be compared to Chennayya, Gora, Ravidas and Chokkamela. Pakkanar was a legendary poet who lived in the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century by the Perar or Nila river in north Kerala. It is often said that the famous song of Onam or “Onappattu” is a recovered relic of his lost 900 Versus. Sahodaran Ayyappan the lead disciple of Nanuguru recovered its fragment and rewrote it into a political verse at the turn of the century in 1920s. He pays homage to the poet of Onapattu in at least two poems. Muloor another stalwarts from the Avarna social section to get acceptance in the literary public sphere as an eminent poet of repute was also showing this kind of a downward movement to the bottom of things in an ethical and egalitarian way. As rightly identified by later scholars and critics like P K Balakrishnan in his monumental anthology called *Narayanaguru*, this downward movement to embrace the people at the bottom was the real ethical principle of Nanuguru. It may be compared to the contemporary notion of dalitization. Ezhavas would be human only when they became Pulaya was that principle in simple terms. Muloor who claimed a literary domain through his historic Kavi Ramayan debate and Chilluvazhakku to use the sound 'r' in the names of Avarnas, practiced this camaraderie in real life. He was the soul-brother of Kurumban Daivatar a dalit leader and wrote his Pulavritangal on dalit lives in his close fraternity with the dalit leader. It must be also remembered that he learned Pali and directly translated the word of the Buddha in Dhammapada into Malayalam under the affectionate compulsion of Sahodaran. Sahodaran also prompted Justice Ayyakkutty for another translation later.

Choti Chatan who is called the Adi Pulaya Kavi of Kochi was a contemporary of Sahodaran. He sung his poems in public and was arrested and detained for this cultural activism that attacked caste and elitism in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Poykayil Appachan also emerged in early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a seminal voice in the dalit struggles in Kerala. In 1910 he was arrested for leading a peace rally for global pacifism and before the colonial court he proclaimed that his organization is PRDS or Pratyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha. Appachan's

greater critiques of religions and culture must be dealt in detail in monographs. It is also an imminent epistemological urgency to rehabilitate such critical and rudimentary voices into the Kerala renaissance studies.

The dominant mode of historiography excludes the other and contested voices and subjects. The silencing and erasure are real problems while we deal with the cultural productions of the excluded as the representation of the margin is a complex and problematic issue (Sekher 2008). Dalit political and cultural interventions in Kerala have a long history going back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This turbulent period of social reformation and cultural revolution is popularly known as the Kerala renaissance (Sekher 2017). Though modern day Kerala was formed only in 1956; a Malayalee identity formation and cultural/linguistic solidarity can be identified in the discursive contexts of renaissance. This linguistic Nationalism or regionalism rather is still forging ahead in various walks of life in Kerala in various avatars. Travancore, Kochi and Malabar were the former princely states of the region. Malabar was directly under the British Madras regime, while the other two southern states were ruled by royal families within the imperial power of the Raj. In Malabar in 18<sup>th</sup> century Hyder Ali and Tipu Sulatan paved the foundations of modern Malabar renaissance through their uncompromising attack against caste and its social engineering. There is considerable difference in the historical experience of untouchability and exclusion within Kerala. But the larger patterns are general and the same. Caste Hindu hegemony is the crux of this commonality across the various regions.

As Narayanaguru has acknowledged aloud the British rule was instrumental in changing things. Renaissance was a direct result of reformist intervention. It came from many sources in the form of missionary intervention, western enlightenment modernity, colonial administration, judiciary and education etc. But the real social change was a direct result of the politics of the marginalized. The education and organization oriented outcaste protest movements were the real catalysts of the event. Missionary educational and evangelical deliberations have provided the subaltern with alternative religious and social praxes. It gave them an ethical and critical sense to recognize the millennia old hegemonic structures that are now recognized as part of the internal imperialism or Hindu colonialism. It provided them an insight into hierarchy and social exclusion. As Jotiba Phule of Maharashtra, Narayanaguru who pioneered a peaceful and comprehensive anti Brahmanic hermeneutics in Kerala has also acknowledged that it was the British who gave him the right to knowledge. He called them his gurus as we have seen and also very clearly rejected the Ramraj in which the Sudra sage Sambuka was killed and denied educational rights according to the Smrutistrutipurana hegemony.

Nanuguru also inspired generations of anti caste fighters like Ayyankali who came from the lowest social strata. Though there are age old traditions of folk-lore and orature articulating both acceptance and resistance of Hindu imperialism, the radical departure and rupture came from the Ayyankali movement in southern Kerala in late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The protest movement unleashed by this pioneering Dalit leader has lasting significance. It was a multilateral struggle for human rights and dignity. He oriented his campaigns with specific political agenda. Struggles to use the public roads, schools and other social spaces and institutions gathered momentum. Ayyankali is the first dalit leader in Kerala to organize an agricultural strike for the right of education for the children of the untouchables in a larger scale in Kerala. It could be remembered that it was Arattupuzha Velayudha Panikar a

pioneering anti caste crusader, who organized the agricultural strike, breast cloth struggles and similar anti caste protests locally at Kayamkulam in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century itself. Arattupuzha was a model for Nanuguru in his mixing up with dalits and establishing schools and institutions for them. Arattupuzha also stressed the importance of cultural capitals like arts and education in the total emancipation of the people.

In late 19<sup>th</sup> century itself, Poykayil Appachan a dalit leader who emerged in the following decades continued the cultural and epistemological struggles of the muted in a different direction at the bottom of things. Poyka worked with the missionaries of central Travancore. He departed from various churches after brief stints in the Christian folds. He can be identified as the first voice who has inaugurated a dalit liberation theology. His songs and compiled speeches are now widely read as the prototypes of dalit articulation and writing. An attempt for subaltern speech was already in the air in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But intense form of Savarna Hindu oppression silenced the feeble voices that broke social conventions. Appachan questioned the untouchability of the church and burned the Bible as a symbolic form of protest, something that reminds us of Ambedkar burning the *Manusmriti*. The epistemological critique in these symbolic acts may be contextualized and re-contextualized in the present by new writers and critics.

As Foucault would argue, resistance to power and hegemony was also instant and multivalent. There were numerous fighters and agitators in Kerala who resisted the internal imperialism of Varna and caste. Names like Pampadi John Joseph, Vellikara Chothi, Kandan Kumaran and K P Vallon are unforgettable. There was fierce fighting inside and outside the legislative assemblies. We have also seen bloody feuds and rioting in the streets. The printed page and the periodicals became battlegrounds in the post renaissance period especially in the mid and late decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was a new beginning, the subaltern was entering writing, representation and history. The historically marginalized people who were expelled from the world of letters and the symbolic order of self representation were regaining the dynamism of speech. Almost all dalitbahujan writers of the present fall back to this radical legacy of cultural revolution. Bahujan or the people is a conceptual conception of the Buddha which was later used by Phule and the like. The critique of caste system and the Hindu Brahmanic social imaginary are evident in each articulation. A departure from the Savarna value sphere and aesthetics is also remarkable. Another important feature is the striking diversity and dialogicity of contemporary dalit writing. It includes tribal writers and activists like C K Janu, Narayan and dalit Christian writers too. It is rich with popular and mainstream writers like C Ayyappan and dissident voices like A Arun; and young academics like O K Santhosh. Whether it is theoretically informed criticism or novel forms of creative writing, contemporary Dalit writing in Malayalam has much to offer. This praxiological mode of writing has produced stalwarts of mainstream creative writing like T K C Vaduthala and A Ayyappan. The critical writings of K K Kochu, V V Swami, K K Baburaj and Salim Kumar often dominate the periodical scene in the contemporary world. After the great Kallara Sukumaran we have learned orators like Sunny Kapikad in the dalit discourse in Kerala. An important lack is that of women voices from within the margin. Female Dalit voices like Rekha Raj, Vijila Chirapad, Dhanya M D and Sati Angamaly have emerged with their publications in prose and verse now.

Dalit poetry in Kerala off course has its origin in modern times in Poykayil Appachan. His unique voice emerged at the wake of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As his signature in songs, it is often

called the Poyka school of poetry. It is much more than poetry and includes the song and spiritual genre. It was basically sung to the audience and it has the spiritual and invoking power of the hymns and spirituals. His songs and spirituals can be compared to the slave narratives and spirituals and blues in the African American context of extreme slavery and deprivation. It was a cultural wailing and he literally constructed and recovered and restored the memory and history of his people through his songs and spirituals. Within Kerala Renaissance they are comparable to Sahodaran Ayyappan's songs that were aimed at the people, trying to humanize and rationalize them and detach them from the Varnasramadharm world view of Hindu Brahmanism. Sahodaran was inspired by the fraternity of Islam and the love-ethics of Jesus.

Sahodaran also addressed the people as the Bahujans and brothers in his poetry like the compassionate one who was his key and keen influence. Appachan was more earthy and spiritual. He through his narrative songs invoked a sense of historic marginalization and suffering during the slave centuries that followed the early middle ages. He elaborated through his poetic powers how the ancient people of Kerala were enslaved by the conquering Aryan Vedic Brahmanic forces and were rendered into slaves by the invaders. His unique recreation of memory and history are really narrative and political. He dramatized the conquests and its aftermath. He used different narrative tropes and tropics of discourse to tell the story of cheat and usurpation. It is again like Sahodaran telling the story of Mabali or Maveli in his "Song of Onam." How the just and egalitarian ruler of the people or the subaltern in Kerala was pushed down under to the netherworld by covetous and cheating Brahmanical dwarf called Vamana. Sahodaran urged the people to abandon this ideology of the Brahman dwarf called Vamanadarsam and to recover the just and egalitarian ethical legacy of Mabali the leader of the people of south India, an aboriginal or Paraya first nation emperor. The reference to Mabali as a Paraya emperor also occurs in modern fiction in Malayalam as in O V Vijayan's *Talamurakal* a critical narrative that deconstructs caste.

We may also remember Phule's Baliraj here and its comparison to Christuraj as in sharp contrast with Gandhi's Ramraj. Appachan also severely attacked Brahmanism and Hinduism in particular for creating the caste Varna hell in Kerala. He also contested and critiqued the evangelical claims of Syrian Christian Churchianity that imbibed the Brahmanical values of purity and pollution and cultural elitism. As Arundhati Roy has observed Christ and Christianity have no caste but unfortunately the caste Hindu elites who have crept into Syrian Christianity in Kerala have caste. He attacked the Euro centrism of the church and even the appropriation of the Bible by colonial forces and elitist groups outside Europe. As we have seen he burned the Bible as in an act of critical rejection and symbolic protest.

Another contemporary of Appachan was Adi Pulaya Kavi Choti Chatan of Kochi. He was also arrested like Appachan as he defied caste and untouchability in his works. He was literate enough to write and publish his verse in the form of anthologies of poetry. He was also excluded and erased from the canon by the literary historians and now being recovered and included into the history book by dalit activists and writers.

It is clear that there were several voices before these early 20<sup>th</sup> century dalit poets like the legendary Kakkayya and Chennayya of early Vachana literature in Kannada or Chokamela and Namdev of Marathi. Pakanar who lived in Kerala in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is an example. An early 20<sup>th</sup> century poet like Sahodaran takes his inspiration from Pakanar and his legendary lost work called *900 Verses*. "The Song of Onam" is believed to be fashioned upon the old

oral song of Pakanar that talked about Onam and its egalitarian legacy. Sahodaran himself pays homage to the medieval poet who composed the first Onapattu in his second song on Onam titled “Yuktikalam Onappattu.” It is clear that the counter to caste was there in south India and Chera land from the inception and infiltration of Brahmanism here from 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries onwards.

In the post colonial period of 1950s and 60s there were poets like Kallara Sukumaran and Kaviyur Murali. K K Govindan and Sunny Kavikkattu were brilliant minor poets who raised the Dalit issue. Sunny M Kapikad is a contemporary dalit activist and prose writer. Kallara Sukumaran as an early dalit leader and poet in Kerala has provided the critical representation of the anti dalit and pro caste Hindu discourses emerging in the post renaissance Kerala very much within the progressive left movement. His poems like “Memories of the Underground” speak about the sense of injustice felt by the dalits soon after the first wave of left radicalism. The dalit woman Chiruta lost everything while giving shelter to the caste Hindu male comrades as they went underground. When the caste Hindu machos emerge as ministers after the elections the untouchable woman loses the recovered human rights, dignity and material possessions too. Kaviyoor Murali also laments about such losses in the onslaughts of caste Hindu hegemony on the rise even in a modern democratic society. Amidst this misery of everyday poets like Kallada Sasi tries to gain momentum and dynamism by recovering the abiding presences and voices like that of Ayyankali. In a poem titled “Ayyankali” he says that “From the coffin of the bygone era/ You resurrect as eternal light.” The light and path of Ayyan is a constant inspiration for the creative dalit writer. The dalit leader is compared to a guiding star that never fades. The long night and nightmare of slavery were ended by the light and organic rise of this leading star. How the Avarnas have become untouchables under the Brahmanic Hinduism and Varnasrama Dharma ideology of social stratification is well elaborated in poetry by Kallada Sasi. He refutes even the enlightened one to make a statement that “nothing is permanent but you are everlasting.” What kind of symbolic capital is Ayyan for the deprived is clear from this over statement. For the dalit poet the social reformer is beyond amnesia and forgetfulness; and we can also hope that such resisting memories may save the excluded from amnesia that opens up the gateways to Hindutva fascism. It is also worth remembering that the OBCs and SCs in Kerala have now aligned with the Hindutva forces under the carpet slogan of “Hindu Unity.” This new bait of Hindu unity is strategically deployed by the Hindu Nationalist forces and the Parivar to court the common people who are ignorant of their immediate pasts and are falling prey to collective amnesia. The moment we forget our history, fascism is at our doorsteps.

Poets like K K S Das have depicted the black dance in poems like “Karumady Nritam.” It is also an invocation to the Karumady Kuttan or the Buddha idol at Karumady indirectly which is an archeological evidence of the Buddhist past of Kerala and the basic working communities' intimate relationship with Buddhism in Kerala. The Amana or Chamana legacy of the Avarna is also exposed indirectly by poems like this. Though a balck girl's dance is depicted its innuendoes invoke the ancient past and erased minor histories and heterologies in Kerala. The culturally archeological narration of unimaginable violence experienced by the dalits and other Avarnas in Kerala under the brutal regime of caste Hindu order also provides cross cultural and inter semiotic references and comparisons with fine arts and visual arts like that of the paintings of K P Reji and even Savi Savarkar. The poem ends with a determined stand point that “we will pay them back.” This kind of cultural and political affirmation and clarity is visible in the poetry of the modernist period in Malayalam.

K K Govindan has gone to the extent of explicitly depicting the caste massacres that continued up to the early modern era in Kerala. How the ritual sacrifices and feudal executions were conducted in every field or household or bund is elaborated in vivid details invoking pathos by the poet in poems like “The Killing Field.” It is worth remembering C Ayyappan who wrote about his grandmother narrating the executions of the slave age and the emotional outbursts of the narrator and the listeners in his childhood. Four or five Tampurans or caste lords are trying to execute a slave man. But his head is not getting separated. It is spilling blood on the bloody lords' faces. Finally the badly mutilated slave asks them to remove the talisman from his body and place it under the Pipal tree and to execute him. This life connection with the Pipal or the the Boddhi tree is what makes the poem more cultural nuanced and dexterous than the hoary scene described. This organic bond with the Bo tree makes it a complex and culturally polyphonic poetic composition.

The continuation of this bloody legacy in the present is articulated by many poems by Raghavan Atholi. The issues of lack of resources he shares with M R Renukumar who writes in the post modern minor tenor. But poets like G Sasi have expressed their political and democratic affiliations with Ambedkarism in very subtle and sophisticated way through poems like “Ambavade.” Such poetic invocation of Ambedkarism and the neo Buddha of India is something that connects Malayalam Dalit poetry with that of Marathi and Hindi ones. S Joseph has created a special niche for his complex and ironic narrative poems within the dalit space in Kerala. His short compositions are hilarious and ironic or even allegorical in plural ways. His poetic critique is having a depth of field and is profoundly humane. M B Manoj has also exposed the dim and badly lit interiors in the experiential and material realm of Kerala society that are oppressive and hegemonic for the former untouchables. Dr Manoj has also tried to bring in inter textual references to Appachan and Putar or the Buddha himself in his poems. Even in the recent last novel by Pradeepan titled *Eri*, the protagonist Eri a Paraya Chitar or Siddhar of Malabar is imagined as the Buddha in an opening scene.

Meantime the dalit women are having many struggles in writing and society, as they are waging their battle against multiple jeopardy. Dalit women poets like Vijila Chirapad illuminates about the queer mix up of caste and gender conundrum in Kerala. She sensitively and sarcastically depicts and critiques the gender equations and masculine status quo in the homo erotic cultural circles in Kerala. Her poetry deals with the domestic and public sphere simultaneously. Through odd and queer images she brings to shock the imbalance of the world around like the striking visual images of Vinu Vadakedath a dalit artist from contemporary Kerala. Dalit artists like Om Soorya have also tried to depict the invisible walls of caste and social exclusion that are tangible in Kerala in the new works that engage with history, society and polity in dexterous ways.

Poets like S Kalesh and Ajish Dasan are writing in a unique idiom that talks about the unknown and lesser written about realities in the contemporary world that exclude the minor and marginalia. The other worldly experiences of the disenfranchised are tangible and resonant in the little narratives of Binu Pallypad and the like. In a country where humans are treated badly than animals and human rights and civil rights are trampled upon by the caste Hindu hegemonic discourses, where even dalit children are burned alive and people are lynched for eating meat such poetic and cultural protest, critique and resistance may not be adequate. But as Auden says, for poetry makes nothing happen, but it is a word, a tounge... As Brecht had it; in the darker fascist times there will be songs about the darker times. And

these songs that spring from Kabir, Pakkanar, Sahodaran, Appachan and a lot of other unknown and minor voices are staking up a strong resistance to the militant and violent genocidal cultural Nationalism that is engulfing the country by continuously deconstructing and differing its Metanarratives of the Hindu imagiNation and its homogenizing agendas. It is a democratic cultural politics of dissent, diversity and dissidence that is created by the dynamic dalitbahujan literary paradigms in India today. And only this polyphony and margin-speak may save the country from an inherent hell of caste and corporate Brahmanism today. The voice and agency of resistance are ethically and rightfully with the people at the bottom and let them do so...

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## In Praise of Achilles Heel : Unveiling Beauty in the 'Blot'

The beauty of the withered and the imperfect is what WabiSabi is defined to be. Although this is the main idea behind the concept, the Japanese aesthetics has much deeper level of conviction towards this. It is a notion of celebrating simplicity and poverty along with those which decay and are about to diminish. This idea has its roots on Zen Buddhism with much wider significance. This expression of the beauty that lies in the brief transition between the coming and going of life, is expressed to bring both the joy and melancholy which make human life complete. Zen seeks artistic expression that manifests the pure and sublime presentation and perception of things. It dodges intellectualism disuniting things from disguise and primarily aims to dig out and fabricate the beauty left by the nature's very flow. This is exactly in opposition to the Western notion of the systematic, structured and flawless conventions, demanding perfection. The paper discusses John Green's novel *The Fault in our Stars* and P. Kesavadev's short story *Deenamma* elucidating the touch of Eastern aesthetic notions, particularly Japanese concept, in them.

John Green in his novel has made ingenious interplay of feelings and emotions. The transient nature of life in general is projected, where the characters live their life at its best. Cancerous diseases mostly leave the sufferers lead a secluded and lonely life making their lives distinct and haplessly unchangeable. However, this book gives a brighter ray of hope to those groups of people who lead an isolated life, desperate about their seemingly closing moment in time. This is where the spirit of isolation gets a different dimension, is being projected and taken into another horizon of thought.

*Deenamma*, on the other hand, has yet another aspect of life being anticipated. The general notion of beauty on the basis of physique and fairness is what makes the protagonist remain completely secluded from the normal social life to be led. However, the work does not end so badly, as it has a bursting open of the long withheld shudder of splendor in the character Deenamma. Her absolute beauty and magnificence is being unraveled by her artist husband and this leaves space for a novel dimension of looking at anything and everything inside out.

In *Deenamma*, the beauty of the character is considered a misfortune by her friends and family. The folks around her are happy to be with her as she is very "efficient" and "dependable". This post-modern mentality to accept anything or anyone only under the basis of productivity and is absolutely in contrast with the Japanese aesthetics the paper focuses on. Deenamma here is seen as the 'flawed' as well as the 'flaw'. She transfigures into a disgusting threat to her sibling as well as a burden to her parents in no time. Her marriage was nothing more than dumping a trouble with financial benefit, thus Deenamma is traded off. The artist husband never looked at her twice and stood clear by all means. The moment of miracle in the story happens at the climax with her husband accepting her as a wife, lover, and as an adored human. This is a pretty application of the Zen philosophy around which the

WabiSabi revolves. Deenamma's husband is finally attaining peace with who she is, not from the unaccepted physique. So from being 'imperfect and inadequate' Deenamma is transformed to someone very beautiful. This might seem anti-feminist – to be 'accepted only at the time and convenience of the husband- but speaking of our discussion, this act helped her to finally be comfortable about how she really is.

'The Fault in Our Stars' is a magnificent work which tells the story of a young teenage girl, Hazel Grace Lancaster, who has been diagnosed with lung cancer and attends a cancer support group. Hazel is sixteen and is reluctant to go to the support group initially, since she could not, in any way, get out of her routines welcoming imminent death. But she soon realizes that it was the most remarkable life-changing feat. Hazel meets a young boy, Augustus Waters, who is charming and witty. Augustus has had Osteosarcoma, a rare form of bone cancer, which he recently survived. Hazel and Augustus board on a roller coaster ride of emotions, including sunshine, lemons and romance; searches for the author of their favorite book, which is Hazel's primary obsession. They travel to Amsterdam in search of Peter Van Houten the author of *An Imperial Affliction*. While on their trip Augustus discloses the heartbreaking news to Hazel about his worsening health condition and messes up their smooth sail. Sharing their experience as a 'victim' to the disease becomes their identity. The **theme** of life and death unfolds through Hazel's relationship with Augustus.

“Augustus, perhaps you'd like to share your fears with the group.”

“My fears?”

“Yes.”

“I fear oblivion,” he said without a moment's pause. “I fear it like the proverbial blind man who's afraid of the dark.”

“There will come a time,” I said, “when all of us are dead. All of us. There will come a time when there are no human beings remaining to remember that anyone ever existed or that our species ever did anything. There will be no one left to remember Aristotle or Cleopatra, let alone you. Everything that we did and built and wrote and thought and discovered will be forgotten and all of this”—I gestured encompassingly—“will have been for naught. Maybe that time is coming soon and maybe it is millions of years away, but even if we survive the collapse of our sun, we will not survive forever. There was time before organisms experienced consciousness, and there will be time after. And if the inevitability of human oblivion worries you, I encourage you to ignore it. God knows that's what everyone else does.”(Green, 11)

They are not people expecting a silver lining around the corner, but death itself. These teenagers have their perceptions inscribed on their destinies. This is what Augustus says about it: "You put an object of death right between your lips, but you don't give it the power to kill you," holding a cigarette butt; he calls it a metaphor. (Green, 11) These young souls come up with awe inspiring mindsets creating a paradigm shift in the readers as a whole.

In the novel, Hazel begins to understand the whole cancer subject, with a different perspective – the deathly perception of love. Love is said to change the way one looks at things. This prospect of looking at death from a different dimension is where the horizon of

the beauty of life's transient nature is wide open. So on what grounds can beauty be expounded?

Beauty is probably best defined as the aesthetic pleasure gained from perceiving something that one believes to be physically attractive. That the rough, asymmetric, and modest objects of wabisabi are considered by some to be the essence of beauty illustrates that a rational or objective approach to understanding beauty will probably yield little. Our reaction to art is conditioned by our social upbringing and also by what we seek to gain from art. As the Japanese have developed an appreciation of things wabisabi in accordance with their philosophy, so other cultures have found beauty that represents their own characteristic worldview. (Juniper, 97)

Classical Japanese philosophy understands the basic reality as constant change, or 'impermanence' (Buddhist expression). The arts in Japan have traditionally reflected this fundamental impermanence – sometimes lamenting, but more often celebrating it.

It does not matter how young or strong you may be, the hour of death comes sooner than you expect. It is an extraordinary miracle that you should have escaped to this day; do you suppose you have even the briefest respite in which to relax? (Keene, 120)

In terms of admiring impermanence and imperfections WabiSabi gets a more significant space for discussion. WabiSabi is a concept based on which the beauty of things imperfect, impermanent and incomplete and, that of things modest, humble and unconventional is being shed lights to. The Japanese culture has been altogether nurtured and passed on in a way these conceptions get into the core of their thoughts, tables and culture. WabiSabi is often combined to create scenes of a raw quality, appreciating things for what they are and celebrating the very existence. According to Leonardo Koren, WabiSabi is the most conspicuous and characteristic feature of what we think of as traditional Japanese beauty and it “occupies roughly the same position in the Japanese pantheon of aesthetic values as do the Greek ideals of beauty and perfection in the West.” In his article titled “The Beauty of WabiSabi”, Leonard Koren elaborates on his impression on “things odd, misshapen, and/or slightly awkward; what conventional thinking might consider “not in good taste” or “ugly”.” In his words, WabiSabi is the antithesis of the Classical Western notion of beauty as something perfect, enduring and monumental. The meaning attributed to wabi and sabi are to be considered, which later were merged in a way that one cannot imagine them separately anymore.

The concept of WabiSabi is associated with the concept of Zen Buddhism, derived from the earlier tea-masters from China. Zen emphasizes “*direct, intuitive insight into transcendental truth beyond all intellectual conception.*” WabiSabi emphasizes on the importance of looking and thinking about things and their existence surpassing the usual mode of appreciation/perception. 'Wabi' is literally poverty and is about embracing a state of quiet ease and comfort with simple things. In short, wabi is a way of life, spiritual path, that of personal contemplation. It precedes the application of aesthetic principles applied to objects or arts. 'Sabi' on the other hand, implies barrenness of something that has gracefully aged well, which when secluded embraces tranquility, aloneness, and deep solitude and has acquired a patina making things a fine old wine from good old days. It as an outward expression of aesthetic values is built upon the metaphysical and spiritual principles of Zen

but translates these values into artistic and material qualities.

The self-imposed isolation and voluntary poverty of the hermit and ascetic came to be considered opportunities for spiritual richness. (Koren)

WabiSabi's beauty changes with its changing surroundings, because it cannot be completely isolated from them. It is believed that the nature creates an energy that recedes and wells up as man's life flows. The Japanese do not simply rejoice color, vivacity and prolonged happiness. They recognize the beauty that exists in the instant, fully knowing the terseness of the moment that comes with the grandeur. In that view, a sense of melancholy or reflective quality is what is deeply embedded in the Japanese culture. WabiSabi, in a way, directs us towards unlearning our preconceptions of beauty and imparts the possibility of rediscovering the intimate beauty in the smallest details of nature and its surroundings. It is an expression of the beauty that lies in the transitory journey of life, where both the joy and melancholy of the coming and going is acknowledged to be the very essence of human life.

The novel, 'The Fault in our Stars' brings about the aesthetic revival of the conception of life's transient/ephemeral nature. The serene melancholy in the lives of Hazel Grace and Augustus Waters and their passionate involvement towards enjoying every single moment of togetherness brings new colors to their spirit and being. This sense of serene melancholy and a spiritual longing is what displays the soul nature of WabiSabi.

In this context, the protagonists of the two texts could be placed on the same table. Due to two different reasons, although both have material/physical causes, they are being subjugated and voluntarily or involuntarily they choose to be alone in their own shells. The oblivion factor and fear of death become not a big deal before the passionate zeal that Hazel and Augustus hold. They end up preparing eulogies to each other, reading them out and thereby embracing ultimate reality. What Hazel points out is their little infinity that they shared in their numbered days and this infinity, she remarks to be the bigger infinity for them. For this to be realized they needed their favorite author to be shedding his real colors and they consider his ill-treatment as a big lesson.

Deenamamma can be considered an agent of the typical Keralite notion regarding the space a woman earns/receives on account of her appearance. The so called "acceptable physique" of "mallus" have a lot to do with the Victorian White's concept of fairness in equation to beauty and sophistication. The expulsion of anything beyond this stratum went straight to the 'Ugly's'. This is still a prevailing evil in the master-withdrawn shores. The western ideology and expectation for beauty to be perfect, flawless, ever young and permanent is no secret. Thus begins the pursuit to stay frozen and plastic. The growth in Botox industry, constant nagging to keep up with full coverage assistants to project unrealistic façade, theories and lifestyles is the new bomb in the city. The irony is that people campaign to "be yourself" in bold and colorful letters while is immaculately groomed and made-up. Thus in this world of pretence Deenamamma is left alone solely because of the way she looks. In the case of the fault in our stars, we see an upside down depiction of everything a normal, healthy person would look onto life. Life for him/her is endless, devoid of any full-stops and death a distant relative. But for Hazel, Augustus, and all those people with death looming around, life has so much more than just living and breathing. Augustus was the miracle Hazel missed all her life – fighting off cancer; and she, his shooting star from his worst fear, the oblivion. They are the imperfect, incomplete, withering off halves of the complete whole. Even eulogies made a

huge impact on their twisted love. Western ideologies don't even bother to fit in these broken lives in their aesthetics or ideologies. But WabiSabi treats them with equal admiration and with all respect for its authenticity. Life is not the pretty pictures hanging off the cathedrals in Rome but the cracked tea cups in the tea ceremony. All we need is to accept the impressions left by the blot and freckles and cherish them.

Aesthetic principles remain vague and just a construct if not applied to our lives as much as to art. Aesthetics can move us towards a changed perception of our relationships to daily life material being and thereby a rejuvenated insight into our culture. This is stressed in the Zen Buddhist principles and adapted by WabiSabi. The purity of the soul and core is the only matter cherished in the school. Only the basic equipments find a place in the shelf and the luxuries abandoned. In other words, the uncorrupted serenity of the outside is considered the most beautiful threshold of the WabiSabi School of life.

The beauty here is not merely in the eyes of the beholder but the innate inborn quality of the person in question. This is the core idea of WabiSabi, to attain perfection through the uncorrupted naturalness of everything. WabiSabi art challenges to unlearn our previous concepts of beauty, to shed all our prejudices to rediscover the intimate beauty to be found in the smallest details of nature's artistry.

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## “Black is [Really] Beautiful” : Role of Black Arts Movement in African American Literature

### Abstract

The paper traces the evolution of the Black Arts Movement in the history of African American writing along its famous dictum, “Black is Beautiful”. The slogan was a wake song for Black writers in America to disengage themselves with the dominant regimes of representation, come back to their own roots- the true culture of Africans. Black Arts Movement (BAM) is eulogized as the spiritual sister of Black Power Movement. Thus it brought into American literature tremendous changes with regard to its themes, characters, setting and tone. BAM exhorted Blacks to take pride in their negritude and reflect it in their works. “Black is Beautiful” can also be understood as a transcoding practice-- a process of taking one existing meaning and (re)appropriating it for new meanings, since meaning can never be finally fixed. This is an effective counter strategy to contest the racialised regimes of representation. BAM, in that sense attempted to substitute a range of positive images of black people, black life and culture for negative imagery which continued to dominate popular representations of those times. “Black is Beautiful” expands the range of racial representations and the complexity of what it means to be black, thus challenging the reductionism of earlier stereotypes. The proposed paper attempts to locate the relevance of BAM, especially the black theater (as it presents life as it is) in the history of African American literature. It focuses on how far these plays of the time did justice to the slogan, Black is Beautiful. The paper uses the contribution of dramatists cum activists like Langston Hughes, Malcolm X, Amiri Baraka to support the study.

**Keywords:** Black theatre, African American, Transcoding, race, BAM, BPM, black consciousness, black nationalism, blackness, identity.

Black Arts Movement was a strategic shift in the history of African American literature. The movement drew inspiration from the Black Power Movement that was gathering momentum in America during 1960s and 1970s taking influences from Malcolm X. It aimed at achieving self determination for poor African masses leading non-emphatic lives in America. Black Power Movement generated both artistic and cultural waves in America thus exhorting Black masses to take pride in their negritude and assert Blackness. The major offshoot of Black Power Movement was the Black Arts Movement. Eulogized as the aesthetic and spiritual sister of BPM, Black Arts Movement broke apart in 1965 with the activist cum artist Amiri Baraka (formerly known as LeRoi Jones). After the death of Malcolm X, Amiri Baraka moved to Harlem where he founded the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/ School (BARTS), which fuelled the Black Arts Movement. As a literary movement Black Arts has its roots in UMBRA and Harlem writers Guild, two formations of writers of the time. It took its ideological formation from Revolutionary Arts Movement or RAM. These three movements gave impetus to BAM, both as a creative and literary movement.

As Houston A Baker points out BAM marks a “generational shift” in African American literature. It is often called a Second Renaissance. On the failure of Harlem Renaissance

conceived in 1920s, poets and playwrights focused on redefining their works based on the theories of Black Aesthetics. The ultimate aim of BAM was to mobilize and intellectually stir black people. Thus Baraka's vision of Black Arts was opposed to Aristotelian notion of art for art's sake. The movement adopted as its slogan, "Black is Beautiful", upholding the liberation of Blacks through arts. The dictum was a wake song to Black writers to disengage themselves from the white modes of representation. "Black is Beautiful" can also be understood as a transcoding practice –the process of taking one existing meaning and re-appropriating it for other meanings since meaning can never be fixed. Thus the dictum aimed at substituting a whole range of negative imagery regarding blackness with a new set of positive meanings.

The two hallmarks of Black Arts activity were the development of Black Theatre groups and Black poetry performances. Both theatre and performances became tools for Black Arts propaganda. Black Theatre in particular was influential because it bridged the gap between black masses and organic intellectuals. Apart from Baraka, writers like Sonia Sanchez, Larry Neal, Addison Gayle, Haki Madhubuti, Ntuzake Shange, and Nikki Giovanni preached Black aesthetics through their writings. Intellectuals understood that in order to alter the social conditions, Blacks first had to change the way they perceived of them; break free from white norms regarding blackness. Thus Black artists engaged in quest for new modes of expressions based on African American tradition. In other words the ultimate idea of Black arts was to propagate Black Aesthetics.

The artists demanded a whole new Black aesthetics as opposed to White aesthetics. Baraka calls Western aesthetics as bourgeoisie art. In his seminal poem "Black Arts", Baraka declares, "We want poems that kill". According to Baraka, politics, social theory and religion and arts produced orderly patterns of images fostering cultural consciousness and national autonomy. The task of contemporary black art therefore was to assault mainstream (white) images and to promote black images as a tool for fostering independent black consciousness, nationhood and culture. "By the time this book appears I'll be even blacker", says Baraka. (*Home: Social Essays*, 10)

Race was certainly an important issue for BAM. This is best understood in the words of Lorraine Hansberry in her play *Les Blancs* (1968) - "I said racism is a device that of itself, explains nothing... a device is a device, but... it also has consequences. Once invented, it takes on life, a reality of its own." (92) As early as in 1897 Du Bois in his *Souls of Black Folk* had asserted that the Black American could best further his cause by rejecting a servile imitation of Anglo-Saxon culture. On a similar note, Baraka argues in his "The Myth of a Negro Literature" (1962) that "a Negro literature to be a legitimate product of the Negro experience in America, must get at that experience in exactly the terms America has proposed for it in its most ruthless identity." Larry Neal, the gospel of BAM, in his 1968 essay of same title proposed a racial reordering of Western aesthetics by incorporating black aesthetics, culture and values. The motive behind Black Arts is the destruction of the "white thing", as Neal calls it, white ideas and white ways of looking at the world. Stuart Hall identifies BAM as a time when black experience became a hegemonic signifier. The arts were sites of black aesthetics where white hegemonic discourse was contested by a black experience based perspective. It was a strategic move to counter marginal, negative images of blackness.

Langston Hughes and Jean Toomer were particularly concerned with white

representation of blackness in the theatre. Hughes' famous poem, "Notes on Commercial Theater" remarks his views.

You've taken my blues and gone  
 You sing 'em on Broadway  
 And you sing 'em in Hollywood bowl  
 And you mixed 'em up with symphonies  
 ... so they don't sound like me  
 But some day somebody will  
 Stand up and talk about me  
 Black and beautiful...  
 And sing about me,  
 And put on plays about me!  
 It reckon it'll be  
 Me myself!  
 Yes It'll be me.

Hughes is enraged at whites' representation of blackness, which he says is not actual black. Black literature in order to be called a true black art must look at that authentic black experience as its staple. However Hughes was optimistic about the emergence of such authentic and committed writers.

The necessity of homeward movement, celebration of black life and culture is dramatized in Baraka's *Dutchman* (1964). This text established a crucial ethical principle for Black Arts Movement. Clay's oft-quoted monologue during which he claims to be a proud member of blue's people, bespeaks an aesthetic, attitudinal movement towards blackness.

In his essay "Towards a Black Aesthetics" Hoyt Fuller traces out four essential parts of Black aesthetics. On the first hand Black aesthetics worked on an assumption that its basis is already in place. Secondly Black aesthetics aimed at the destruction of the "white thing". It took into account black interest. Above all black aesthetics was an ethical movement. to this last point Bell Hooks adds her view that Black aesthetics was an essentialist movement. BAM has problematized the relation between artistic expression, racial identity and aesthetics. It calls for African American visibility and audibility, the very conditions of "(mis)recognition". To be visibly black in a racist society of spectacle, a strategic concretization of blackness is required.

The ideology that nourishes the Black aesthetics/ Black Arts not only seems to aim at introducing reforms but also aims at having a certain influence on the great masses of black people. Larry Neal reports that one production of *The Slave* chose as the emblem of the black revolutionary army "a red-mouthed grinning field slave", demonstrating a radical alteration in meaning and a supreme act of freedom, available only to those who have it liberated themselves psychically" (72). Thus the impact of Black aesthetics emphatically targets the black masses. As a testimony to this, Baraka declares in his manifesto entitled "The Revolutionary Theater" that "theater must be food for all these (Blacks) who need food and

daring propaganda for the beauty of human mind.” (5) The effort of BAM was to alienate misconceptions of blackness and to develop both an independent African American individuality and nationhood. Many artists responded to BAM dropping their slave names and adopting African names. LeRoi Jones adopted the new name Amiri Baraka as a part of rejecting white man's identity and embracing African identity thus promoting and publicizing Black Arts project.

Coming back to the slogan “Black is Beautiful” and its transcoding attempts, we find black artists and theorists often trying to reverse the stereotypes. They traversed the reticulated terrain of minstrelsy, colonial oppression and the struggle for identity. Baraka's *The Slave* (1964) and *Jello* (1970) are good examples. Baraka does not portray minstrelsy as simplistic tool of racial domination. Instead he uses black face as an unstable form of insight into the lower circles of racism.

BAM censured any kind of “blackening up” –whether it is tomming before white authority or puffing up one's machismo to get rewards. Amiri Baraka in his revolutionary play *Slaveship* delineates the character of Tom Slave. In the opening scene Tom Slave is found monkeying around the white soldiers over board. In the second part he spies the plans of Reverend Turner. In the last scene Baraka presents him as the preacher who speaks in favour of white masters. He is beheaded by a group of revolutionaries who then threw his head onto the middle of the stage. This ritual sacrifice is used by Baraka to warn against blackening up of his people.

BAM lost its importance with Amiri Baraka severing his affiliation with the movement and shifted to political internationalism, becoming a Marxist- Leninist. In *Home: Social Essays* (1966) Baraka records his shift from phenomenological poetics to black aesthetics and Black Nationalism. In short Black arts Movement has significant influence in the history of African American literature. It helped bringing out great many black writers to the mainstream literature and criticism. The slogan of BAM also fuelled the nationalistic urge in these writers and they have shown justice to the movement.

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## Objectification of Women in Comics

The history of comics has followed different paths in different parts of the world. Earlier there used to be a separation between images and words as the two required different methods of reproduction. They were mainly based on religious subjects. By 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries comics started dealing with social and political subjects and made use of caricature and satire. Speech bubbles for dialogues were also developed in this period. With the developments in printing technologies and with the establishment of newspapers and magazines, the illustrations commenting the social and political issues started appearing as cartoons in them. These were later developed into comic strips by 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 20<sup>th</sup> century the comic industry flourished and they mainly targeted the children. Graphic novels and Webcomics were the developments of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Since surveys revealed that men were the primary consumers of comic books, male-centred books were large in number in comic book industry and they concentrated on stories featuring male characters to attract the male readers. Females remained insignificant to writers and publishers. The inclusion of female characters were often discouraged and even if they were included, they were used as secondary in importance. Actually this problem does not affect comics alone, but it is very evident in media in general that have a history of poor female representation.

The world of comics was dominated by superheroes like Superman and Captain Marvel during its early stages of development. Originally, women played a very small role in them. Even if any women characters made an appearance in them, they were presented as dependent and damsels in distress who needed to be rescued by the superheroes. She was usually kidnapped by criminals or the villain and the superhero simply rescues her and flies her to safety. The women were also portrayed as seductive vamp or as a suffering girl-friend. They were stereotyped as subordinate characters who always needed the help of male protagonists. Thus they were always relegated to the background. This gender discrimination was quite explicit in the early stages of the development of comics were women were presented as less intelligent than men and incapable of doing something worthwhile.

Male and female patriotic characters began to appear in comics after World War II. Wonder Woman is one such character to mention who possessed super human powers. She was more or less the female version of male super heroes. She has got the ability to fly and has the power and strength to defeat the villains. Following her example many female protagonist oriented comics emerged soon like Miss America, Mary Marvel, Super Girl, She-Hulk and so on. Thus they conveyed the message that women are also capable of doing whatever men can do. But another thing that happened simultaneously was that they were depicted as sex objects. The superheroes and super heroines of the DC and Marvel comics were the most gendered and objectified. This sexism was used over and again mainly to please the male readers as they were more in number than the female readers for comics.

Let us examine a few famous female characters in comics. One of the super heroines to

catch the attention of comic world was none other than Wonder Woman of DC comics. The character first appeared in *All Star Comics* in 1941 and her official name was Princess Diana of Themyscira. She has superhuman strength and was depicted as an athlete, fighter and strategist. Her costume includes the red top, blue and white star skirt, red boots and tiara. But later by 1950's she was still wearing the classic costume, but it started to get shorter. As time passed many changes were experimented with her costume and her skirt got replaced with a bodysuit. Though she was one character who got spared from major blames against her costumes, she still had to face the criticism of looking sexy in her revealing clothes in many later books in which she appeared (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1

Another famous super heroine is Cat Woman, again from DC comics. She was known for her complex love-hate relationship with Batman. She has been portrayed as an anti-heroine, often doing the wrong things for the right reasons. Many a time she was presented as an object to admire and desire. Her costumes highlight her curves and her body is presented as her strength (Fig. 2). She appeared glamorous and was banned from comics during 50s for violating Comic Code rule.



Fig. 2

Poison Ivy was the super villain and an adversary of Batman appearing in DC comics. It was some dangerous experiments that transforms her into Poison Ivy with plant and animal-based toxins in her blood stream that make her touch deadly. She uses plant toxins and mind-controlling chemicals for her criminal activities. She was usually portrayed as wearing a green one-piece outfit adorned with leaves and plant vines (Fig. 3). She was known to be able to seduce men and women alike and she traps her opponents with her beauty.



Fig. 3

Scarlet Witch was from Marvel comics who has the superhuman ability to change reality and could cause unlikely events to take place according to her wishes. She has undergone many costume changes from a red bathing suit and a wimple that covered her head and neck (Fig. 4) to a red bodysuit that left her shoulders and upper chest exposed (Fig. 5).



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Marvel's She-Hulk was originally presented as ill-tempered and violent, but later her personality changed over time. She is now depicted as fun-loving, kind and empathetic. She is the physically strongest known woman in the Marvel Universe. She has donned numerous costumes but is immediately recognisable due to her size, green skin and long dark green

hair. In her first appearance she wore a ragged white dress which covered her upper body and midsection (Fig. 6). After her Savage era, she appeared in a sleeveless costume and later in a purple and white skin-tight one piece garment (Fig. 7).



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

The presentation of women characters as objects for male gaze became common despite of them being strong or powerful. They were presented in their skin-tight and usually suggestive costumes. They were depicted as objects of desire and male sexual fantasy. Even they are often drawn in such poses to show off their curviest parts clearly visible. Many a times what is given more importance is not what she is doing but what she is wearing. It is as if there is no relevance to her character or personality. They were overly sexualised with revealing clothes and comic books were full of sexual images of women and this hyper-sexualisation lessens the role they are playing in tackling the problems of gender inequality and the fights for women's rights.

The increase in the number of sexual images and reliance upon violent themes led to many complaints and the Comics Code Authority passed a written code containing the guidelines to be followed while writing comics. This period of regulation did not last long and the Superheroes and the scantily-clad Super heroines re-emerged. The unrealistic representation of female characters gave wrong impression in the minds of the young male readers. Many writers used women as sex objects in their comic books merely to increase their sales. They used it to cover up their weak story lines and poor characterisation.

Many super heroines were presented as possessing many skills including mind control power which they used to manipulate their enemies to gain wealth and power. Consider White Queen who used such mind control powers to influence her enemies, Catwoman who used her beauty to win over Batman, Poison Ivy who used her seductive love potions to gain whatever she wants and there are many more. Another character to mention is Frank Miller's Elektra. She is portrayed as a character suffering from Elektra Complex who imagines herself raped by her father. But later it is revealed that it was only her fantasy.

Towards the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the comic writers began to exaggerate the sexual characteristics of both male and female characters. The males grew more muscular and

females developed longer legs, smaller waists and presented them as naked or partially dressed. Thus both genders became representations of fantasies for male adolescent readers and they have no connection with reality. Jeffrey Brown wrote, "Modern female characters are so thoroughly eroticized that it is real impossible to find a super heroine or villainess that is not defined primarily by her sex appeal" (Brown, p. 77).

The sexist undertones and stereotypical images of women became common in the comic industry. This is mainly because this industry is male-dominated. Even in the case of the readers, majority of them are male. So the writers and publishers are more concerned with pleasing them. This does not mean that there are no female comic readers, but as the sexualisation of women in comics continues, the number of female readers will decrease again. This paper mentioned only a few female super heroines; there are many others that won the hearts of millions of comic book fans. But the sad thing is that even by looking at their cover pages it seems that artists and writers are more concerned with how the characters are depicted than with the storyline. It should also to be remembered that it is wrong to blindly blame all the characters and works of DC and Marvel comics. There are many comic books and characters that are worth mentioning for their strong storyline and character portrayal. Consider *Gotham City Sirens* and *Birds of Prey*.

A slight change in the scene came after the comic industry adopted the Comics Code Authority in 1954. The industry formed a self-regulatory body which imposed certain code of ethics and standards for comics. Comics Code barred many things in comics including violence, torture, sympathetic portrayal of criminals, nudity and indecent or undue exposure, suggestive posture, inappropriate dress, exaggeration of female form and so on. Although the Comics Code had no official control over the publishers, most distributors refused to accept comics that did not carry their seal of approval.

Positive changes can be seen in the comic industry as far as hyper-sexualisation is concerned. A good plotline and portrayal of female characters with consistent core values and modest dress is what is required. It is a happy thing to note the introduction of independent and strong women characters in the comic world and the good news is that many writers and artists are taking an effort in this regard by giving importance to story than to cheap selling tactics. Let us hope that more will join them to make this medium a meaningful storytelling form.

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## Selling Beauty

Modern advertisers capitalize on modern Women's desire to be beautiful. Adornment is an enormous and often pleasing part of female culture. In the 1950's advertising revenue soared. As beauty is a major attribute, modern women's magazines now centre on beauty rather than house work. Emphasis on attractiveness is a testimony to the rising importance of personal appearance. Friedan laments that “there is no other way for a woman to be heroine” than to “keep on having babies”; today a heroine must keep on being beautiful (Wolf 67). Modern advertisements are selling diet products and specialized cosmetics and anti-ageing creams rather than anything else. For the advertisers of the expanding range of cosmetic and beauty products, the fashionable woman is the ideal icon. The selfless concern of the wife and mother were replaced by a self – directed attention to images. Thus appearance becomes identity and woman's main line of action.

Woman concentrates on self-fetishisation. Women are pictured in advertisements as self-indulgent pleasure-seekers or flappers. Infatuation with one's own body is an infantile trait that persists in many an adult's subconscious. Advertisers portray women as glamorous and beautiful and the implication is that they need the advertised particular products to appear so. This type of advertisement often makes the ordinary woman feel inferior or insecure and yearn to be like the beautiful woman in the advertisements. The psychological approach of the advertisers works very well here and the ordinary woman feels a pressing need for personal adornment and buys the advertised product in the hope that she can be beautiful like the woman endorsing the product. Thus women's beauty is used to work consumers and thus the advertisers prey on female insecurities.

Feminists have been much concerned about the importance of appearances, particularly with in women's lives. How a woman looks largely determines how other people react to her. Simone de Beauvoir writes 'thus the supreme necessity for a woman is to charm a masculine heart intrepid and adventurous though they may be, it is the recompense to which all heroines aspire; and most often no quality is asked of them other than their beauty'(Barthel 9). Be they princesses or shepherdesses, they must always be pretty order to obtain love and happiness, Advertisements exaggerate the need for personal adornment. SusanBrownmiller has described the importance placed on the appearance of femininity (Barthel 10). Beautiful people are an especially favoured race. According to psychologist Elaine Hatfield “ most people assume that good looking men and women have nearly all the positive traits” (Barthel 10).

The beauty role or the importance of appearing attractive in public, of maintaining standards, of encouraging male attention becomes a central pre-occupation for woman. In 1987 *The New York Times* published an article on the various beauty products available for girls from five years old onwards. This included shampoo, lipstick and perfumes. Many magazines stress the beauty role and many products help women to accomplish it. Putting on appearances, whether seen as reflecting vanity or virtue has been considered a primarily female interest or activity. Walter Benjamin sees woman as a theme echoed in

advertisements for makeup “for eyes, lips, cheeks and nails” (Barthel 38). This is a game in which we are all becoming players, adept or inept.

In India images of beautiful women have emerged as a prime target for advertisers of the expanding range of cosmetics and beauty products. Young, beautiful and attractive women are portrayed in the commercials but one may wonder who makes these endorsements. “Roland Barthes identifies this as the 'passive imperative' voice through which women are told what they absolutely must do, but they are not told by whom” (Barthel 39). The alluring models are capable of attracting consumers, and the 'passive imperative voice' contributes to that. Advertisements assume their own authority and their own mystique. They speak as though they had expert knowledge. But it is very much in their interest, the interest of the advertisers and the manufacturers that women accept it unquestioningly and buy the advertised product unthinkingly. Such sales gimmicks operate very successfully in enticing the gullible women respondents.

Besides this generalized and anonymous authority, advertising assumes several other voices. One such voice draws upon the closeness of the mother-daughter relationship. It is nurturing, protective, gently encouraging and born of experience. Mother fetish is often found in advertisements of skin-care products. In the advertisement of the MedimixAyurvedic toilet soap it is the mother who endorses the product. Prickly heat, pimples, blackheads, sweat, dandruff and germs play havoc with beauty. Medimix soap not only can protect us from all these beauty problems, but also can enhance our beauty by fighting against all these. She assures that this soap is the only thing which one requires to be healthy and beautiful as it contains pure coconut oil and 18 herbs.

No one distrust a mother and if one follows this maternal advice-the viewer of this advertisement may feel-it will help that person to remain safe and protected. Besides, this advertisement arouses a sort of nostalgia in the psyche of Indians for Ayurvedic system of medicines. Motherhood and Ayurvedic medicines are part of Indian culture and they evoke feelings of warmth and affection and thus the claims made by the soap sound reliable and credible. The modern penchant for herbal products is guaranteed by the mother and, thus the modernization of Indian tradition is also connoted. This advertisement employs a narrative campaign to snare consumers.

Another voice of authority which commends the selection of beauty products is the voice of science. It articulates the voice of reason and logic. Sometimes this voice of science illustrates proven facts or results of studies. The advert applies a factual approach instead of an emotional one. It is the voice of experiment, the dispassionate voice of the “Scientist” working for the benefit of humanity. Advertisers take pains to demonstrate the seriousness of manufactures' efforts and the resulting soundness of their products. But a beautiful model is displayed in the advertisement to convince the women consumers of the sure effect of the product. According to Chunawalla, “Beauty appeal in India builds 'fair and lovely' complex. Fairness creams exist in India only. Also talcum powder is used mostly on the face by the South Indians” (27).

Glamour magazines like *Femina*, *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Filmfare*, *Vanitha*, etc., are filled with the faces and exhortations of professional beauties-models or actresses. Use of celebrities is a standard advertising technique and one growing in popularity. Companies are willing to pay substantial fees to have celebrities tout their product and their product

only. The young woman seeing an endorsement from female super stars does sit up and take notice; these are women who 'have' made it, they are women who are beautiful" (Barthel 50).

In many print advertisements also such beauties are depicted. Advertisements are played as art, as science, as craft and even as witchcraft. "Advertising is the witchcraft of the twentieth century. It has its incantations, its how to recipes... its priests and priestesses, its temple whores and secret languages"(Barthel 18). The public's adoration for super star athletes and entertainers is the foundation of the celebrity endorsement commercials. Such advertisements are extremely popular. The presumed pull of the star appeal is that people like to identify themselves with their favourite stars and will therefore be positively influenced by the appearance of a star in the advertisement. The presence of a star may also catch people's attention when they are flipping through a magazine. Advertisers look for people who are a little bit outside the ordinary, whose faces, voices, walks and mannerisms make them stand out from the crowd. That is why sororial tone or established celebrities are used in many commercials.

Body beautiful is the new mantra for both men and women. According to Dr. Narendra Pandya, a beauty surgeon in Bombay, "Beauty pageants have raised the standard of good looks and the need for perfection has percolated to the ordinary man... Today society is affected by hyper aesthetic tension" (Abraham 38). A recent trend is to go for surgery to look better rather than to correct imperfections. Age or marital status is no bar for beautifying oneself.

Massive advertising campaigns play an important role along with quality and styling in the field of fashion. In a mere decade and a half Indian fashion has turned into burgeoning business thanks to clever advertising. In women's hosiery rapid changes have taken place in shades and textures. Even designer wear, which is beyond the reach of the ordinary middle class, has been popularized through adverts on the pages of fashion magazines. Self indulgent designers vie with each other to grab sales by creating hype for themselves. The glamour magazines convey the message that to be considered hep women have to choose the right brand of designer wear, the right accessories and the right kind of cosmetics. Fashionable and smart models in opulent designer wear in the magazines inspire the impoverished as well as the affluent to buy them. Women's magazines cater for all the needs of women to look decorative and desirable. Such magazines devote at least ten pages to fashion, using local as well as foreign models. The main themes running through these magazines are 'beauty' and 'attraction'.

The language of the beauty orders the world, reaffirming status, style and feminine stereotypes. Advertising tends to follow affluence by putting emphasis on attractiveness and personal appearance. In the early decades of the century, wearing obvious make up marked a woman as cheap. Now, wearing cheap make up marks her as cheap. Today, a poorly paid worker is told by beauty and fashion advertisements that she has a democratic right to whatever she desires. She is told that spending may be the secret key to achieving status, beauty, self-approval and love. Thus even the working class women are enticed into these pitfalls.

The woman's social power depends on management of her 'beauty assets'. Women know very well that unequal and segregated labour markets and patriarchal rule have prevailed, but they have learned that there is a kernel of truth to claims that social power hinges on their

ability to evoke desire through appearance. Becoming an object of desire supposedly makes a woman more valuable to herself. Control over one's bodily appearance is correlated with control over one's socio-economic environment.

The advertisers create an artificial aura of glamour and vitality around the product by using beautiful models. Today's advertising market may become over saturated with professional beauties selling beauty products and disclosing beauty secrets. So women are in a dilemma not knowing which model they have to follow. However it is debatable, whether the said model has used that particular product at least once in her life. Yet through puffery and exaggeration the advertisements succeed in creating an illusion in the minds of the viewers that the products enhance the beauty of the model. Consequently they are allured to buy them. The ordinary people become quite unable to make the crucial distinction between the make believe of popular culture and the reality of their own lives. The advertisements have a 'Pavlovian' hold on their audience and spectators and can persuade them to accept any emotion or idea the advertisers wish to convey. Thus they sell their products by reaching potential buyers through persuasive and informative pitches.

Feminists resent the implication that women are preoccupied with cosmetics, style, fashion and attracting men. They accuse advertisers of propagating such an idea. Naomi Wolf in her famous work *The Beauty Myth* discloses how images of beauty are used against women. According to her the rise of beauty myth is just one of several emerging social fictions that masqueraded as natural components of feminine sphere: 'The beauty myth of the present is more insidious than any mystique of femininity yet. A century ago Nora slammed the door of the doll's house, a generation ago women turned their backs on the consumer heaven of the isolated multi-applianced home, but where women are trapped today there is no door to slam' (19).

Since men have used women's beauty as a form of currency in circulation among men ideas about 'beauty' have evolved since the Industrial Revolution side by side with ideas about money so that the two are virtual parallels in our consumer economy. As women demand access to power, the power structure uses beauty myth materially to undermine women's advancement. The beauty myth was institutionalised in the past two decades as a transformer between women and public life. "The beauty myth is not about women at all, it is about men's institutions and institutional power" (Wolf 13).

"The beauty role-the importance of appearing attractive in public, of maintaining standards, of encouraging male attention-becomes a central preoccupation for girls and remains a concern for women for much of their lives, if not all their lives" (Barthel 10). So the advertisements of cosmetics championed by the beautiful models, appear convincing and appealing to the viewers. Usually women consume such beauty products and the advertisements exploit women's craving to be 'beauties' by means of such machinations. "Clothes, make-up and accessories become not simply one form of communication, but rather the only form of communication necessary" (Barthel 62). The commercials thus reinforce the stereotype woman who values her visible beauty identity as her only important identity and her main line of action. Marketing strategies have helped to reinforce the fantasies that beguile women in to accepting their role as ornaments of beauty and sensuality, which degrades and denied women of their self-respect, dignity and their humanity.

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## Factors Involved in Aesthetic Judgment With Special Emphasis to The Feelings of The Moment

### Abstract

*The paper examines the various factors that influence the aesthetic judgment with special emphasis to the feelings of the moment. This paper researches the factors like Heredity, Stereotypical concepts, Symmetry, Hormones, Areas of interest, Color, Shape and Size, Attitude, Other's opinion, Media, Background knowledge, Archetypes, Emotional state etc. that influence aesthetic judgment. Using various research methods, it came to notice that whatever the factors may be the feelings of the moment when somebody sees something or someone decides the degree of beauty in it though the cameraman's eye also has influenced the mentality of the beholder in judging the beauty of something. As beauty is a myth, and is difficult to define the beauty of something, the arbitrariness of beauty depends on these several factors. The beauty of something lies in the eyes of the beholder who is specialized with unique characteristics. So, there is no so called 'defined beauty'.*

### Introduction

“Don't you think it is beautiful?” somebody might have asked this question anywhere in the journey of our life. The response depends on one's ability of aesthetic judgment. The object of the aesthetic judgment can vary from paintings, sculptures, literature, art design etc. to human beings, nature, other creatures and objects. Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge. In his work, *The Critique of Judgment*, Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher conveys that judgment of beauty are sensory, emotional and intellectual all at once. Interpretation of beauty depends on aesthetics and taste. The philosophical notion of beauty is aesthetics. Taste is created by the education process and the mass culture. Kant describes the four possible judgments such as the agreeable, the beautiful, the sublime, and the good. Here, we are considering the second one, the beautiful. It is necessary to admit that the “cameraman's eye” has affected the process of aesthetic judgment. As beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder, what someone feels beautiful might not be beautiful to other for the eye is purely subjective with the beholder. It is because of different factors that decide the beauty in a thing/ idea. Heredity, Stereotypical concepts, Symmetry, Hormones, Areas of interest, Color, Shape and Size, Attitude, Other's opinion, Media, Background knowledge, Archetypes, Emotional state etc. influence the “subjectivity” of the beholder. These factors can be divided broadly into physiological factors, biological factors, psychological factors and philosophical factors.

### Physiological factors

The physiological factors like symmetry, shape, color and size can affect the aesthetic judgment of the beholder. Hofel L and Jacobsen T have found that aesthetic experience and judgments are affected by the symmetry and asymmetry of an object. In 1930, Maksymilian Faktowicz designed a beauty micrometer that could measure even the minor asymmetric flaws. It is named after him as Max Factor. The Max Factor stresses the importance of symmetry to keep the beauty in an object. Normally, human beings are

conscious about the symmetry of themselves. If there is no symmetry, we feel that somewhere something is wrong or incomplete. If something is treated as wrong or incomplete, then it is given no aesthetic value, in most cases. A portrait of a lady is judged as beautiful if the features are drawn perfectly that keep the symmetry in it. Everyone wants nothing to be misplaced. If everything is placed properly in something, it can possess an honor of being judged aesthetically. Likewise, the shape of an object calls for the attention of the beholder. Though novelty or familiarity affects the judgment, the shape matters. An architecture or designer gives importance to the shape of everything to make them perfect and this “perfectness” adds value to the process of aesthetic judgment. The shape of the object decides the feeling of “completeness” as well. There is no argument that color does decide the beauty of something as it is awarded the grade of beauty by the judge and it is purely subjective. The world might not have been this beautiful if all the trees and plants were colored with only one grade of a single color say red. The sky is beautiful during the dusk and dawn but the same color is not welcome in the middle of these times. Human beings give importance to blue and pink for their babies. Some particular shades of colors are not appreciated during festivals, functions and other gatherings. An object of beauty might be beautiful to someone if it is colored green but might be disliked by some others only because of the reason that it is green in color. Like color, the size of the object of judgment also matters. The expected size by the beholder and the actual size of the object need to be matching to get the object judged aesthetically. If the size is below or above the expected range, the object might not be treated as beautiful even though it has covered some other parameters.

### **Biological factors**

The biological factors refer to that of the beholder. The factors like Heredity and Hormone come under this category. The beholder is sometimes helpless in finding beauty in some objects because of his heredity. Heredity is the passing on of traits from parents to their offspring. Through genes, the science has proved that the likes and dislikes of our ancestors are transferred to generations in various degrees. The beholder might be having an affinity towards a particular idea, piece of art or an object that is liked by some of his ancestors. This affinity will play a vital role in generating the aesthetic sense of the beholder to find the beauty in something. If the person is not interested in a particular area, it would be difficult for him to enjoy the beauty in that area. This “interest” can be generated in numerous ways and heredity is a prominent way among them. In the case of hormones, let's focus on to the prominent hormones in the human being, estrogen and testosterone. In 1878, Francis Galton, a polymath, while speaking to anthropologic institute of Great Britain and Ireland, stressed three parameters that decide beauty- averaging, symmetry and effect of hormones. The presence of estrogen signifies the fertility aspect that represents youth and maturity whereas testosterone signifies masculinity. The presence of these hormones shows that the “object” is healthy. The hormones help the human beings to be attractive. Galton explains that, in the human brain, attractive face activates parts of our visual cortex, fusiform gyrus that is especially tuned to processing faces and an adjacent area called the lateral occipital complex that is especially attuned to processing objects. He further says that attractive faces activate parts of our reward and pleasure centers in the front and deep in the brain ventral striatum, orbitofrontal cortex, and ventromedial prefrontal cortex. Our brain automatically responds to beauty by linking vision and pleasure. This affects in the process of the aesthetic

judgment as this process is done even without the deliberate attempt of the beholder.

### **Psychological factors**

The psychology of the beholder plays a vital role in aesthetic judgment. Areas of interest, attitude, media, other's opinion etc. are considered under this category. In psychology, interest is a feeling or emotion that causes attention to focus on an object, event, or process. Here, the interest of the beholder varies and such areas of interest affect the process of aesthetic judgment. If the person is not interested in paintings, can he enjoy that particular piece of art and judge aesthetically? He may judge, but the judgment done by an individual who loves paintings will be different from that of the former. The next factor is attitude. It is a psychological construct, a mental and emotional entity that characterizes a person. It is the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary social psychology, says Gordon Williard Allport, prominent American psychologist. The predisposed state of mind of the beholder can be termed as attitude. A person's past and present affect his attitude towards something. The attitude of an individual towards an object of aesthetic judgment matters. If the object is treated as an interesting and charming one, the judgment would be better than some other person who treats it as a dull area. The media has affected the psychological characteristics of an individual. David Giles, in his work, *Psychology of the Media*, explains the impact of media in shaping the way we see ourselves and others. The effect of advertisements, celebrity worships, treatment of certain issues etc. shape the attitude of a person and it affects in the process of aesthetic judgment. Media has formulated some notions regarding each and every ideas and objects; the expected level of quality to be kept by such things and the expected level of appreciation. The beholder is also subjected to be influenced by other's opinion as well (other than the media). The comments of people on a certain thing or idea force the beholder to think in that particular perspective too and this will affect the judgment process. "If others see beauty in it, why can't I?" you might have thought so while observing something. The perspectives of the majority are accepted somehow in most cases. This also includes the person whom you love or trust, whom you keep close relationships with, whom you admire etc.

### **Philosophical factors**

Philosophical factors like stereotypical concepts, archetypes etc. affect the aesthetic judgment process. There are some stereotypical concepts on what is / should be beautiful. It is based on the culture of that region or country. Imperialism and Colonialism have played a pivotal role in framing such stereotypical concepts. There appears a particular figure in mind when we think of a beautiful piece of art, human beings and nature. The human mind is programmed so by the continuous outpouring of such ideas and impressions. Archetypes refers to "the original pattern or model from which all things of the same kind are copied or on which they are based; a model or first form; prototype. According to Carl Gustav Jung, the term archetype refers to a collectively inherited unconscious idea, pattern of thought, image etc., universally present in individual psyches. Carl Golden says that people have several archetypes at play in their personality construct; however, one archetype tends to dominate the personality in general. Carl Golden divided the archetypes in to twelve under three sets; Ego, Soul and Self. They are the Innocent, the Orphan/ Regular Guy or Gal, The Hero, The Caregiver (Ego types); the Explorer, the Rebel, the Lover, the Creator (Soul types); the Jester, the Sage, the Magician and the Ruler (Self types). It is evident that the archetypes play unconsciously in the esthetic judgment procedure.

### **Feelings of the moment: the prime factor**

Kant explains “aesthetic judgment” as a judgment based on feeling. These judgments are essentially subjective. The etymology of the word “aesthetic” indicates that aesthetic judgment rely on the feeling of the subject who judges the object. Kant argues that our judgment of beauty is a subjective feeling. The human mind accepts something as beautiful only when his mind experiences a peace of mind. What the beholder feels at the moment of aesthetic judgment matters. Sometimes, the feeling might not be appropriate to enjoy the beauty in something. For example, a man who is rushing to his office may not be mentally fit judge something aesthetically, at that moment for he is not having the proper feeling to enjoy the beauty in it. If we see a scribbled paper that is not written neatly, we may ignore it but if we were given the details that it was a letter written by a little girl before her death to her mother sharing her dreams, there would have created a feeling in us thereafter and thus would be able to find the aesthetic elements in it. There is no argument that an angry person can judge something aesthetically than a person who keeps a feeling of happiness, peace and calmness at that moment. It is difficult to keep same feeling always. So the degree of aesthetic judgment done by the same individual varies based on the feelings of that person in different occasions. There is no doubt that other factors influence the beholder in the procedure but it varies depending on his/her feeling at that particular moment. A poem may not be appealing to a reader if his feeling is inappropriate but at the same time, it would be appealing to those who read it with a peace of mind. The Feelings of the moment is the prime factor that influences the aesthetic judgment.

### **What is Defined Beauty?**

It is difficult to define the beauty in something as it is relative. What someone sees beautiful might not be beautiful by some others. Even a single person is unable to judge something aesthetically in different occasions. The degree of beauty changes according to the physiological, biological, psychological and philosophical factors. These factors play in myriad ways to complicate the process of defining the beauty in something. Above all, the feelings of the moment cause changes in the same individual itself in enjoying the beauty in a particular object of aesthetic judgment. From this, it is evident that the concept of beauty is arbitrary and there is nothing called a “defined beauty”. The so called “perfect beauty” cannot exist. No two individuals enjoy things with same degree of aestheticism. It is difficult to judge something aesthetically for there is no correct value as an output. Subjectivity is a hindrance in identifying beauty in something. The so called beautiful things would not be appropriate in some cases say peacock's tail. It is a burden to the peacock. Two “beautiful” things are sometimes not supposed to come together. For example, it would be disgusting if some wears a “beautiful” fancy shoe with his executive dress in a conference. This is also subjective. Someone may” sense some aesthetic quality in it. Then what is “beauty”? Is there any truth in it? As it is relative, there is no truth in beauty. Beauty is a myth.

### **Conclusion**

This paper, titled, “Factors involved in aesthetic judgment with special emphasis to feelings of the moment”, tries to explore various factors that involve in judging an object aesthetically. The various factors are broadly classified into physiological factors, biological factors, psychological factors and philosophical factors. There exist even more factors. The factors discussed in this paper are symmetry, shape, color and size (physiological); Heredity

and Hormone (biological); Areas of interest, attitude, media, other's opinion (psychological); stereotypical concepts and archetypes (philosophical). Above these factors, the feeling of the person at that moment decides the degree of beauty in the object of aesthetic judgment. Finally, the paper tries to prove that there is nothing called “defined” or “perfect beauty”.

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## The Sensual Monsoon : A Peep into the Aesthetics of the 'Forbidden Fruits' in Indian Erotic Tales in English

### Foreplay: The Beginning

Rousseau once wrote “whoever blushes is already guilty, true innocence is ashamed of nothing”, in his essay *Emilius; Or, An Essay on Education* (325). It might be the beauty of the 'forbidden' that obligated Adam and Eve to eat the fruit from the Garden of Eden. They were wholly heedless of the art of blushing in their life before they eat it. Every 'forbidden fruit', irrespective of the culture in which it is fructified, has a beauty of its own and it voyeuristically induces every person to indulge in. The pleasure seeking animal called man spares no moment to elicit the same from the activities he habitually engages. Though his ways are diverse, his ultimate end is pleasure itself.

In his widely acclaimed Psychoanalytic Theory of Personality, Sigmund Freud describes the Pleasure Principle as the driving force of the Id that looks for speedy fulfillment of all needs, wants and urges. The Pleasure Principle strives to gratify our most basic and primitive urges including thirst, anger and sex (Storr 61). A state of anxiety or tension is created when a man cannot meet these needs. The id is the most rudimentary and animalistic part of one's personality. Freud believed that id was the only part of the personality that was present from birth. It is regarded as one of the strongest motivating forces in a human being; it also tends to bury the personality at the deepest, unconscious level.

In childhood the id controls and guides the majority of the behaviour to satisfy the fundamental urges for food, water and various forms of pleasure. Sigmund Freud noticed that children at their very young age often attempt to gratify their biological needs as quickly as possible with little thoughts. They never think of the acceptability of their behaviour. As the children age gradually and attain maturity the ego develops in them and helps to control the urges of the id. The ego is concerned with reality (Storr 61-62). It ensures that the needs of the id are met and make sure that the needs are acceptable in the real world. According to Freud the ego operates through the Reality Principle which is an opposing force to the instinctual urges of the Pleasure Principle. Instead of pursuing immediate gratification for urges, the Reality Principle guides the ego to check these needs and hence the enjoyments are both realistic and socially appropriate.

Lacan uses the term *Jouissance* to denote enjoyment. The term does not appear in Lacan's work until 1953, but even then it is not particularly salient. In the seminars of 1953–4 and 1954–5 Lacan uses the term occasionally, usually in the context of the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the slave: the slave is forced to work to provide objects for the master's enjoyment. Up to 1957, then, the term seems to mean no more than the enjoyable sensation that accompanies the satisfaction of a biological need such as hunger. Soon after, the sexual connotations become more apparent; in 1957, Lacan uses the term to refer to the enjoyment of a sexual object and to the pleasures of masturbation, and in 1958 he makes explicit the sense of *Jouissance* as orgasm (Evans 117).

The pleasure principle functions as a limit to enjoyment; it is a law which commands the subject to 'enjoy as little as possible'. At the same time, the subject constantly attempts to transgress the prohibitions imposed on his enjoyment, to go 'beyond the pleasure principle'. The very prohibition creates the desire to transgress it, and *Jouissance* is therefore fundamentally transgressive (Evans 118).

Both the Pleasure Principle of Freud and the *Jouissance* of Lacan were intimately associated with the psychology of human being as a whole. It touches the human mind as such. But this paper is attempting to apply these theories to the general processes of reading the erotic. It shows how people derive the pleasures from the 'prohibited' or 'immoral' writings and eventually reveal the concept of beauty inherent in erotic verbal signs.

### **Lovemaking: The Body**

The erotic tradition of India is thousands of years old. Since time out of mind, the Indians have been divided in terms of erotic writings. There were literary romantics and the traditionalist. The romantics embraced the erotic writing as they believed it added gloss to life. In other words they were erotically positive. Knowledge of the erotic enhanced the quality of living. They used their art as vehicle of erotic articulation. Their literature, music, drama and even grammar were infused with the erotic. Romantics believe that coupling was a central life force and they appreciated the energy that comes from all couplings whether man-woman, woman-woman, man who identify himself as woman (and are fantasizing about male gods or wo(men) with god (Narayanan XIII)).

Traditionalists on the other hand are erotically anxious. They believed that a qualitative life was one in which the four goals of life – Artha (wealth), Kama (desire), Dharma (duty) and Moksha (salvation from the cycle of life and death) – are in balance. They never promoted the erotic worrying that if not controlled strictly it may hamper the other three goals of life. They used both religious writings and social contracts to articulate the dangers of the erotic and insisted that the erotic must be kept on the periphery aside from its necessary use as a vehicle of reproduction. Traditionalists believe in the notion of the ideal couple: heterosexually and monogamously married with children and the extended family in the foreground and a willingness and ability to keep the erotic in the background.

Both the romantics and the traditionalists were anyhow unanimous in their opinions about the extraordinary power and attraction the erotic held on human beings. During the Vedic Period in India the traditionalist sentiment prevailed. But later around the beginning of the second century BCE literature sang about the glories of the erotic. From the second to the sixth century Indians embraced the erotic idiom. It was the golden age of Romantics. This age was noticeable for the Tamil Sangham poetry, Maharashtrian *Gata Saptasati*, the prose and Poetry of Kalidasa and *Kama Sutra* itself. The period was followed by puritans again. The single work that survived the Puritan clutch was known as *Amarusataka*. It was written in Sanskrit in the seventh or eighth century by King Amaru of Kashmir. Later the Bhakti poets carried the glory of erotic writings proclaiming their erotic love towards god. Following the Bhakti period the Urdu language exerted a considerable influence upon Indian culture and had a pro-romantic influence. The joining hands of the Hindu and Muslim puritans along with the seventeenth century British puritans curtailed the growth of erotic thoughts and writings. However significant works broke the wall of puritanism and appeared in a scattered fashion. *Radhika Santawanam* by the Telugu courtesan Muddupalani and the

poems of Qalandar Bhaksh Jura't are a few among them. As we advanced towards the present era the diverse cultural states of India consciously indulged in erotic writings in their own tongues.

### **Orgasm: The Ecstasy of Beauty**

As far as love making is concerned, foreplay – the poetic way of sieving pleasure – can be considered as the childhood of orgasm – the mature pleasure. In erotic writings, like foreplay and orgasm in sex, a reader may extract pleasure directly from the words openly from the words such as cock or vagina or circuitously suggesting the meaning, like the unfolding of a marvelous poem. Margaret Mascarenhas in her poems experimented both. For instance her poem 'Funeral' is a foggy road where the reader is supposed to extract the pleasure with effort:

.....  
It is sticky, this residue  
It smells of fermented flowers  
And hospital rooms  
There is no beauty in ashes  
The only music left to play  
is a dirge to the day  
You stopped kissing my hands. (9-13)

It's all about the love making process and dry season left after the male orgasm. A sudden cessation of the kissing indicates exhausted male sexuality. The female counter part could not find the beauty in ashes as they cherish the fire often. In her another poetic piece entitled 'Passive – Aggressive' she subverts the age old binary of male–female sexual encounter. The poem is noticeable as it boomerangs the constructed notion of sexuality.

.....  
But you forgot to feed the unicorns  
I am not a thing  
Or an area  
I will not remain quietly in a corner by the wall  
Don't take anything for granted:  
If you eat raw onions, you must move to the far side of the bed. (2-7)  
Margaret has made use of direct expressions too. The poem 'Sirens' is 'nude' for instance.  
Sirens  
wetting  
Tongues  
circling  
Necks  
fragrancing

Nipples

standing

Legs

wrapping

Hips

wilding

Mouths

stretching

Eyes squeezing

liquid glass

on pale silk sheets. (1-18)

In her *A Pleasant Kind of Heavy and Other Erotic Stories* Amrita Narayan makes use of the erotic idioms to represent the beautiful. The story 'The Touch of the Sun' tells the story of a local artist who embarks upon a wild and passionate affair with a Russian neighbour. The story is teeming with gorgeous expressions. They are often suggestive and force the reader to deconstruct the phrases thereby forming a 'pleasant kind of heavy' in their heart. At one instance the narrator describes the physique of Fedya, the Russian as:

When he first arrived in the United States of America he'd moved furniture to make a living – a part of his history that is visible in his large, developed shoulder muscles – but the way he is touching the flower speaks of his tremendous versatility. He strokes it gently, using only thumb and forefinger, from bottom to the top, not going all the way but stroking just up to the flower's sepals where the purple is turning to dark pink and returning to the base before moving up again, his concentration as unwavering as his gaze. (38)

The reader is here left to brood over the sexual connotation it may have. The most striking feature about these expressions is they never demand a standard of beauty. At another point the story teller narrates Gitanjali's effort to make a tea saying that “a good tea must not be rushed and Gitanjali never tries” (39). It denotes the way she approach sex and it becomes apparent when the story develops further.

At some other instances in the story Amrita explicitly expresses the passion of a sexual intercourse and perhaps these utterances make the story immoral to the so called 'moralists'. The sentences are 'naked' revelations of the beautiful in human body.

He looks down there at those petals of his goddess, now moving his knees and thighs to either side of hers such that her thighs squeeze together and penetrating her thus, he places one thumb on her clitoris and rubs this place of his worship as he continues to thrust. Minutes later, arches up from the pillow in ecstasy, while Fedya continues rubbing and thrusting until he is sure she is completely spent. (56)

Ananth in his novel *Play with Me* depicts a meditative world of love and sex. It is the story

of a successful photographer called Sid who fell in love with a free spirit Cara and later with another woman. Sid's relationship with Cara is charged with love and lust and the writer placed charmingly the energy of their relationship while he describes the bond. Consequently the verbs of lust are more overtly placed on the pages and perfectly unclothed in all ways.

She reached down and curled her fingers around my throbbing cock and guided me into her, thrusting her hips upwards as I entered her swiftly. It felt like the first few moments after you dive head first into a warm swimming pool, the water enveloping you comfortingly, your body moving rhythmically, pushing further feeling triumph in every thrust. (189)

In the three genres analyzed above – poetry, short fiction and long fiction – the general tendency prevailed was that nobody was excavating the external beauty as such which we usually do with a picture or a video. Instead the readers were creating an imaginary space of their own and experiencing a pleasure which was almost similar to that of the *Jouissance* suggested by Lacan. Hence the erotic writings are all about the internal and the real beauty

### **Pillow Talk: The Conclusion**

The whole world exists today on the brick of relationships and the relationships depend upon words. The words are looking for the beautiful and beauty finds its comfort in 'naked utterances'. It is to be noted that these stripped words never demands a specific colour, race, caste or class to be defined as beautiful. Let's call these 'naked articulations' as 'pillow talks', which is actually an intimate conversation between two sexual partners after the intercourse. It includes caresses, cuddles and other physical activities that cement the intimacy. Verbs are the backbone of the concept. In other words, it is the bare and hence honest verbs that define the beauty as such.

The fundamental point that this paper wanted to settle is that the beauty of the erotic utterances surpass all other representations of beauty. The film and other visual media spotlight the colour or the shape of the human body. They are still not courageous enough to render a black or downtrodden in their representations. But the beauty came into being by words especially by erotic writings have no issues with the race, ethnicity, caste or colour of the people. When we speak of a human body we are referring to the beautiful embodiment of a person, and not to a body considered merely as such (Scruton 40). It is free from all limitations. A visual narrative, be it a moving image like film or a stable one like that of a painting, is limited by the beauty dictated by the so called White or elite culture. On the other hand pictures that we stitch by words become beautiful in all respects. It is left to the free play of imagination of the reader. It can be concluded, after all, that the beauty of the erotic writings is nothing but pleasure. It is faultlessly free from all standardized forms of beauty and therefore exists in multitudes

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## Philanthropic Pulchritude : The Attribute of Benevolence in the Sagacity of Charm

From the time immemorial, stories are told among people depicting beauty and humanity, the two major aspects of life. Both of these qualities are directly proportional and closely interrelated. Man is a social animal at the same time he is an aesthetic animal. Most of the people describe beauty as the outer charm but it is not only the external prettiness but also the internal psychological factors including personality and humanity. In his famous book *The Sense of Beauty*, the American author George Santayana describes 'anything which pleases is beautiful'. In the poem *Lotos Eaters* Tennyson says that unless man possesses a satisfied heart he cannot be the roof and crown of creations. Satisfaction is only guaranteed when one helps others in a benevolent fashion. Dalai Lama describes kind-heartedness in *The Art of Happiness* as 'the love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries; without them humanity cannot survive. According to Hudson, a beautiful Lilly plant will be a simple Lilly plant to a common man, a Liliaceae family plant for a scientist, 'beautiful lady in the garden' for an ordinary poet and 'power and plant of life' for a poet of the highest order. But everyone will appreciate the inner beauty alike. Clemency is an inborn nature of mankind. In whatever depth it is buried, it will come to the surface when an occasion arises. The present paper is trying to analyze the novel *The Kite Runners* by Afghan author Khalid Hosseini to describe the nature of man. Its hero Amir, due to his inabilities and circumstances, once behaves like inhuman towards his companion Hussain, but later he abandons his moral turpitude and expresses his philanthropic attitude. Beauty and humanity are juxtaposed and assayed in literature by majority of the authors through visualizing the generosity behind captivating people and their allurements is due to the humane behaviour. The philanthropic attitude of a person will increase the superficial beauty in gigantic proportions.

**Key Words:** Pulchritude, Clemency, Philanthropic attitude, Allurement, Moral turpitude.

From the very old days, stories were told between people and engraved on stones. Literature existed before the period of literacy. Literature is the reflection of a society pertaining to its culture, humanity, beliefs, beauty and traditions. It depicts the life. The stories told by the people among them describes beauty and humanity in detail. Both these qualities are intriguingly interrelated. Most of the old stories are vividly describing the beauty of the heroines and the humanistic attitude of the heroes.

Beauty is a personal experience involving an interpretation of some entity as being in balance and harmony with nature, which may lead to feelings of attraction and emotional well-being. It is the characteristics of an animal, idea, object, person or place that provides perceptual experience of pleasure and satisfaction to a person. According to Christian ideological thinking beauty is an ultimate value – something that we pursue for its own sake and for the pursuit of which no further reason need be given. So it should therefore be compared to truth and goodness. But beauty is a matter of appearance, not of being, and by exploring beauty we are investigating the sentiments of people, rather than deep structure of the world. Our judgments of beauty are often supported by critical reasoning, which focuses

entirely on the character of the object. The judgment of beauty is not merely a statement of preference but an act of attention and expression in many different ways. We appreciate beautiful things not for their utility only, but also for what they are in themselves and for how they appear in themselves. When our interest is entirely taken up by a thing, as it appears in our perception that is our aesthetic interests, and independently of any use to which it might be put that is our utilitarian interests, then do we begin to speak of its beauty. There is an ancient view that beauty is the object of sensory rather than an intellectual delight, and that then senses must always be involved in appreciating it.

Art becomes the enterprise through which the individual announces himself to the world and calls on the gods of vindication. True artists control their subject matter in order that our response to it should be their doing, not ours. Art is the best medium for a person to express his sense of beauty to the world.

Humanity is a virtue associated with basic ethics of altruism derived from the human condition. It is a quality to show interest and sympathy towards other fellow human beings. Confucius said about humanity as love of people while Greek philosophy is silent about describing humanity but speaking about its qualities like love and kindness in detail. Humanity can be explained as having qualities like love, kindness and social intelligence. Love is a mutual feeling between two people characterized by attachment, comfort and generally positive feelings. Kindness is a quality that evokes feelings of altruism, generosity, helpfulness and a general desire to help people. Social intelligence is the ability to understand relationship with other people, including the social relationship involved in intimacy and trust, persuasion, group membership and political power.

American author George Santayana describes beauty as 'anything which pleases is beautiful' in this famous book *The Sense of Beauty*. The Greek proverb 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder' describes the true fact about aesthetics. Ralph Waldo Emerson says that 'never lose an opportunity of seeing anything beautiful, for beauty is God's handwriting'. According to Hudson people admire beauty according to their perceptiveness, like a small Lilly plant will be simple Lilly to a common man, a plant having scientific name and belonging to the Liliaceae family for a botanical scientist, beautiful lady in the garden for an ordinary poet and power and plant of life for a poet of highest order. In the poem *Lotos Eaters*, Tennyson says that unless man possess a satisfied heart, he cannot be the roof and crown of creations.

In *Invisible Man* Ralph Ellison says, 'life is to be lived, not controlled; and humanity is won by continuing to play in face of certain defeat. Dalai Lama describes kind-heartedness in *The Art of Happiness* as 'love and compassion are necessities not luxuries; without them humanity cannot survive.

The novel *The Kite Runner* by the Afghan novelist Khaled Hosseini describes the two qualities of beauty and humanity in detail. Most part of the story tells the events happening in Afghanistan, but the author describes the place not as a barren land ravaged by terrorism but a place having its own beauty in it. Hosseini pictures Kabul as a beautiful city with a lot of kind hearted people.

*'The poplar trees lined the redbrick driveway, which led to a pair of wrought-iron gates. They in turn opened into an extension of the driveway into my father's estate. The house sat on the left side of the brick path, the backyard at the end of it.'*

Baba, the father of the hero of the novel Amir, is a kind hearted man. He is a Pashtun by birth and he has a friend called Ali who is a Hazara of lower social class. Ali, due to his feeling of inferiority works as a servant to Baba, but Baba considers him as equal. Amir, the son of Baba and Hassan, the son of Ali are playmates.

Hosseini is also par excellence in describing people with minute details like *'I can still see Hassan up on that tree, sunlight flickering through the leaves on his almost perfectly round face, a face like a Chinese doll chiseled from hardwood: his flat, broad nose and slanting narrow eyes like bamboo leaves, eyes that looked, depending on the light, gold, green, even sapphire.'*

Baba considers Hassan as equal to Amir, and congratulates him whenever he excels Amir. Baba behaves roughly towards Amir, but he is benevolent towards society by building an orphanage by himself and giving poor people as much as he can. The respect given by other people towards Baba for his humanitarian attitude which impresses Amir to like him.

Amir do not like his Baba's behavior towards Hassan. Hosseini describes Amir as a child with many inabilities and Hassan as a child with more good qualities. But Amir wins a kite festival to Baba's expectations. Hassan, an expert kite runner, while trying to secure the defeated kite for his friend Amir, is brutally raped by three people. Although Amir sees the cruel act, he due to his weakness does not fight against this injustice. Due to his guilty feeling he avoids Hassan and later on expels him from the house by imputing him as a thief.

*'Hassan's not going anywhere. He's staying right here with us, where he belongs. This is his home and we're his family. Don't you ever ask me that question again.'*

This was the harsh reply of kind hearted Baba while Amir asked for a replacement of servants. Baba's this behavior compelled him for the cruel act of inflicting guilt upon Hassan.

Separation of Ali and Hassan from Baba and Amir saddened Baba but made Amir happy. Due to the problems in Afghanistan Baba and Amir escapes to America. Benevolent and courageous nature of Baba comes out during this trip also. Although he and Amir travels as refugees, while a soldier tries to molest a woman who was a co-passenger in front of him, Baba fights against it.

*'Tell him I'll take a thousand of his bullets before I let this indecency take place.'*

Baba and Amir lives in America in a low social state but Baba faces the situation in a hopeful way. Though he loves his son fully, he always longs for Hassan to be with them.

After Baba's death, Amir got a call from Rahim Khan, his father's friend, who compels him to correct his childhood mistakes. Amir return to Kabul to see its devastating situation. Hosseini describes the fate of Afghan people during the Taliban rule as Amir find a college professor begging in the street.

KhaledHosseini's fictitious language is also an art of beauty in itself. *'Earlier that morning, when I was certain no one was looking, I did something I had done twenty-six years earlier: I planted a fistful of crumpled money under a mattress.'* This passage describes two similar acts, one done to make his friend guilty of theft and the other done as a benevolent act.

At last Amir follows his Baba in showing benevolent attitude and he rectifies his early mistakes and this made him the hero of the novel.

We can come to a conclusion after detailed perusal of this novel '*The Kite Runner*' that its author Khaled Hosseini is excelling in describing the humane nature of man in detail using beautiful words.

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## Demystifying the Sensual : A Study of Oscar Wilde's Select Poems

Since culture does not facilitate the expression of alternative sexual orientations, the mechanisms of unconscious acquire a medium of its own to get articulated. The conscious self is permitted to project only that kind of images which are socially and culturally acceptable; but the unconscious finds ways of expressing the forbidden desires through symbolic expressions.

Hostility towards homosexuality hinders the writer's explicit expression of homoerotic elements in his work, as a result he devises different methods to give expression to his repressed desires. Wilde seems to have approached his poems in a complex way through which his repressed homosexual feelings find expression by means of contrast. A study of select poems by Wilde exposes how such repressed feelings get manifested through different aspects of physical beauty.

The portrayal of women in Wilde's poems is highly relevant in the sense that they depict Wilde's attitude towards women and heterosexual relationship. Women in his poems symbolically stand for chastity and represent unconsumed love. He brings images of virgins and praises their physical charm in abundance, but keeps himself away from them.

Pearson makes a valid observation regarding Wilde's relationship with women:

Part of his attractiveness to women was due to the fact that, while delighting in their society, they were not physically necessary to him. The real 'Don Juan', he told Vincent O' Sullivan, 'is not the vulgar person who goes about making love to all the women he meets, and what novelists call "seducing" them. The real Don Juan is the man who says to women, "Go away! I don't want you. You interfere with my life. I can do without you". Swift was the real Don Juan. Two women died for him'. (260)

'La Circassienne' is a poem which celebrates the beauty of a woman. The speaker admires the beauty of that young woman. He loves her "tremulous topaz eyes". He adores her body, her ivory hips, her gilded breasts, sun-scorched neck, eyelids of chalcedony etc. But more than everything he loves her chastity: "And most of all, my love, I love, / Your beautiful fierce chastity" (75). The poet's description of the physical beauty of the woman rules out her sexual potency.

His poem 'Requiescat' is about the death of a woman who "was young and fair" but has "fallen to dust" (18). Poet describes her as "lily like", "white as snow", with "bright golden hair" (18), but is now insensible to the music of the world. It is a small poem in which the poet grieves over the death of his beloved. The line 'She hardly knew she was a woman' (18) negates the possible pleasures in the life of a woman. The fact that she lived the life of a woman without experiencing the pleasures which she could have had as a woman underscores her virgin existence. The poet's lover thus lived and died as a virgin.

In the poem 'The New Helen' the poet brings a different image of Helen. He says "Yet care

I not what ruin time may bring/ If in thy temple thou wilt let me kneel” (28). He expresses his love and adores her as an entity different from all other women. He says that she is not “born as common women are” (28). But he concludes the poem by stressing the fact that she is “pure and inviolate!” (29). His love takes the form of a spiritual love by presenting her as pure and unstained.

Like the speaker of Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress' in the poem 'Panthea' the speaker tries to arouse the passion of his hesitant lover. He says, “I am too young to live without desire/ Too young art thou to waste this summer night” (83). He reminds her that they have lips to kiss with and hearts to love. There is no consummation in their love though he tries to make their love immortal as the notes of a great symphony.

Attributing divinity to women makes it easier to describe them as virgin and chaste. In some of his poems Wilde brings the images of virgin women who have divine and godly existence. For instance in 'San Miniato' he speaks about “The Virginal white Queen of Grace-Mary!” (19). He asks her to listen to him before the sun shows to the world his “sin and shame” (19). Similarly in the poem 'Rome Unvisited' he addresses the blessed lady as “Mother without blot or stain” (21). It is in this religious poem that Wilde expresses his desire to see Pope prior to his death.

Wilde even portrays them as passionless and incapable of lustful emotions. In 'Madonna Miad' he paints in words the image of a beautiful woman. He describes her in detail: lily girl, brown braided soft hair, blue eyes, pale cheeks, red lips and white throat with purple veins. She is presented as pure and one who is not stained with lustful emotions: “Pale cheeks whereon no love hath left its stain/ Red under lip drawn in for fear of love” (26). Wilde imagines this beauty as devoid of passion and lustful feelings. In a way this act of negating lust in women could be a manifestation of Wilde's own failure in falling for their feelings. The lines “Yet, though my lips shall praise her without cease, / Even to kiss her feet I am not bold” (26) elucidates poet's attitude towards heterosexual relationship. He can shower words of praises on her but fears her physical proximity.

In 'Impression du Matin' the poet speaks about one pale woman with “lips of flame and heart of stone” (41). Lips of flame suggest her beautiful physical features, but the heart of stone implies her inability to arouse lustful emotions. 'Silentium Amoris' shows the poet's inability to express his love to his lady love. He is charmed by her beauty, but fails to express it: “So doth thy Beauty make my lips to fail, / And all my sweetest singing out of tune” (92). He is muted by excess of love and wild passion: “So my too strong passion work me wrong, / And for excess of Love my Love is dumb” (92). This poem is yet another example for poet's failure in keeping relationship with a woman. He feels that it would be better for her to leave him and go to someone else who may love her: “Else it were better we should part, and go, / Thou to some lips of sweeter melody, / And I to nurse the barren memory / Of unkissed kisses, and songs never sung” (93).

There are poems which exhibit Wilde's hostility towards women and his distrust in heterosexual relationship. He presents them as unfaithful, treacherous and even wicked. 'Serenade' is a poem about a faithless woman who has no feeling for her lover. He calls for his lady love but says she will not come because she does not care about a lover's vows (45). He goes on to generalise his view on women as incapable of being true to love: “True love is but a woman's toy, / They never know the lover's pain, / And I who loved as loves a boy / Must love in vain, must love in vain” (45)

'The Dole of the King's Daughter' is basically a poem about sin and punishment. The king's daughter lived a life of sins: "Seven sins on the king's daughter, / Deep in her soul to lie" (75). It is said that there is one man who truly loves her and he "hath duggen a grave by the darksome yew" (75). Perhaps he killed the king's daughter and dug the grave to bury her, because the poem concludes with the lines: "The sins on her soul are seven, / The sin upon his is one" (75). The poem is yet another example for Wilde's poems that depict treacherous and sinful women.

As the title suggests 'Her Voice' is the voice of a lady who tells her lover that they were lovers once but, "those times are over and done" (93). She says it was all a beautiful dream and they have lived their "lives in a land of dreams!" (93). Bold and determined, she advises to "kiss once again, and part" (94). She is also a representative of treacherous women who mercilessly cheat their love. She confidently asserts that "I have my beauty – you your Art/ ...One world was not enough for two/ Like me and you" (94) and leaves him.

'The Harlot House' is also a poem about unfaithful woman. The poet goes to the harlot's house with his love in the night. Together they watched the dancers spin to the loud music. He watched them with disgust and thought "the dead are dancing with the dead" (115). But she left his side and joined them: "Love passed into the house of lust". Here again the poet portrays the image of a lustful woman who leaves her love to seek more pleasures. His description gives the readers an impression that she has no love, but lust.

Same sex pairing can be observed in some of his poems where the speaker associates himself with a male character in the poem. In certain poems the description of his love creates an ambiguous position regarding the lover's gender. His words of praise seem equally applicable to a boy love as well. In 'Ave Maria Gratia Plena' the angel and the speaker form the same sex pair. The speaker is eagerly waiting for "His coming" (20). He has some wonderful images of this angelic figure in his mind. He tries to imagine "Him" as the great "God who in a rain of gold/ Broke open bars and fell on Danae" (20) and as the god who slew Semele when she wished to see "God's clear body" (20). Both these reference connote to the Greek god, Zeus. According to the myth Danae is the daughter of King Acrisius. When Acrisius learned that he will be killed by the son of his daughter he locked her away in a chamber. But Zeus got into the chamber in the guise of a golden shower and impregnated her. Semele is mother to Dionysus by Zeus. Zeus fell in love with her and repeatedly visited her. Zeus' wife Hera became jealous of her and planted seeds of doubt in Semele's mind. Semele then demanded that Zeus reveal himself in all his glory as a proof of his divinity. He does it. But being a mortal looking upon the God she perished, consumed in flame. The speaker of the poem expects to see such a heroic paramour like Zeus in his angelic figure: "And now with wondering eyes and heart I stand/ Before this supreme mystery of Love" (20). And what he sees is "An angel with a lily in his hand" (20). Attributing the lustful images of Zeus to the Angel gives a different shade of colour to the speaker's relationship with the angel. Moreover, he deliberately makes his angel a man not a woman.

The image of 'narcissi' in the poem 'Sonnet Written in Holy Week at Genoa' can be taken as a symbolic representation of homosexuality. Narcissi though a type of flower echoes its name with the mythical character Narcissus who fell in love with himself. Narcissism is often considered as the epitome of homosexual attraction. Falling in love with one's own image is treated as the crudest form of feeling sexual attraction towards someone of the same sex. In the poem the poet was wandering through Scoglietto's far retreat. "Life seemed very sweet"

(21) as he stood enjoying the beauty of nature with the pale narcissi lying at his feet. It is then that the young boy priest announced the death of Jesus. And the speaker confesses that “those clear Hellenic hours” he has spent with his love has “drowned all memory of Thy bitter pain, / The Cross, the Crown, the Soldier and the Spear” (21). Here he presents a contrast between Hellenic pleasures and Christian values. His love has made him forget the Christian values for a while.

In 'Easter Day' the poet's undue admiration for the Pope offers a different reading to the poem. He describes the Pope thus:

Like some great God, the Holy Lord of Rome  
 Priest- like, he wore a robe more white than foam,  
 And, king –like, swathed himself in royal red,  
 Three crowns of gold rose high upon his head:  
 In splendour and in light the Pope passed home. (24)

The vision of Pope reminds him of someone who long back has wandered by a lonely sea. He is very much touched by the spectral sight of Pope. Pope is thus a symbolic representation of a feeling that he longs for.

In 'Vita Nuova' the image of 'White Limbs' symbolically suggests the poet's repressed desires. It stands for the persona whom the poet waits. The speaker of the poem is not happy with his life: “My life is full of Pain”, he says (25). He waits for some miracle to happen so that the miserable experiences of his life may change. He longs for the arrival of someone “who can garner fruit or golden grain/ From these waste fields which travail ceaselessly!” (25). His quest for this mysterious presence is shown using the image of casting net into the sea. He threw the net and finally saw, “From the black waters of my tortured past/ The argent splendours of white limbs ascend” (25). The white limbs represent his hope and happiness. He describes the ascend of the limb as “a sudden glory” (25) which has brought happiness to his life. The white limbs thus form a pair with the speaker of the poem.

'The New Helen' speaks about the return of Helen or about the Helen of his time. This Helen, he says is “not born as common women are!” (28). The poet also speaks about a God “whose feet/ In nets of gold the tired planets move” (28). The poet combines the image of Helen with the God to give a new form to the New Helen. He speaks about the God thus: “Who in thy body holds his joyous seat”. Helen's body is the God's abode. Helen's union with the God symbolically associates her with a man which gives homosexual connotation to her relationship with the speaker of the poem. The description of Helen's influence on other men reminds us of Dorian's evil influence on other young men.

No! Thou art Helen, and none other one!  
 It was for thee that young Sarpedon died,  
 And Memnon's manhood was untimely spent;  
 It was for thee gold-crested Hector tried  
 With Thetis' child that evil race to run,  
 In the last year of thy beleaguerment; (27)

After having set the new image of Helen the poet now expresses his love for this New Helen.

O Helen! Helen! Helen! Yet a while,  
Yet for a little while, O, tarry here,  
Till the dawn cometh and the shadow flee!  
For in the gladsome sunlight of thy smile  
Of heaven or hell I have no thought or fear. (28)

Moreover, he has taken the image of Helen from the Greek mythology to contrast it with the barren, loveless and passionless England.

Lily of love, pure and inviolate!  
Tower of Ivory! Red rose of fire!  
Thou hast come down our darkness to illumine  
For we, close-caught in the wide nets of Fate,...  
Till we beheld thy re-arisen shrine,  
And the white glory of thy loneliness. (29)

She thus stands for desires which are forbidden in England. They are fated to live in the world of gloom and the New Helen set a model before them with all the glory of her, or more precisely his loveliness.

In 'Taedium Vitae' poet expresses his disgust with women. He says he doesn't want to mesh his soul within a woman's hair (95). He doesn't wish to stab his "youth with desperate knives" (95). He thinks a woman's love is of least importance in his life. And that it is "better to stand aloof/ Far from these slanderous fools who mock my life" (95). Instead he prefers to go back to the "hoarse cave of strife" where his "white soul first kissed the mouth of sin" (95). Kissing the mouth of sin can be taken as a symbolic representation of homosexual relationship. Thus the speaker of the poem and the symbolic mouth of sin form the pair in the poem.

Explicit same sex pairing can be traced in his poem 'Endymion' between the poet and his love. The poet asks the moon to leave his love to him. He asks the moon to be a guardian or sentinel to his love. The "purple shoon" is a recurring image in the poem. The colour purple is often used to denote gay people. The poet keeps reminding the moon that his love is "shod with purple shoon" (46) indicating his gay orientation. He describes his love thus: "...he is soft as any dove, And brown and curly is his hair" (46). He asks the moon to tell his love that he is waiting for him. But when the lover doesn't come back he says, "False moon! False moon! O waning moon!/ Where is my own true love gone,/ Where are the lips vermilion./ The shepherd's crook, the purple shoon?"(47) He concludes the poem asserting that his lover is not meant for the moon. The lady moon has the young Endymion, a beautiful youth who was loved by the moon. He was put into sleep, and every night the moon embraced him. The poet tells the moon, "Thou hast the lips that should be kissed" (47). He encourages the moon to have relationship with Endymion, and asks to spare his love.

As a poet Wilde is greatly inspired and influenced by the romantic poet, John Keats. The poem 'The Grave of Keats' displays poet's affection and admiration for Keats. Poet describes Keats the way one admires his love: "O Sweet lips since those of Mitylene!" (71). Interestingly enough, Mytiline is the capital and port of the island of Lesbos. The common

term lesbian is an allusion to the Greek poet Sappho whose abode was the Island of Lesbos. Mytilene is thus closely associated with homosexuality. The poet promises that, “tears like mine will keep thy memory green/ As Isabella did her Basil tree” (71). In Keats poem, 'Isabella, or the Pot of Basil' Isabella's attachment with the pot of Basil tree underscores her ardent love for her lover Lorenzo who was beheaded. By bringing the image of Isabella and Lorenzo poet celebrates his love for Keats.

Literature offers a space where the unacceptable fantasies and desires become sublimated into acceptable literary images. As Freud proposes, art draws upon the unconscious for its themes and images. Suppressed desires in the unconscious often take distorted forms in literature thus getting projected to the so called forbidden social space. Wilde's alternative sexual orientation thus gets manifested in his poems through the way he represents women and treats the theme of love and physical beauty.

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## Toni Morrison's Subversion of Beauty Standards in *The Bluest Eye*

Beauty is considered as a social and cultural construct because each society has its own standards and ideals of beauty. But, the recent researches show that colonialism had its impact on beauty standards too because it could make white standards of beauty as universal and unquestionable to an extent. For more than a century, white is beautiful, was an undebated area as the entire world believe so. Societies started denying their ideals of beauty and following white or the standardised versions of beauty. With the coming of postcolonial writings and counter discourses people started analysing and questioning all the well-established white standards including beauty standards. It gave a new way to ethnic or culture specific ideals even in the case of beauty standards. "Black is beautiful" became one of the prominent movements led by the black artists of America in 1950s and 60s which challenged the white supremacy that portrayed black as ugly and demonic and highlighted black as beautiful. It also tried to dismiss all white parameters of beauty because it believed that beauty is a cultural construct and thus culturally specific.

Toni Morrison writes her novels in the background of "black is beautiful" slogan and she approaches the debate from a different perspective through her writing. Even though we argue that beauty is culturally specific and thus different for each and every society, it is not so easy in the case of people and societies live in contact with the colonisers even now. As Frantz Fanon rightly points out, as long as the black remains on his home territory he will not have to experience his being for others. But the moment he comes out of it he has an existence only in comparison with the white. (Fanon 89) So, in a predominantly white society like America, beauty cannot be a black cultural product purely. Rather, it will be constantly under threat as it can neither be purely black nor be purely white. To quote Fanon, "I wanted to be typically black, that was out of question. I wanted to be white, which was a joke." (Fanon 111)

Morrison deals with such a tensed situation through her first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970). She analyses the impact of white standards of beauty on a young female psyche in a neo colonial world through this novel. It also shows the impossibility of being "typically black" as they are far away from their homeland or their new homeland is never hospitable to them. So, in this paper I would like to do a postcolonial enquiry to see how Morrison subverts the white standards of beauty that make the existence of black beauty impossible and its impact on Pecola Breedlove and other women characters. It is an attempt to see why Morrison was very much concerned in selecting the most "vulnerable member of the society", a female child, to portray the devastating impact of beauty standards. ("Foreword" 3)

The entire colonial project has its roots in the misrepresentation of the colonised and their socio-cultural standards as they have been always projected in a comparative light with the west. Literature and other visual media had a predominant role in propagating white standards so as to highlight whatever was not white in a negative shade or rather to project them in an inferior position. Morrison brings in these propagandist social productions in several parts of the novel to analyse its role in the colonisation of black minds in a different

way.

The novel begins with a popular school primer in America during almost 1940s to 1970s. It gives the picture of a beautiful white family of Dick and Jane. It fixes Dick's and Jane's "green and white house with red door" and their "happy family" consisting mother, father, Dick, Jane, dog and cat as standard. As Esti Sugiharti quotes Gurleen Grewal, Dick and Jane primer shows the "hegemonizing force...of dominant culture" (Sugiharti 4) But, Morrison's play with the language or dismissal of the so called standard language while repeating this primer also can be seen as a challenge to this beautiful family, as she portrays some ugly households and families of black people in the later pages of the novel.

Morrison also encounters with and challenges white gender specific standards of beauty in a detailed manner throughout the novel. As Morrison discusses in her 1971 essay "What the Black Women Thinks about Women's Lib", they established satisfactory differences between white and black females. The white females were ladies, worthy of respect as they were soft, helpless and modest, whereas coloured females were women and unworthy of respect as they were tough, capable, independent and immodest. (1) White world is constantly under the process of making and maintaining these differences in a more evident fashion. Susan Bordo argues that through seemingly trivial practices, rules and routines we "make our bodies". It is not the craving, instinctual body, but what Foucault puts it as "docile bodies." (1) Morrison's black female characters are always under the threat of these white feminine standards. Claudia's hatred for white dolls would be a best example to understand this debate. Claudia says "the big, the special, the loving gift was always a big, blue eyed Baby Doll... What was I supposed to do with it? Pretend I was its mother? I had no interest in babies or the concept of motherhood. I was interested only in humans my own age and size..." (Morrison 18) At the same time, Pecola and Frieda admire Shirley Temple, another white icon of beauty a lot. Even, Claudia is incapable of rejecting the dolls completely. She hopes that there will be a day when she may also become mature enough to turn violence to love and to admire Shirley Temple. (21) This ability to transform hatred of dolls to love is possible for Claudia because her constant engagement with the one and only approved standard of beauty.

In the "Introduction" to *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon discusses the inferiority complex ascribed by the coloured people in two ways because of their constant engagement with the white culture. The first one is the economic inferiority and the second one is the internalisation or epidermalization of this inferiority which will make one to think white as the superior. (5) This kind of an inferiority is inscribed in Pauline and Pecola. For Pauline, it happens through her migration to North and her new addiction for film. In her narrative, she says. "Northern coloured folk was different too...no better than whites for meanness...they wore high heels...they were amused by her because she did not straighten her hair...when she tried to make up her face it came off rather badly..." (Morrison 115-116) It is a psychological trauma discussed by Fanon where his fellow Negroes too reject him because they are almost white now. (Fanon 96) Pauline's inferiority complex becomes more and more intense, because, to put it in Madonne M Miner's words, she is introduced to the "crippling effects of white standards of female beauty through films." (qtd. Walther ) It made her to imitate the hair style of the girl in the magazine cover page (Morrison 121) and to realize how ugly her newly born daughter was. (Morrison 124) Also, it made her to embrace the white household of Fisher's and to be a faithful servant there abandoning her own family. (Morrison

126) So, as Morrison notes in her essay "What the Black Woman Thinks about Woman's Lib", for a black woman hostility comes not only from the popular white beauties but from the happily married black women too. (15) Also, in Pauline's case visual media and magazines trap her into inferiority complex as they did not represent Pauline's type of beauty.

Pecola's tragedy is not just because of the visual absence of her beauty, but because of its terrible impact on her own fellow beings. Her own mother rejects her as the white household made Pauline a little white with the money they have paid her and the social status she attained before other black women because of the money she earned. MacTeer family becomes so sympathetic towards Pecola only because of her inferiority in terms of economic and social status. Claudia remembers, "Mama had told us a 'case' was coming- a girl who had no place to go. The country had placed her in our house for a few days until they could decide what to do... that old Dog Breedlove had burned up his house, gone upside his wife's head, and everybody, as a result was outdoors." (Morrison 14-15) So, Mrs. MacTeer becomes so angry on Pecola when she drinks three glasses of milk. (Morrison 21) Also, Claudia and Frieda are not very positive about her acquaintance with three whores in the city as their family status does not allow them to see them in a positive light at all. Pecola's encounter with Geraldine and her cat also establishes her inferiority in a more clear fashion as it also shows the demarcating line between a clean and a "nasty" black. (Morrison 90) Maureen Peals entry into the school also draws our attention to the more complex realities of colonialism. As a mulatto, Maureen enjoys a privileged position than all the black girls and it makes Claudia furious on her. She says "black boys did not trip her in the balls; white boys did not stone her... black girls stepped aside when she wanted to use sink in the girl's toilet." (Morrison 60) Maureen is not beautiful. At the same time, she is not ugly too. She has a different paradigm of beauty, which is "cuteness" as one of her parents is a white. (Morrison 72) With that she is capable of saving Pecola from boys. Visual absence of Pecola's beauty, white glances that neglected even her own existence, and black glances that distanced her from her own people, provoke her to pray to make her disappear. "Pecola hid behind hers. Concealed, veiled, eclipsed... , when every billboard, every movie, every glance told that she was ugly." (Morrison 37)

Morrison projects Pecola as intersectional space where all layers of inferiorities interact with each other. Here, author's selection of the "most vulnerable member" of the society, a female child also becomes very important. Even though Pecola's brother, Sammy Breedlove also suffers the same family problems and racial discrimination, Morrison projects him as a person with certain amount of agency and power in his hand because of his so called inherent privilege as a boy. When Pecola learns about her ugliness from other's eyes, she prays to god to gift her a pair of blue eyes, she eats candy named after the "smiling white faced, blond haired, blue eyed" Mary Jane, she drinks milk from Shirley Temple faced cup, and even she goes to the West Indian priest Soaphead to come out of the inferiority complex that damaged her psyche very badly. But, none of these things helps her to either to achieve what she had wished or even to come in terms with her own ugly bodily realities. On top of it her situation becomes more and more tragic as she was brutally raped by her own father. Although Claudia believes that Cholly loved Pecola enough to touch her, envelope her and give something of himself to her, his touch does not help her anyway other than ruining her completely. He becomes the supplier of one more inferiority element to her identity and it makes her mad at the end. But, Sammy's case is so different. The narrator says "Sammy used his ugliness as a weapon to cause others pain. He adjusted his behaviour to it, chose his companions on the

basis of it: people who could be fascinated, even intimidated by it.” (Morrison 37) Fanon says that, when others fix him with their gaze, he loses his temper and he explodes. (Fanon 89) Similarly, Sammy too has such an agency and power to explode and cause pain to others. Whereas all these layers of inferiority makes Pecola more and more ugly to an extent that it damages her psyche.

Toni Morrison tries to subvert all white standards of beauty as it does not even allow other paradigms of beauty to exist because of its dominant nature and because it has a huge impact on the black psyche. Further, she questions and challenges the black people who have appropriated themselves to the white icons and standards of beauty by showing its impacts on young Pecola. It also shows the impossibility of “black is beautiful” slogan as everybody aspires to be little white and look beautiful and Claudia concludes her narrative by saying that “this soil is bad for certain kinds of flowers.”

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## Celebrating the Feminine Beauty : The Self Exploratory Power of Beauty in the Indian Chick Lit Culture

### Abstract

*The concept of beauty which has been a pursuit of humans for centuries looms large in the popular culture when it comes to the matters regarding women. Rather than a physical attribution, it crosses the boundaries to something that gives us perceptual experience and is expressed as an enthralling, poignant and beguiling spirit whose curbing is a herculean task. Popular culture presents certain standards of comparison for ideal beauty whose inaccessibility can cause indignation, uneasiness and even ostracization from the society. Beauty is in the beholder's eyes has become a cliché and now deconstructed as beauty is in the eyes of the society.*

Modern Indian fiction which seeks to render experience from the view point of feminine consciousness and susceptibility impart a great subservience in procuring space for the real women to arise and employ their full potentiality. The aesthetic considerations which are made on the changing tastes of its captive audience lead to the adoption of Chick-Lit, a contemporary genre which has a dual Anglo-American origin in 1996 has been introduced to the young Indian girls with the publication of Advaita Kala's *Almost Single* in 2007. **Indian chick lit** is the Indian subgenre of chick lit, a genre of fiction written for and marketed to young women, especially single, working women in their twenties and thirties usually featuring an airy, irreverent tone and frank sexual themes, penned by a woman. Though the genre is liberating, the issues it confront, especially the everyday challenges of a “new woman”, such as their conflict with beauty is worth mentioning. Chick lit focuses on several important issues such as consumerism, love, fashion, beauty etc. But its exploration of beauty as a resistance to patriarchal force and its impact in procuring a space for women in the contemporary society, carved a niche for itself in the literary arena.

One of the grave issues that Indian chick lit project is the heroine's obsession with beauty. The issues of beauty such as identity, body image, empowerment, vendibility etc are reflected in the novel. Almost all the beautiful aspects of beauty are explored throughout the novel. The cosmopolitan culture portrays women as an object to be gazed and conquered by men. But chick lit heroine through her beauty resist the patriarchal domination and considers beauty as a means to obtain a high socioeconomic status there by creating an identity for her in the society.

The present paper entitled “Celebrating the Feminine Beauty: The Self Exploratory Power of Beauty in the Indian Chick Lit Culture”, is an endeavor to study how the concept of beauty is related to identity, body image, empowerment and the importance of superficial beauty in popular culture. . For the same, the novel, *Losing My virginity and Other Dumb Ideas* by Madhuri Banerjee is analyzed so as to reveal how beauty is portrayed as a serious issue capable of self exploration.

## Introduction

Indian English literature which has been a product of colonial encounter started with the imitative phase following the British models and went through various phases hence emerging as a distinctive voice in revealing the quintessential Indian experience. Due to the patriarchal postulations of superior male artistic creativity, the work of women writers has been prejudiced for inferior themes based on their circumscribed experience. The majority of these novels depict the psychological sufferings of the frustrated house wives in search of their identity and self esteem. Literature often mirrors the culture that exists in a society. Hence, literature “grants us access to countless new cultures, places and inner lives” (Merrick 2006, ix). The aesthetic considerations which are made on the changing tastes of its captive audience compelled the Indian literature to experiment new trends and genres to keep up the spirit of their readers distracted by new media and the internet.

Chick Lit is said to have a dual Anglo-American origin in 1996 with the publication of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* in UK and Candace Bushnell's *Sex and the City* in USA. It is a genre in the women's writing written by women for the women. The general themes deal with the dilemmas which a modern working woman has to face on day to day basis. Elizabeth Merrick attempts to summarize the main plotlines of the typical chick lit novel in the following extract:

Chick lit is a genre, like the thriller, the sci-fi novel, or the fantasy epic. Its form and content are, more or less, formulaic: white girl in the big city searches for Prince Charming, all the while shopping, alternately cheating on or adhering to her diet, dodging her boss, and enjoying the occasional teary-eyed lunch with her token Sassy Gay Friend. Chick lit is the daughter of the romance novel and the stepsister to the fashion magazine. Details about race and class are almost always absent except, of course, for the protagonist's relentless pursuit of Money, a Makeover, and Mr. Right. (Merrick, 2006: 7-8)

Indian chick lit is the Indian subgenre of chick lit, a genre of fiction written for and marketed to young women, especially single, working women in their twenties and thirties usually featuring an airy, irreverent tone and frank sexual themes, penned by a woman. The adopted genre when adapted into the Indian context emerged as a new trend especially for the young autonomous working women who are struggling to find a space for themselves in the socio economic scene of the twenty first century. The rise of chicklit's popularity in India begins with the publication of *Piece of Cake* by Swati Kaushal in 2004. The success of the book prompted a flood of similar books in the book market such as Rupa Gulab's *Girl Alone*, Rajashree's *Trust Me*, Advaita Kala's *Almost Single* etc. Terry Eagleton asserts that the “fact that we always interpret literary works to some extent in the light of our own concerns [...] might be one reason why certain works of literature seem to retain their value across the centuries” (10). Eagleton's argument is applicable to this Indian sub-genre which typifies not only the experience of Indian women but also the experience of the tens of millions of women in the post-colonial developing world.

*Losing My Virginity and Other Dumb Ideas* by Madhuri Banerjee explores the journey of a woman who meets a romantic relationship after a long wait, only to get all her notions shattered and discover a 'new' self. Kaveri, the protagonist of the novel is the epitome of the new woman in the chick lit who has everything that a woman needs to be contended in her

life. She is in her thirties, single, an interpreter by profession who knows seven languages and enjoys the freedom of her life- an intelligent and autonomous woman but feels insecure and incomplete in her life in search of "The great love of her life."

Chick lit novels can be identified readily by their pastel covers and illustrations of women with high heels, designer purses, and fashionable clothing (Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006). Wells explores the connection between fashion and identity in chick-lit: "[C]onsumer goods are essential to chick-lit heroines' self-conception and self-presentation, and writers commonly give as much attention to the obtaining and assembling of outfits as to the maintenance of faces and bodies" (62). The elements of fashion have remained and continue to be a crucial part of society and women lives. It plays an important role in their lives and projects the need for stylish and good looking. Chick lit heroines, an epitome of modern women incline to be exceedingly fashion-conscious and thoughtful of their appearance, crave to look as trendy as possible, often placing fashion before their own comfort. They celebrate the feminine beauty in all its sense and tries to reconstruct it as their powerful weapon. They consider beauty as a means of alluring advertence in the public thereby carving a niche for themselves in the society. Appreciation from the public is the primary concern of the Chick lit heroines and at any cost they are ready to sacrifice anything for its sake. Kaveri, the protagonist though beautiful with shoulder length, black hair and olive skin (2) couldn't find a perfect love remaining even in her thirties "Unmarried. Single. Alone"(2). It is at this point of time she longed for a changeover. Aditi, her friend advised her some tips to attract male gaze "First you have to shop for new clothes, new shoes and new accessories to impress a guy"(40). This shows the importance of appearance in the love relationship which in turn contributes a new identity for the individual. The changeover though an obsession of the heroine turns out to be positive as she finds herself confident and bold enough to face the world. Similarly Kaveri felt that her new makeover would make even the celebrities envious:

So I went home and stood in front of the mirror and looked at myself for a long time. I started liking the new look. I felt confident. Thinner even! Maybe this wasn't bad idea. I was ready to go out and meet some new men!  
(26)

Chick lit which focuses on the life of a woman seriously deals with the beauty concept which is seen as a powerful weapon capable enough to redefine an individual. The definition of being "beautiful" imposes drastic psychological effects upon the heroine which have been correlated with degradation, eating disorders and low self complacency. The chick lit heroine's obsession with her beauty and her constant worries about her weight can be considered as an attempt to construct gender identity. The relationship "between a woman's appearance and the chances of her [...] success in bedrooms and boardrooms is an issue that has long been central to discussions of feminism" (Ferriss and Young 11). The primary battle for protagonists within chick lit novels is with their weight, while the search for a man becomes secondary (Umminger, 2006). Popular culture considers that the image of a female must be thin to be noticed in the world. The identity of the female protagonist is entirely fabricated based on her inclination to have the perfect body, or to maintain the perfect shape. In the novel Kaveri struggles to maintain a perfect shape and even had an aversion for herself due to her bodily imperfection.

I've always had a love- hate relationship with my body. I've tried to love it

enough to look like the model of a Cosmo cover, but ended up hating that it didn't adhere to any of my diets or workout regimes. I still believed that if I needed to lose my virginity, I might need to lose my weight first. (17)

The misconception that men get attracted towards trendy and slender female is deeply rooted in the female psyche. Weight issues are one of the grave concerns confronted by the Chick lit heroines. Susan Bordo notes, "Fat, not appetite or desire, became the declared enemy, and people began to measure their dietary achievements by the numbers on the scale rather than by the level of their mastery of impulse and excess" (185). It is an accepted fact that thin remains the standard, and anyone who does not meet this standard, particularly women, becomes an outcast to society. Nancy Etcoff states: "At the same time that the thin ideal has become entrenched, it has been vilified by feminists and cultural critics as oppressive and dangerous to women" (201). This is evident from the uneasiness of Kaveri that the anxiety of the overweight compelled her to "spent tens of thousands of rupees on different slimming centres and dieticians to curb the expanding waist"(10). In the beginning of the novel, Kaveri wears a size 14 and is unhappy with her life later she turns her life around through dramatic weight loss, earns a glamorous promotion at work, and had begun wearing heels, summer dresses and short skirts that were all a size 2 (216). The message Kaveri sends is that a woman's happiness is directly related to her body weight (Umminger, 2006).

There is always an identity crisis and an internal conflict in the heroine regarding her appearance. Popular culture imposes certain definitions for beauty whose inaccessibility can cause indignation, uneasiness and even ostracization from the society. Beauty is in the beholder's eyes has become a cliché and now deconstructed as beauty is in the eyes of the society. The heroine's identity is being manipulated by popular culture and tries to construct her identity based on these assumptions. The term identity refers to the internal conflict confronted by the heroine with her own beauty. This conflict arises from the reality that her identity does not come from within but is actually prescribed to her by others and society most probably from magazines, television, movies, or other images within popular culture. In case of Kaveri it is Aditi who is the manipulator of her internal conflict. She goes on preaching that "And please stop eating this calorific things! Men don't like fat women" (24). Kaveri tries to define herself following the norms of popular culture. She felt that in order to be accepted by the society she needs to be in terms with the concepts of culture, leading her to become a trendy woman. Aditi advised: 'First of all, ...'We need to get your hair straightened or coloured or something that makes it less blah'...'Nobody likes to screw a frizzy haired chick. A new hair style is what you needed' (23). This transformation to fit in the society turns out to be positive as it made Kaveri bold enough to ignite her adventures.

The term beauty is directly connected with vendability in Chick lit as it refers to the ability of a woman to market herself as an ideal partner to form a good relation. Kaveri though unmarried in her thirties is in search of her 'One great Love'(2) which turns out to be a herculean task for her. She is aware that the only weapon she has to conquer love is her beauty. When her love Arjun speaks to her she tries to expose herself by showing her charms. 'I took off my sunglasses and pulled them to the top of my head so he could notice my eyes, the only good feature about me part from my wrists'(44). Kaveri tries to make an impression in Arjun through her wardrobes and accessories. On her first date she wears 'jeans and an emerald blue sleeveless top with a white shrug, losing the heels for silver flip flops' (51). This attracted him and complimented her for her gorgeous outlook and finds it difficult for him to

part from her. He says “I think you're the most beautiful, intelligent, enigmatic woman I've met” (77). Thus Kaveri is able to market herself to earn her love through her beauty. The beauty in Chick lit is a resistance to patriarchy as her beauty gives her an opportunity to influence and make a man her slave. He even goes on to the extent that he pleaded for her presence. Though it ended in a heart break she is able to make him realize that her absence is a great loss for him. Finally when her love returns to her at her own terms she finds herself telling him: “You have always taken charge and presumed what we should do. And I've let you because it felt nice to have someone lead the way. But I've thought about what I've wanted to do and have been doing it for so long now that I can't have someone else lead the way.” (220). When her love is back on her own terms she didn't want him. She did not need him anymore- emotionally, physically, financially and spiritually.

The self exploratory power of beauty is analogous with the empowerment of women. The term empowerment as it relates to beauty refers to the power that women can achieve when they succeed in society. Kaveri through her beauty explored her strength as a woman. Though she is abandoned by her love, she made it as a stepping stone for success. Kaveri, through her journey finally explored herself and emerged as an independent woman who believes in love but not domesticity. She lets lose herself only to emerge out more self confident. To fight her blues she decides to step out of her comfort zone and experiment with new things in her life. She participates in a reality show, starts a venture as travel planner and finally decides to do the scariest getting a tattoo before shifting to New York for an internship. She becomes immensely popular with her reality show and the reason behind it is her feminine beauty. When she is being selected for the show, she couldn't sort out the reason for her selection which later revealed by the director as 'I liked your freshness when I had met you some months ago. You had a wonderful face that you're willing to try anything'(150). Finally we find our heroine in New York at the day of her final ordeal before her one great love steeped in the knowledge that she is beautiful and also that she is looking good in white coat from Macy's and black plunging “Herve leger” dress. But what is more laudable is her self exploration that finally makes her outgrow her fear of loneliness. She realized that her beauty is her strength.

Indian chick lit, a contemporary genre for the new women provides a hope and optimism for the new woman of the twenty first century. It helps her to redefine her womanhood, trying to carve a niche for herself in the society. It also focuses on several important issues such as consumerism, love, fashion, beauty etc. Chick lit portrays the feminine beauty in all its positive sense and tries to redefine her identity. But it's exploration of beauty as a resistance to patriarchal force and its impact in procuring a space for women in the contemporary society, carved a niche for itself in the literary arena.

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## Adagio : A Verbal Trip to the Aesthetics of Dance in Indian Context

O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,  
How can we know the dancer from the dance

- W.B Yeats, 'Among School Children'

Dance is a physical and visual art form, which has an immediate and massive impact on the spectator. The various Indian forms act like a window to India's rich cultural reservoir. Dance is the form of art, wherein the body is used as a medium of communication. Indian dances have played an influential role in many other realms of art including poetry, sculpture, architecture, literature, music and theater. The earliest archaeological evidence of Indian dance, which dates back to 6000 BC, depicts a beautiful statuette of a dancing girl.

Bharata's Natya Shastra (which was written between the 2nd century B.C. and 2nd century A.D) is the earliest available thesis on dramaturgy. According to a popular belief, Brahma, the Creator of the World, combined literature from the Rig Veda, songs from the Sama Veda, abhinaya (expression) from the Yajur Veda and rasa (aesthetic experience) from the Atharva Veda, to form natya (what we today call dance). It explains the nuances of dance, giving stress on mudras (hand formations) and their meanings. Apart from the abhinaya and the performance of rasa, the audience is amused by the attire and ornaments of the artist.

The majority of Indian classical dance forms are focused on the depiction of the nine rasas (Navarasas or the emotions), which includes Hasya (happiness), Krodha (anger), Bhibasta (disgust), Bhaya (fear), Sringara (erotic love), Viram (courage), Karuna (compassion), Adbhuta (wonder) and Shanta (serenity). Bharatanatyam - Tamil Classical Dance, Odissi - Oriya Classical dance, Kuchipudi - Telugu Classical dance, Manipuri - Manipuri Classical Dance, Mohiniaattam - Malayali Classical Dance, Sattriya - Assamese Classical Dance, Kathakali - Kerala Classical Dance, Yakshagana - Coastal Karnataka Folk Dance.

I assume that beauty is an essential attribute of the divine. The Divinity, the Divine Mother, is indescribably beautiful, aesthetic, tender, sweet, subtle, charming and attractive. Therefore in the Indian Classical Dance, which is essentially an expression of divine grace and subtle divine beauty, very much emphasis is laid upon Beauty and Elegance of the dance-movements as well as the appearance of the dancer.

In ancient times the Temple-Dancer was regarded and worshipped as the living Representative of the Divinity. The real Temple-Dancer was supposed to be highly dignified, pure, of good moral character, very well educated and exclusively devoted to divine ideals and aspirations. The outer appearance of the Temple-Dancer, the dresses, the jewels, etc. were arranged in such a way, that everyone got the impression, that not an ordinary human being is dancing, but a vibrant, beautiful, real Divinity.

In modern era dance forms are also used for maintaining body fitness as Dance Therapy. Dance provides an active, non-competitive form of exercise that has potential positive effects for physical health as well as mental and emotional wellbeing. Dance therapy is based

on the idea that body and mind are co-relational. Dance has the power to heal and inner awareness.

Even now, in the present performances of Indian Classical Dance, especially in the Bharatanatyam, Mohiniyattam and Kuchipudi-styles, very much emphasis is laid upon the Divine appearance of the dancer. The costumes and ornaments, used in these dances are extremely beautiful and colourful. The ornaments are so attractive, that they immediately delight the eyes and heart of the viewers.

Bharatanatyam is a major genre of Indian classical dance that originated in Tamil Nadu. Bharathanatyam expressed Hindu religious themes and spiritual ideas, particularly of Shaivism, but also of Vaishnavism and Shaktism. The word meaning of Bharathanatyam is Bha- Bhava which means emotions, Ra- Rag meaning musical notes, Ta- Taal meaning rhythm, Natyam- the Sanskrit word for drama. The long and dedicated art is necessary to acquire grace and elegance to have a charming personality and appearance. The hand gestures called 'Mudras' convey myriads of meaning.

The major parts of the body head, chest, hands and legs called 'Angas' are classified into three groups for the assignment of the movements. The parts are called 'Prathyangas' and 'Upangas' which includes the extremities and facial features.

'Adavu', the basic unit of dance technique combining standing position, leg movements and hand gesture helps to decorate the art. All these give a lively and delighted expression to the dance performance. These require a lot of concentration from the dancer to transcend the mind, forget the individual self and merge with the divine beauty. The same aspects in every classical dance such as Kucchupudy, mohiniyattam, etc.

The dance ornaments are the original designs, derived from the temples. They look beautiful and have a deep mystical meaning.

The long braid represents Kundalini power. The white and orange flower symbolizes the Kundalini Shakti. The round ornament that is at the crown is called Rakkodi which represents the Brahmarandra. There is a hidden spiritual in this ornaments accompanied by unending peace, joy and wisdom. They also wear other head ornaments, like the sun and the moon representing Pingala and Ida. When these are united, divine presence starts to flow. Another beautiful head ornament, leading from the upper part of the head towards the forehead and parting from these towards the temples of the forehead. This ornament is worn by ladies all over India for joyous, auspicious occasions and festivals. This ornament is called Nettichutty which represents the divine presence flowing in a drop manner. There are other dance ornaments for example necklace, belt etc. which associates with various spiritual meanings. The above mentioned beautiful ornaments of Indian classical dance are closely connected to the mystical and divine beauty.

Bharatanatyam remained exclusive to Hindu temples through the 19th century, was banned by the colonial British government in 1910, the Indian community protested the ban and expanded it outside the temples in the 20th century. Modern stage productions of Bharatanatyam have incorporated technical performances, pure dance based on non-religious ideas and fusion themes.

Mohan Khokar's the most famous book Traditions of Indian Classical Dance works as a perfect medium that propagates and inculcates the ideas of Indian classical dance into the psyche of the reader. He says that the Indian classical dance is gradually moving away from

its original form. In ancient times dance was not controlled by commercial greed. The old beauty of aesthetic interpretation and the real spirit of total involvement of a dancer is lacking today.

Kuchipudi , derives its name from the village of Kuchelapuram, in Andhra Pradesh, India. As a classical form of dance, drama and music, Kuchipudi enjoys a unique place among the Indian classical idioms. Kuchipudi grew largely as a product of the Bhakti movement beginning in the seventh century A.D. However, it was in the 14th century that the ascetic Siddhendra Yogi appeared on the scene and gave Kuchipudi a new definition and directions.

“A clean body thus a clearer mind thus A sparkling self”- Vimmi B Eshwar.

This art form elevates the abhinaya pattern to the heights of spiritual salvation. The dance breathes in four elements of expression. The Angika Abhinaya (expression through body gestures, postures and movements), the Vachika Abhinaya (expression through voice and speech), the Acharya Abhinaya (expression through visual presentation) the Sattvika Abhinaya (expression of the reality of an emotion).

The modern version of Kuchipudi is attributed to Tirtha Narayanayati, a 17th-century Telugu sanyasin of Advaita Vedanta persuasion and particularly his disciple, a Telugu Brahmin orphan named Sidhyendra Yogi. Tirtha Narayanayati authored Sri Krishna Leela Tarangini and introduced sequences of rhythmic dance syllables at the end of the cantos, he wrote this work as a libretto for a dance-drama. Narayanayati lived for a while in the Tanjore district and presented the dance-drama in the Tanjore temple. Narayanayati's disciple, Sidhyendra Yogi, followed up with another play, the Parijatapaharana, more commonly known as the Bhama Kalapam. When Sidhyendra Yogi finished the play, he had trouble finding suitable performers. So he went to Kuchelapuram, the village of his wife's family and present-day Kuchipudi, where he enlisted a group of young Brahmin boys to perform the play. According to the tradition, Sidhyendra requested and the villagers agreed to perform the play once in a year, and this came to be known as Kuchipudi.

The downfall of Indian dance culture in colonial rule period : After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the Mughal Empire collapsed, Hindu rebellion sprouted in many parts of India, including the Deccan region. In the second half of the 18th century, during this period of political turmoil, the colonial Europeans arrived, the Madras Presidency was formed by the East Indian Company officials and became part of the British Empire. Andhra was part of the Madras Presidency. During the colonial era, Hindu arts and traditions such as dance-drama were ridiculed. History says that the British officials stereotyped and dehumanized artists, calling Indian classical dances as evidence of "Harlots, debased erotic culture, slavery to idols and priests" tradition. They launched the "anti-dance movement" in 1892, to ban all such dance forms. The anti-dance camp accused the various classical Indian dance forms as a front for prostitution, while revivalists questioned the constructed histories by the colonial writers.

In 1910, the Madras Presidency of the British Empire altogether banned temple dancing. Kuchipudi, which was traditionally staged at night on a stage attached to a Hindu temple, was impacted and like all classical Indian dances declined during the colonial rule period. Thus from this era upto now there is a wrong impression in the mind of people about this art.

After the ban, many Indians protested against the caricature and cultural discrimination, launching their efforts to preserve and reinvigorate their culture. Due to these efforts from

1920s onwards, the classical Indian dances witnessed a period of renaissance. Because of the efforts made to preserve this art, there is appreciation and encouragement, the people are able to admire the divine beauty in this art.

One should know that the outer beauty should remind us of the beauty of beauties – God. A dancer without this divinity is a soup without salt. If a divine dancer performs a dance, the whole world will be attracted to her divine beauty. It is the hidden language of the soul. In order to realize and express real divine beauty, the dancer must therefore try to become an outright divine personality.

Yakshagana is a separate genre of music, independent of Karnataka Sangeetha and the Hindustani music of India. It is believed to have survived as an indigenous phenomenon only in Karnataka. A typical Yakshagana performance consists of background music played by a group of musicians (known as the *himmela*); and a dance and dialogue group (known as the *mummela*), who together enact poetic epics on stage. The *himmela* is made up of a lead singer (*bhagawata*)—who also directs the production—and is referred to as the "first actor" (*modalane vasha*). Additional *himmela* members are players of traditional musical instruments, such as the *maddale* (hand drum), the *pungi* (pipe), the harmonium (organ), and the *chande* (loud drums). The music is based on ragas, which are characterized by rhythmic patterns called *mattu* and *tala* (or musical meter in Western music). Yakshagana literally means the song (*gana*) of the *yaksha* (nature spirits). Yakshagana is the scholastic name (used for the last 200 years) for art forms formerly known as *kēḷike*, *āḷa*, *bayalāḷa*, and *daśāvātāra*. It is believed to have evolved from pre-classical music and theater during the period of the Bhakti movement. It is sometimes simply called "the play" (ಽಽ) in Tulu Language.

A Yakshagana performance typically begins in the twilight hours, with an initial beating of the drums of several fixed compositions, called *abbara* or *peetike*. This may last for up to an hour before the actors finally arrive on the stage. A performance usually depicts a story from the "Kavya" (epic poems) and the "Puranas" (ancient Hindu texts). It consists of a story teller (the *bhagavatha*) who narrates the story by singing (which includes prepared character dialogues) as the actors dance to the music, portraying elements of the story as it is being narrated. This art transmits the spiritual knowledge to build a strong pillar of belief on religious aspects in the heart of the individual.

**Costumes and Ornaments:** Yakshagana costumes are rich in colour. The costumes (or *vesha*) in Kannada depend on characters depicted in the play (*prasanga*). It also depends on the Yakshagana style (*tittu*). Although ornaments are still predominantly made of woodwork. Yakshagana costumes consist of headgear (*Kirita* or *Pagade*), *Kavacha* that decorates the chest, *Buja Keerthi* (armlets) that decorate the shoulders, and belts (*Dabu*)—all made up of light wood and covered with golden foil. Mirror work on these ornaments helps to reflect light during shows and add more colour to the costumes. Ornaments are worn on a vest and cover the upper half of the body. The lower half is covered with *kachche*, which come in unique combinations of red, yellow, and orange checks. Bulky pads are used under the *kachche*, making the actors' proportions different in size from normal. The character of *Sthree Vasha* makes use of sari and other decorative ornaments. Costumes give information about the performer and also aid in setting the mood. These puppets have very distinctive and elaborate costume. The costumes are made of traditional Palghat and karnad sarees with checks. The costumes have created by imitating the attire of god and goddess to provide the imaginative picture and feeling of the heaven.

In sum, from the Indian perspective, dance is not merely an art or even an expression of emotions. It is a sadhana to bring an aesthetic order to an otherwise jumbled life. Through this sadhana the dancers commune with the Divine. Therein lies the fulfilment and perfection of dance.

I want to close my essay about Adagio: A Verbal Trip to the Aesthetics of Dance in Indian Context with a small quotation Paramahansa Shri Swami Omkarananda Saraswati, gave in Omkarananda Ashram Switzerland, after an Indian Dance-Performance of a small girl: "It was not a dance as such, it was an Adoration of God. Through the movements of her body she worshipped God. It has cosmic dimension. It affects the nature. The society profited, the nature profited, the whole cosmos profited. God is the aim of this dance.

"'Rock and Roll' does not give you happiness. It does not make you a Saint.

"This dance is an education in itself. It makes you happy. The rhythms of the Infinite are expressing themselves in this dance. If you want to see the real Bharatanatyam, go to Madras. There you will see, what this dance really is. But the soul of it lies in the hands of the Divine. Be a great devotee of the Divine and you will know all the secrets of this dance, all its metaphysics."

Swami Omkarananda

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## **Staging Presence and Desire : Exploring the Performing Female Body in Marina Abramovic's *Thomas Lips* and *Night Sea Crossing***

The female body had always been reclaimed as source of pleasure. The prudery and sexual phobias of past decades had been overcome and the female body could be represented to a sympathetic female audience. No longer objectified by male writers and directors, the female performer exposed, demystified, rehabilitated and reintegrated her body while inviting the spectators to see themselves mirrored in the spectacle on stage. The often explicit scenes celebrated female sexuality and the beauty of the flesh. To see and experience women's bodies from a female perspective and to discover a new female, a discourse of the body, turned out a second liberation for many women. It also transpired from these experiences that the rather Manichaean world view of 'women as victim-man as oppressor' no longer sufficed to explain the complexities of psycho-social and psycho-sexual behaviour. It is probably significant that by that time, another age group of feminists – heirs of the first generation of 'women's libbers' – had come to the fore. They discovered that many female artists, after going through a phase of celebrating the body as spectacle, had ended up with a new form of idealization of the female body. Such gynocentric mythology bore little relation to the way they had experienced life- in fact, it began to stand in their way when they sought to explore the multi faceted and often contradictory emotional and social condition of the female psyche. It was therefore paramount to disrupt and subvert the accepted languages of representation in advanced information societies. Both Body artists and female video artists demonstrated in their works that just as gender was not biologically determined but socially constructed, there existed no 'natural sign' of the body but only ideologically charged representations of it. The advantage of video performances over Body Art or painting was its ability to juxtapose 'woman as subject' with 'women as object' in the same live event.

The first performances that combined body-centered live art with an electronic mediation through the video camera took place around the year 1970. Vito Acconci and Dan Graham were regarded as the fathers of this new genre, but it was soon taken up by women artists and in due course developed into a favourite genre of Feminist Performance Artists. The general tendency was to be drawn towards body-centered video performances by the female artists, whereas the male artists were more actively concerned with exploring the formal and material characteristics of the new electronic medium. Video performances offered an apt outlet for feminists who sought to confer value upon women's experiences and achievements, expose and subvert the traditional images and roles assigned to women in the mass media and develop a new identity outside the constraints of patriarchal society. Many women artists such as Carolee Schneemann, Marina Abramovic and Gina Pane and male artists like Vito Acconci and Joseph Beuys saw in the mass consumption of gender specific imagery a major obstacle to establishing an emancipated identity and sought to reclaim the body as a site of subjectivity instead of having it to serve as a canvas for the projection of desires. Vito Acconci and Marina Abramovic were among the pioneers of Body Art. These artists explored corporeal existence and the semantics of the body, which took on a variety of forms, ranging from questioning and disrupting social norms pertaining to body expressions. For these artists, the subject matter of Body Art was not the biological organism inscribed in the textbooks, but as a site of social inscription.

Marina Abramovic` began her career as a painter in Belgrade in the 1960's and became an independent performance artist in 1973. She defined the purpose of her actions as `using body as material...pushing my body to its physical and mental limits'. She regularly used pain and danger to intensify her experience of reality. In her early Body Art, she reached a state of trance through physical ordeals; in her middle period with her partner Ulay, she connected with the deeper layers of herself, the Earth's energy and flow of Nature and her later works were more akin to a cleansing process. By putting her whole life into her performances, Abramovic` could communicate to her audience the profound experiences that opened new aspects of human existence. She was able `to push them through an opening and give them a key to something'. She could act like a `bridge' that allowed spectators to connect with a `higher self' and with the source of energy she herself was `plugged into'. Her performances were eye openers, where she uses her body as a vehicle or agent to effect a transformation of the self and to transmit impulses to the audience. This was initiated by her strong need to communicate with her audiences directly, rather than via an art object. . It problematized the relationship between the real woman in the performance area with the image of the woman on the stage and thereby fostered new types of spectatorship. This immediate contact in a live situation produced an exchange of energy that was qualitatively different from responses prompted by a gallery exhibition.

Abramovic's early performance was characterized by the use of danger and physical ordeals . In a society obsessed with comfort and cocooning people from the aspects of reality that were considered abject, unpleasant or horrifying. Abramovic came to the conclusion that `the subject of my body should be the limits of the body. I would use performance to push my mental and physical limits beyond consciousness.' Her interest in the eastern concepts of time and in the Buddhist perspective of life and death became apparent in most of her works. The actions were carried out with all the rigour of Eastern performance systems and allowed her to `empty' herself in order to reach a higher plane of consciousness and a sense of freedom that cannot be otherwise be known. A perfect instance in this regard is her performance `Thomas Lips' drew on shamanic techniques and archetypal criticism integral parts of a ritual, in which she sat naked on a table drinking a litre of honey and a litre of red wine. She then crushed the glass with her hand , took a razor and cut a five pointed star on her stomach. Subsequently, she whipped herself until she could no longer feel any pain , lay on a block of ice under a heater suspended from the ceiling and waited until the audience intervened and rescued her. Such self inflicted tortures was an attempt at establishing harmony between mind and body, human being and natural environment , man and woman often bordered on obsessive behavior and expressed an impossible longing for total fusion. Meditative introspection alternated with travels to faraway cultures, which were both physical and spiritual journeys and often arduous vision quests.

During her early performances, Abramovic had sought enlightenment from reading Zen, Vedic and Theosophic scriptures , by studying Eliades account of Siberian shamanism and Jung's theory of archetypes. She extended her knowledge of esoteric spiritual techniques during a series of journeys that took her to Australia, the Sahara, the Gobi Desert and China. This allowed her to tap a vast reservoir of mystic wisdom and equipped her with new experiences and techniques that had not been accessible to her in Communist Yugoslavia or capitalist Europe. The immersion into living praxis of Eastern religion and the ancient culture of indigenous Austrialians gave Abramovic's performances an increasingly mystical direction and led to what they called the Motionless Work. The most important of this was `Nightsea Crossing', which had as its motto `...presence..being present, over long stretches of time, until presence rises and falls, from material to immaterial, from form to formless, from instrumental to mental, from time to timelessness. The slightly enigmatic title referred to `crossing the ocean of the unconscious...and surfing different mental

states.'As Abramovic explained, the performance was the fruit of their experimentation in the Australian desert.

The piece was performed in conventional proscenium arch theatres, where Abramovic undermined her audiences expectations by not playing another character and instead carrying out in an unfeigned manner, some of the body lesions of previous performances, such as cutting a scar with a razor blade on her stomach/ The scenes were all taken from Abramovic's life in art, and the fact that she played her own life, or rather, certain aspects of it, distinguished it from theatre. It still involved her in an act of transformation, of entering into 'another state, but it was not to imitate another person'. Abramovic saw herself as a medium and believed that her shamanic vision quests could empower her audience to find peace of mind and enlightenment through connecting with the forces that spoke through her. Her increasingly mystical introspection and spiritual concerns led her to the conclusion that all audiences have the potential; to be creative and 'connected', but that this ability needs to be opened up and developed by them. She called this technique 'Boat emptying, steam entering.'

In all her performances, Abramovic used her body as a vehicle or agent to effect a transformation of the self and to transmit impulses to the audience. In her early Body Art, she reached a state of trance through physical ordeals; in her middle period with her partner Ulay, she connected with the deeper layers of her self, the Earth's energy and flow of Nature and her later works were more akin to a cleansing process. By putting her whole life into her performances, Abramovic could communicate to her audience the profound experiences that opened new aspects of human existence. She was able 'to push them through an opening and give them a key to something'. She could act like a 'bridge' that allowed spectators to connect with a 'higher self' and with the source of energy she herself was 'plugged into'.

Abramovic, who considered herself a political artist, wanted to overcome the system of production and distribution in the institutionalized art market and release her creations from the confinement of the gallery space. Abramovic's early performances concentrated on the body as a source of identity and, through its dependency on other human beings, as the origin of social existence. She showed how the self fashions itself and at the same time is constructed by outside forces. By objectifying the body and making it a focus of observation, especially female identity and its relation to the male 'other', she employed a number of performances to reveal how we fashion ourselves. She stated that the body was a vessel of the self and of one's autobiography. But instead of conducting herself – inquiry as a solitary monologue, she sought to project herself into social space and to create a stage for the enactment of the self and exploring the construction of identity through interaction.

Abramovic acknowledged the influence of Bertolt Brecht's concept of alienation and used similar devices to put a frame around certain traits of human behaviour to make them stand out and look strange. Her performances were experiments in the Brechtian sense, employing the technique of the contradictory actor, who exhibits himself as an object of analysis and suggest a commentary of his own behaviour. Abramovic's staging of the self in public was designed to demonstrate the self in interaction with the other, to make visible the controlling functions of society and to show the individual as an active agent in a network of forces. Parallel to her work as a live performer, Abramovic also used the medium of video to explore the power of the performer over the spectator, the boundaries of public and private, the interrelatedness of submission and domination, male and female, body and mind. She became a pioneer and established an innovative and influential oeuvre in this new medium.

The subject matter of Body Art was not the biological organism described in medical text books, but the body as a site of social inscription. The Theatre artists started to unfold their

bodies in public, aimed at peeling off the sedimented layers of signification with which the body was historically and culturally coated. Performances focused on racial difference and placed the discriminated, non-normative body in a historical context of colonialism. This gave rise to the innovative and radical work of artists such as Coco Fusco, Guillermo Gomez-Pena and Adrian Piper. Others directed their attention to the topic of sexual identity and demonstrated the political sphere of their most private life sphere. As in the case of most political theatre of the period, these performers tend to emphasize the content of their message rather than the means of presentation and consequently fell into the category of radical theatre rather than Body Art. Feminist performance artists drew attention to the female body as an object to be looked upon; they stripped off the layers of cultural inscriptions and deconstructed the gendered sign of 'woman' in the traditional representational framework.

Many women artists were concerned with the idea of representation. They saw in the mass consumption of gender-specific imagery a major obstacle to establishing an emancipated female identity, and sought to reclaim the body as a site of female subjectivity instead of having it to serve as a canvas for the projection of male desires. It was therefore paramount to disrupt and subvert the accepted languages of representation in advanced information societies. Both Body artists and female video artists demonstrated in their works that just as gender was not biologically determined but socially constructed, there existed no 'natural sign' of the body but only ideologically charged representations of it. The advantage of video performances over Body Art or painting was its ability to juxtapose 'woman as subject' with 'women as object' in the same live event. The synchronous feedback of video technology offered a unique means for making the viewing process a focus of attention. It problematized the relationship between the real woman in the performance area with the image of the woman on the video monitor and thereby fostered new types of spectatorship.

The quest for an authentic and essentialist experience of the self led many performers to the study of ancient trance techniques, magic rites and healing ceremonies. Having grown tired of traditional religion in Western society, they sought to re-establish contact with the sacred realm by means of new rituals. Artists who shared their concerns, rejected the exploitative mechanistic attitude towards the physical world and demonstrated the dependence of the biological body and of the body politic on Nature. Most of these artists were solo performers. The physical culture of the 1980s with its narcissistic and fetishistic 'body-beautiful' ideology caused some artists to specialize in parodistic appropriations of imagery that had become ubiquitous in commercial television and popular press. Others regarded the self as a metaphysical construct or as a psycho-social product capable of being contested and signified in a variety of manners. Whatever the theoretical position be, the body as a cultural artefact or an object of psycho-social narratives could best be demonstrated in the medium of performance. Here, the artist could 're-present' himself in a self-determined subject position and reveal both the process of inscription and ways of resisting oppressive social codes. Thus performances acted as a therapeutic process, healing both the actor and the audience alike.

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## Measured Body Norms and Ideals : The Anthropometry of Barbie

“My Whole Philosophy of Barbie was that through the doll,  
The little girl could be anything she wanted to be.  
Barbie always represented to the fact that a woman has choices”

-Ruth Handler<sup>1</sup>

“She was sunshine, Tomorrow land,  
The future made plastic.”

-M.G. Lord<sup>2</sup>

Anthropometry is a science of measuring human body which originated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is concerned with measuring, comparing, and interpreting variability in different zones of human body: Craniometry<sup>3</sup>, Phrenology<sup>4</sup>, Physiognomy<sup>5</sup> and Comparative Anatomy. Anthropometry shares an understanding that the body is a window to see moral, temperamental, racial and gender characteristics. Anthropometry is believed to be a useful technique in resolving three critical issues: the boundaries between races and ethnic groups, the normal and degenerate and the border between the sexes.

In the History of Anorexia Nervosa in United States, Joan Brumberg points out notions about a human standardized figure with some unrealistic norms created by doctors and certain popular magazines<sup>6</sup>. (1988:232-5). The health reformers, educators and doctors who promoted Norma<sup>7</sup> as an ideal woman were well aware that her sensible, strong, broad waisted body differed significantly from the tall, slim waisted bodies of the fashion models in Vogue. There are a variety of means to encourage women to ignore the temptations of vanity and fashion but they are all ill equipped to compete with the persuasive powers of a rapidly expanding mass media that markets a very different kind of female body. As the post war period advanced, Norma continued to be trotted out in home economics and health education classes. But in the iconography of desirable female bodies, she would be overshadowed by an array of images of fashion models, pin up girls put out by advertisers, entertainment industry and a burgeoning consumer culture. These idealized images became thin in 1960's and 70's while the 'average' woman's body was in fact getting heavier. With the thinning of American Feminine ideal, the representation of the statistically average women became aberrant, as slenderness and sex appeal- not physical fitness became the prime concern of post war femininity.

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<sup>1</sup>Ruth Handler in the documentary Barbie Nation: An Unauthorized Tour (2003).

<sup>2</sup>Lord, M.G. Forever Barbie. New York: William Morrow & Comp.1994.Print.

<sup>3</sup>Measurement of cranium or main part of the skull.

<sup>4</sup>Pseudo medicine primarily focused on measurement of human skull.

<sup>5</sup>A person's facial features or expression when regarded as indicative of ethnic origin.

<sup>6</sup>Brumberg, Joan Jacob. Fasting Girls: Reflections on writing the history of Anorexia Nervosa. History and Research in Child Development. Vol.50 No:4. 1985.pp93-104

<sup>7</sup>Rule or pattern of body.

In the conundrum of somatic femininity that female bodies are never feminine enough and that they must be deliberately remade to be what the society intended – a condition dramatically accentuated by consumer capitalism. In this context, Barbie the teenaged fashion doll was born to the society with some pre ordained anthropometric features of femininity.

Inspired by her daughter, Ruth Handler created Barbie as a medium to encourage different careers and paths in children. Handler's daughter Barbara used to play with paper dolls. She pretended that they were cheerleaders or professionals in a variety of careers. Ruth believed this to be an important part in a child's early development and she decided to create Barbie. On March 9, 1959 Ruth introduced the Barbie doll during an annual New York toy fair. Barbie was unlike any other toy at that time and many people were skeptical about it. While there were other toddlers and baby dolls in the market, Barbie was the first older doll with a feminine figure that made her stand out. The baby dolls that were currently in the market were also becoming less popular and made this venture a risk that people did not believe in.

While the Barbie doll was receiving a lot of criticism for her unrealistic proportions and negative effects upon young children, the original concept for the doll could not have been further from this fact. Handler had a specific way of looking at the Barbie dolls. She was quoted as saying “My whole philosophy of Barbie was that through the doll, the little girl could be anything she wanted to be”. Handler wanted to inspire women to explore different career paths and she said “Barbie always represented the fact that a woman has choices”<sup>8</sup>. The Barbie doll was created to inspire children to follow their dreams no matter what they wanted or what they came from. “It was meant to empower women”<sup>9</sup>.

“When I grow up... I can be anything I want” this is the opening line of 2016 commercial produced for Mattel. Spoken by two girls – a child ballerina and a teenage pianist – the words were accompanied by a soft acoustic track to convey pioganancy. The short film goes on to depict these hopeful girls alongside successful women; a pilot, teacher, artist, designer, athlete, musician, fire fighter, veterinarian<sup>10</sup> etc. The interposed image suggests that the girls who became inspired to 'dream big' will grow up to be empowered, creative and passionate adults. The doll's ever changing professional path proves to be illustrative of many young girls and women's career aspirations as seen when Belle proclaims “I want to be Barbie”<sup>11</sup>.

Mattel's<sup>12</sup> marketing approach is to present Barbie as both 'real' and aspirational, thus it promoted the doll's success. The advertisement lyrics perfectly reflects that it works as an instructional tool to motivate girls and young women.

*Barbie you're beautiful*  
*You make me feel*  
*My Barbie doll is really real*  
*Barbie's small and so pretty*  
*Her clothes and figure look so neat*  
*Some day I gonna be exactly like you*

<sup>8</sup>Ruth Handler in the documentary Barbie Nation: An Unauthorized Tour. 2003.

<sup>9</sup>Shannon, Jacqueline. Dream Doll: The Ruth Handler Story. Longmeadow press. 1994

<sup>10</sup>Barbie careers Website: <<http://www.barbiemedia.com/about-barbie/careers.html>>

<sup>11</sup>The Barbie Dreams 'I Can be...' website is interactive and fluid.

<sup>12</sup>Mattel, Inc is an American multinational toy company founded in 1945.

*Till then I'll know just what I'll do*

*I'll make believe that I'm you*<sup>13</sup>

Ever since Barbie took its first catwalk, she has been considered a beauty icon. Yet whether the doll represents an achievable standard of beauty has propelled her into many debates surrounding somatic plausibility. As Rand observes “(f)eminists have frequently translated barbie's measurements into human terms to underline the unrealistic ideal of beauty that the doll is said to promote”<sup>14</sup>. In popular discourse it is argued that if Barbie were a real teenage fashion model, her extreme chest, waist and hip ratio would prevent her from strutting down the runway or even from standing upright<sup>15</sup>. Thus critics of Barbie's corporality have been vocal both academically and in mass media. In 2011, an American morning talk show 'Today'- invited college students and artist Galia Slayen to be their guest<sup>16</sup>. Slayen unveil her creation: a life sized construction of Barbie and the doll stripped controversy world wide. Standing at about 6 feet tall with a 39” waist and 33” hips<sup>17</sup>; the reconstruction is striking in its distortedness<sup>18</sup>. While Slayen's mathematical conversion have been disputed, her model offers an obvious social commentary of Barbie as an abstracted version of feminine embodiment.

Slayen suggests that the crux of the 'Get Real Barbie campaign' is to convey the message that Barbie does not offer an accurate portrayal of feminine embodiment<sup>19</sup>. Her doll provides visual validation for what feminists have been assuming about the doll's somatic image: 'Barbie is not a realistic body'<sup>20</sup>. Lord confirms the suspicion regarding the questionable proportion of Barbie and elucidates the reason behind her exaggerated frame:

Fans of conspiracy theories will be disappointed to learn that Barbies proportions were not the result of some misogynistic plot. They were dictated by the mechanics of clothing construction. The doll is one sixth the size of a person; but the fabrics she wears are scaled for people. Her first designer explained, that the doll had to be disproportionately narrow to look proportional in clothes<sup>21</sup>.

According to M.G.Lord, Barbie's plastic figure confounds accurate human dimensions. Nevertheless, her body remains a site of corporate promotion, media attention, academic criticism and feminine aspiration. In *Volatile Bodies: toward a Corporeal Feminism*<sup>22</sup>, Grosz tries to explain and justify different social positions and cognitive abilities of two sexes<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup>1959 first ever Barbie commercial song.

<sup>14</sup>Rand, Erica. *Barbie's Queer Accessories*. Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press, 1995.

<sup>15</sup>Though this myth has been circulating for years, there is no evidence to suggest its accuracy. Nevertheless, the legend persists and is repeatedly used as ammunition against the narratives of Barbie as aspirational figure. see Denise Winterman, “what would a real Barbie look like?” <<http://ews.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/7920962.stm>>

<sup>16</sup>Over the last several decades many artists have responded to Barbie in their work. Most notable is Cindy Sherman with her untitled black and white photographic series. Slayen's work offers a timely example of how a single work of art or social commentary can reignite the and media frenzy surrounding Barbie's body.

<sup>17</sup>'Life size Barbie gets real women talking'. Vedio article. <<http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/42595605/ns/today-today--people/t/life-size-barbie-gets-real-women-talking/#T3TNAs30k8g>>

<sup>18</sup>By Mattel's account, Barbie's current measurements are :5 inches bust, 3/4 inches waist, 5/16 inches hips. if Barbie is one sixth of a person then these measurements would be 30" bust, 19.5" waist, 31.125" waist. Dolls vary and Barbie has been reconfigured over years. Nevertheless Slayen's point is clear Barbie's dimension represented a distorted view of feminine embodiment. <<http://www.barbiemedia.com/barbie-facts-for-the-record.html>>

<sup>19</sup>'Life size Barbie gets real women talking'(video)

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Lord, p.12

<sup>22</sup>Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, .1994.

<sup>23</sup>Grosz, P. 14

When Barbie exclaims, “Let's get gorgeous !” the focus on her body and body of her consumers convey her primary interpretation<sup>24</sup>. Narratively Barbie's body and mind struggle to coexist in popular and academic discourse alike. She is defined by her body or her mental (in) capacity. Barbie's physicality is generally regarded as perpetuating stereotypical ideas of femininity. Concern is often raised about how the doll signals the uniformity of form, reinforcing a very narrow standard of white able-bodied, slender, heteronormative beauty. With reference to these conventional standards of beauty, Grosz argues that traditional narratives of humanist thought also rigidly 'construct' femininity and feminine bodies as 'frail, imperfect, unruly and unreliable'<sup>25</sup>. Along with citing Barbie's disproportionately narrow waist as a sign of frailty<sup>26</sup>, her sculpted feet designed for the highest of heels too have been read as helpless and immobile<sup>27</sup>. While Barbie is often ridiculed for being impossibly perfect, categorizing doll proportions as inaccurate is also a way of defining her feminine likeness as an imperfect representation.

Rather than focusing on how Barbie's 'impossible' proportions do not, measure up to fleshy woman, Urla and Swedlund's analysis takes a crucial turn. Maintaining the tenet that the body defines the feminine subject, researchers suggest that the doll presents 'an ideal that construct *women's* bodies as hopelessly imperfect'<sup>28</sup>. It is their assertion that Barbie act as a marker of feminine embodiment which translates into convincing healthy women in the United States and globally, that 'their bodies are defective'<sup>29</sup>. With these pointed words, Urla and Swedlund articulate the silent concern surrounding Barbie aspirationalism calling attention to the impetus Slayen's Get Real Barbie Campaign. Because these researchers conclude that Barbie is an 'impossible ideal', their work presupposes both facts that Barbie is not real and that woman and girls have to obtain the aspirational somatic image of Barbie that Mattel has set forth. As a result, the doll is understood to have a negative impact on how women and girls imagine their own bodies and subjectivities.

While analyzing Barbie dolls from the perspective of gender studies we can see what image of woman a Barbie doll creates in the mind of young girls and other consumers. As Trier Bienieck and Leavy<sup>30</sup> points out, gender is socially constructed and consists of ideas we link to masculinity and femininity and how we apply these notions to people. Those ideas often become stereotyped and as a result some roles, activities, feelings, appearances are viewed distinctly as male or female. These gender norms are mainly learned through our interactions with other people and cultural objects and texts.

Barbie's influence extends to inform ideas of contemporary femininity, manifested in what Rogers defines as 'the emergence of the technobody'<sup>31</sup>. She explains that Barbie is an icon whose 'perfect' body is more attainable than ever before. She exists more widely as an icon in those cultures where women cannot escape endless messages about how to improve, enhance, rework and even perfect their deficient flawed bodies<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>24</sup>Barbie fashion website<<http://www.barbie.com/activities/fashion/>>

<sup>25</sup>Grosz, p.13.

<sup>26</sup>Winterman (para-11)

<sup>27</sup>In August 2012 Mattel released its “I Can be...” Presidential doll. This Barbie is the first in the history of doll to stand without support. 'Barbie run for president can stood up on her own !'

<sup>28</sup>Urla and Swedlund, p-305.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, p-227.

<sup>30</sup>Trier- Bienieck, Adrienne.M, and Leavy ,Patricia. Gender and pop culture: A text Reader.Rotterdamsens.2014

<sup>31</sup>Rogers . p-123

<sup>32</sup>Roger.p-122

In these terms technobody is a result of adjustments intended to make the feminine body appear 'better' through the assemblage of contemporary cosmetic and technological practices. Yet the definition of what means better is never constant. While perfection may appear attainable through a narrative of aspiration tied to Barbie, in reality this perfection is just out of reach. Due to this deferral, cultural attention is subsequently placed upon feminine somatic imperfections inherent in humanist construction of body. As a result, despite the technological advancement of cosmetic procedures, Roger asserts that the feminine body is understood that as the one constantly requiring work.

Eclecticism is a way of mixing cultural practices in accordance with mass consumer demands of versatility and disposability in order to maintain the status quo. The idea of financially driven pastiche is certainly applicable to practices that promote doll like technobody. Cosmetic surgery ,make up, tattooing, piercing, dieting, teeth alignment, teeth whitening ,hair removal, tanning, hair straightening , perming and dying are all consumable procedures that came together to produce a seemingly changeable but always racially white, idealized feminine corporality in the west. This kind of somatic reinvention can be understood as a manifestation that works to maintain the narrative of unified western subject depending on what border cultural practices are popular at the time.

Deemed to be an inaccurate representation of feminine embodiment, it is curious to see Barbie's physicality coded with terms used to describe an essential list of femininity. Certainly, the Barbie doll is understood to be relying on fleshy feminine embodiment and explained as a cultural fascination. However, Barbie is read as an amplified version of female physicality that is 'too much' of a feminine figure. Critically analyzing, classifying and coding Barbie may be attempted to master an 'out of control body' that serves as an archetypal surrogate for all that is written as out of control with feminine subjectivity. Yet in reading Barbie as 'frail, imperfect, unruly' or 'unreliable' in order to highlight the doll's inaccuracies, a contradiction is created. Applying these terms- terms that are usually employed to essentialise the feminine subject to describe the doll's feminine shortcomings, demonstrates a discursive double bind. Within this framework, there is a suggestion that either femininity is only 'true' when it is inaccurate or more accurately femininity that is strong, perfect, disciplined and reliable.

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## Does B(lack) Beauty?: Battling the Eurocentric Beauty Myths and the Rise of Black Consciousness in the Select Works of Zadie Smith and Maya Angelou

The term Beauty and its indefinability always postulate a solemn debate in everyday life. The concretized beauty concepts and standards bring several queries both in academic circle and commoners' life. Though people argue beauty a transcendental feeling, the very aspect of one's physical features and its association with white complexion always relegate and counter the countenance of black lives. This kind of rejection of black consciousness and their identity in Eurocentric beauty standards make the concept of beauty a complex subject.

According to Oxford Dictionary beauty is a combination of qualities, such as shape, colour, or form that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight. Anglicized 'ugly' white version on beauty thwarts the hopes of black to appear 'beautiful' in front of the colour blinded whites. White People often perceive black as an ugly subjects and force black communities to feel pity about their physical constructions. It was Tony Morrison; in her masterpiece '*TheBluestEye*' meticulously observes black's lack feeling on white aspects.

“Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs – all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured”. (20). Here the fascination for white brings deep blemishes on black culture and identity. Frantz Fanon's 'Black skin, White masks' marks the blind imitation of colonized. For him “the black man wants to be white. The white man slaves to reach a human level” (3). This kinds of extreme curiosities on white features are the major charectrics of Zadie Smith's novels. Her acclaimed novels such as 'On Beauty' and 'Swing Time' discuss the black's lack feeling and the problems of mixed races regarding beauty standards.

In her writing the inferiority regarding blackness is apparent in the portrayal of characters. The biracial unnamed narrator in 'Swing Time' who wishes to be a well-known Tap dancer intensely hankers for imitating and intimating the ways of white. In 'Swing Time' the central narrator states: “In films and photographs I had seen white men sitting at their pianos as black girls stood by them singing. Oh, I wanted to be like those white girls” (25). This desire to be attached with white men bring the issues related to black's lack feeling and subservience to white culture. The obsession on white and the perplexities on beauty are the major themes of Afro American and other black writings. In *SwingTime* the Central narrator's meeting with her intimate friend Tracey is an indication for the fascination for fairness.

“Tracey's face was much perky and round, she looked like a darker Shirley Temple, except her nose was as problematic as mine, I could see that much once, a ridiculous one- it went straight up in the air like a little piglet” (9). Here the character's obsession and compulsion towards the colour consciousness and the bodily features of the other characters signifies the enthrallment towards colonizers. Most of the postcolonial thinkers who have focused on the issues related to the black American and African studies, especially the themes like colourism and black identity find black people's profound longing for mimicking

the attributes of white colonizers. Alterity and ambivalent nature of the colonized sections heighten the issues regarding beauty standards established by the colonizers. In the post-colonial context the term alterity suggests the otherness. Here the out sidedness that the black or mixed race people face due to their colour and the inferiority created by colonial class produce a feeling of abjection in black identity. Frantz Fanon points out the psychic frustrations and the colonized people's desperate attempts to retain the integrity of their individuality. In the colonial context, the native community and the nation are both controlled by the white men. The notion of whiteness and their 'impeccability' and 'infallibility' that colonizers gain through the consent of colonized help colonizers to establish their supremacy over colonized.

Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* narrates the saga of two mixed race family and their affiliation with each other, poses several philosophical questions regarding the concept of beauty. *On Beauty* revolves around the connections between two families: the Belseys, which includes Howard Belsey, a middle aged academic at the fictional Ivy League Wellington College; Kiki, his black Floridian wife, and their mixed-race children, Jerome, Zora and Levi. The Belsey family head Howard's affair with one of Howard and Kiki's oldest friends, Claire Malcolm shatters their family life.

The title *On Beauty* raises arguments and deep inquiries on the very notion on beauty. Here Zadie Smith discusses the myriad aspects of beauty through the eyes of mixed race people. *On Beauty* which centers on the story of Belsey and Kipps families and their connection takes place in the white college town is abundant with various cultural and racial issues. The novel deals with the mixed expressions of black identity through several characters. The character named Kiki, the wife of a white professor Howard, feels very lonely and inferior about her black complexion. While narrating about Howard's complexion, Zadie Smith writes:

His teeth—uniquely in his family—are straight and of a similar size to each other; his bottom lip's fullness goes some way towards compensating for the absence of the upper; and his ears are not noticeable. Which is all one can ask of ears. He has no chin. But his eyes are very large and very green. He has a thin, appealing aristocratic nose. (18-19)

Here the features of one of the Belsey members imply the glorification of the legacy of white man. The character Kiki who feels utter loneliness tells her white husband: "Everywhere we go, I am alone in this ... this sea of white. I don't see any black folk any more. Howie. My whole life is white" (206). Fanon remarks that the Negro is enslaved by his inferiority, the superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation (60). Here Kiki's despair regarding her blackness shows their acute otherness. Kiki's apprehension and her skepticism about her husband's affection prompts her to muse on the patriarchal concept on beauty. "It is true that men—they respond to beauty...it doesn't end for them, this...this concern with beauty as a physical actuality in the world—and that's clearly imprisoning and infantilizes..." (207).

The novel's title would indicate *On Beauty* deals with issues of physical appearance, mainly through its black female characters. Victoria and Kiki are foils in this regard. Kiki is a large, black woman, whose size and complexion make her a misfit in Howard's life. After Kiki discovers Howard's affair with Claire, she tells him that he humiliated her by sleeping with someone significantly smaller than her, to which Howard replies, "I married a slim

black woman" (207). This thinly covert accusation demonstrates that Howard believes to an extent that Kiki's weight gain was the real reason for his infidelity. Howard also sleeps with Victoria Kipps, who unlike Claire is black. During their intimate relation, Victoria mentions Kiki's appearance:

She is very beautiful, said Victoria impatiently, as if Howard were being particularly dense about an obvious truth. Like an African queen. Howard pulled harshly on the tight end of his fag. She wouldn't thank you for that description, I'm afraid. Beautiful? Howard blew out of his smoke. No African queen. Why not? I think she finds it patronizing, not to mention factually inaccurate—look, Victoria. (313)

Victoria is very different than Kiki. She is slender and yet still very curvy, and is more 'beautiful'. Many male characters are besotted by her, including Howard's own son, Jerome. This difference in appearance between Kiki and Victoria demonstrates the consequences black women face when they are not deemed beautiful according to Eurocentric beauty standards. Eurocentric racial notions make an attempt to scoff at other races, especially at black communities.

Racial classification is political in nature. The words and deeds of white classes have come to be deemed as 'norm' and non-white as savages or 'other'. Apart from physical beauty, it also analyses the concept of beauty itself and its value. Throughout the work many of the characters observe beauty in various ways. Monty and Howard, who are very keen on their academic excellence, fail to recognize beauty in its actual forms. Howard's inability to find and praise Kiki's natural appearance increase affliction in their affection. Howard's lack of appreciation towards Kiki's facial and racial features initiate discussions on black identity and racism.

### **The Rise of Phenomenal Women**

“Unless the oppressed learn to hegemonize their own self, unless the culture and consciousness of the oppressed is put forward visibly in public debate, unless this culture is prepared to clash with the culture and consciousness of the enemy in public, a society of equals will remain illusion”(Ilaiah,168). The writings of Zadie Smith and Maya Angelou share similar views regarding the inner beauty and the bodily and physical aspects of black generation. In *Beauty*, Monty's wife, Carlene, admires beauty better than her husband, as seen when she and Kiki discuss the painting of the 'Maitresse Erzulie,' "Black Virgin" (174–175). Carlene dislikes the painting because of the price but instead because of what it means to her and what it symbolizes, "She represents love, beauty, purity, the ideal female and the moon.." as well as the contradiction of representing "jealousy, vengeance and discord" (175). Giving insight into what Carlene herself sees as beautiful in what makes the people she loves. In their conversation about the beauty of the painting, they share their thoughts on Christian faith which treats things in a binary opposite manner. “Because ...we're so binary, of course, in the way we think. We tend to think in opposites, in the Christian world. We are structured like that” (175).The painting later becomes a controversial matter between the families when it is left to Kiki by Carlene while Monty and the Kipps only see the price of the painting for its value and not how much it mattered to their loved one (277–280).Struggle between two families regarding their classes and their clashes on concepts like beauty and art are the striking features of the novel. Kiki's race is an opposite

of Howard's elite class; this creates frustration and conflict in her marital life. Howard's preference for 'beautiful' woman prompts him to dislike his black Afro American wife. Howard's son Levi struggles with his mixed race identity and blackness because of the primarily white world of academics that he lives in. Howard and Kiki's family is a combination of stereotypically "white" attributes and those that are stereotypically "black," including physical traits, creating complexities within the family that reflect the complexities within academia and the relationship it has with race and class.

Maya Angelou's poems and her autobiographical writings celebrate the identity of black. Her writings highlight the lives of assertive black women. Her renowned poem 'Phenomenal woman' attempts to subvert the white beauty standards. In her poem 'Phenomenal woman' she glorifies the colour and culture of black in a cheerful manner.

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.  
 I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size  
 But when I start to tell them,  
 They think I'm telling lies.  
 I say,  
 It's in the reach of my arms,  
 The span of my hips,  
 The stride of my step,  
 The curl of my lips. (9)

This poem contains Angelou's candid remarks and proclamation of black identity. Physical complexion of black people is glorified. Poet's self-love and confidence on her physical features help her to elaborate about her solid conviction regarding blackness. The bold narration of her bodily matters enables her to confront the white superiority that considers black as uncouth and ugly. She attacks the stereotypical notions related to beauty of women. Her abrupt beginning on her physique and the word 'phenomenal' startle the 'pretty women'. Curl of her lips, sturdy steps, prettify her attitude and it petrifies the 'pretty people'. Angelou's incisive writings dissipate the hegemonic characteristics of white and bring counter culture of black feminism. Proponents of black feminism strongly necessitated the emancipation of black women from the oppression of both black and white oppressors.

Binary constructs between the black and white enhance white's exploitation against black folk. The wide spread growth of black movements divested the patriarchal polemics on black women's identity. The rise of black women in America mitigated the pressures of black women who were doubly oppressed and persecuted due to their colour and other cultural traits. Maya Angelou's poems such as *Phenomenal Woman*, *Still I Rise* vehemently opposed the assimilation of White beauty traits and desired for ascertaining the longings of black minds. She stood divorced from white beauty standards which tried to internalize the ideology of patriarchy.

I'm a woman  
 Phenomenally.  
 Phenomenal woman,  
 That's me. (13)

Here Angelou emphatically states her woman hood which was damaged by elite white class. Angelou considers herself as a phenomenal woman who relegates white beauty ideals and white cultural traits. The emergence of black feminism paved the way for the black writers to voice their feelings in literary and non-literary circle.

Black feminism became prevalent in the 1960s, in response to the sexism of the Civil Rights and racism of the feminist movement. From the 1970s to 1980s, black feminists established various groups which addressed the role of black women in Black Nationalism, gay liberation and second-wave feminism. Theories of Black feminism advocates the liberty of black women, primarily aimed at deconstructing the white ideals and idols that marred the black endeavors in creating a unique black identity.

Maya Angelou's poemsexhort the black women to reclaim and redefine their self, mutilated and 'coloured' by white domination. Alice Walker's concept Womanism, which she narrates in her prose collection *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* focuses on "womanist" theory. Walker defines "womanist" at the beginning of the collection as "A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mother to female children and also a woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female". [2]. Maya Angelou in her poem *Still I Rise* is addressed to the entire black women who have sorrows and harrowing experiences.

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may tread me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.  
Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room. (8)

This undaunted spirit and courage to stand against all oppressions make her to redefine the very concept of identity and distorted notions on beauty. Here she attempts to validate the inner beauty and the independence of black people and their traditions, as the poem continues

Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise?  
That I dance like I've got diamonds  
At the meeting of my thighs? (28).

In Harihar kulakrni's book *Black Feminist Fiction: A March Towards Liberation*, she observes the condition of black lives and writings.

In white America, if there is anything that has caused incalculable devastation of black womanhood, anything that has damaged her psyche, and taken heavy toll of her personality, anything that has moulded her consciousness, anything that ultimately socialized her identity out of existence, it is the seamless web of misconceptions, myths,

images and stereotypes. It is they which constituted the ideological mechanism with which the racist, sexist, oppressive forces distorted her humanity and finally created an identity confusion in black woman's mind. (87).

### Conclusion

I am black; I am in total fusion with the world, in sympathetic affinity with the earth, losing my id in the heart of the cosmos — and the white man, however intelligent he may be, is incapable of understanding Louis Armstrong or songs from the Congo. I am black, not because of a curse, but because my skin has been able to capture all the cosmic effluvia. I am truly a drop of sun under the earth. (Fanon, 27).

Zadie Smith's novels designate the issues of mixed race related to their identity and their notions regarding black consciousness. Smith's characters face intense traumatic experience in blurring the distinction between black and white. Smith's attempts to reinforce the black consciousness and rejecting the Eurocentric beauty standards give ample scope for black to resist the white beauty ideals and idols.

Maya Angelou's service to Black women who were tormented by the colour of their skin clearly indicates that beauty is not a skin deep subject. Coloured people and their desire to imitate the features of white and their ideology have made the history of black bleak and unbeautiful. The rise and emergence of Black feminism, Womanism and other black Arts Movements accentuated black people to relinquish their inferiority and poor images on their body and identity. Current feminist thinkers and writers have begun their attempts to redefine and reclaim their pretty identity and they are capable to declare that black doesn't lack beauty.

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## Is Beauty Amenable to Character or Vice Versa?: Multidimensional Facets of Beauty in *Chokher Bali*

“Beauty is worse than wine, it intoxicates both the holder and beholder”. Beauty is the quality in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses. This sense of beauty is visible in most of the art forms like paintings, sculptures, literature and films. All these art forms mostly try to depict the beauty of women.

In Rituparno Ghosh's movie *Chokher Bali*, which is an adaptation of Tagore's novel, this beauty can be said as the weapon of the main character Binodini. She uses beauty as a tool to retain her lost dreams. The film is about the story of two women, one who is extremely beautiful and other one whose beauty is her character. In this movie the author tries to unfold the physical beauty as well as the inner beauty. This paper propounds to find out whether beauty persuades character or character persuades beauty.

“Beauty is worse than wine, it intoxicates both the holder and beholder”. Beauty is the quality in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses. Throughout the ages, from Queen Nefertiti and Helen of Troy, to Botticelli's Venus and Cleopatra, beauty has always and continues to both awe and mystify humans. According to Charles Reade “Beauty is power; a smile is its sword”. This sense of beauty is visible in most of the art forms like paintings, sculptures, literature and films. All these art forms mostly try to depict the beauty of women. Beauty created a mystique attraction and power. Its effects are undeniable. In general, the personal beauty is generally assumed to imply facial beauty. Most of the historical women characters used this beauty as an armament. The story of Cleopatra is the best instance for that. As Blaise Pascal says “Cleopatra's nose, had it been shorter, the whole face of the world would have been changed.”

Such women characters can be seen in Literature and films also. Rituparno Ghosh's 2003 movie *Chokher Bali* narrates the story of such a character. The movie is the adaptation of Rabindranth Tagore's novel of the same title. It is the story of distrust, adultery and falling outs. But through these outer covers Tagore tries to throw light upon the uncoloured life of a Bengali Hindu widow, Binodini and correlates the life of a widow with a married woman Ashalatha. In this movie beauty can be said as the weapon of the main character Binodini. She uses beauty as a tool to retain her lost dreams. The character Binodini is extremely beautiful and on the other hand Ashalatha's beauty is her character. In this movie the author tries to unfold the physical beauty as well as the inner beauty. This paper titled “Is Beauty Amenable to Character or Vice Versa?: Multidimensional Facets of Beauty in *Chokher Bali*” propounds to find out whether beauty persuades character or character persuades beauty.

*Chokher Bali* is a family drama, set in the time when families were more orthodox than we can imagine. It is the story of the rich, flamboyant Mahendra, his simple, demure wife Ashalatha and his friend Bihari. Their cosy domestic scenario undergoes great upheaval with the introduction of the vivacious Binodini, a young, attractive widow who comes to live with them. Mahendra was one of the first to see Binodini's photo when she was proposed as a

prospective wife for him, yet refused her on account of his being “unready for marriage.” Then Mahendra marries Ashalatha, his aunt Annapurna's niece. Annapurna has chosen Bihari as the husband of Ashalatha. But at last Mahendra marries Asha because he fell in love with her innocence and naivety. Though Mahendra marries her Bihari loves and respects Ashalatha throughout his life but never reveals his feelings in front of her. Ashalatha is very simple, demure as well as a naive woman and was happy in her conjugal life with Mahendra. But all the warm domestic scenarios have taken a radical change with the intervention of fascinating, sensuous Binodini who comes to live with Mahendra's family obeying the invitation of Rajalekshmi, Mahendra's mother. After the death of her husband she spends a lonely life in an unknown village.

Being a widow in such a traditional atmosphere and the kind of treatment they used to receive was really pathetic. Forget colourful clothes, or tasty food they lose the right to be happy. Here Tagore's creation takes us back to the traditions and superstitions and time of British India flawlessly. Through Binodini Tagore explores the consequences of the abysmal life and the sexual frustrations of a young Hindu widow. While the dangers of female sexuality were contained by the institution of marriage, the young, attractive widow, unaccommodated and outside the control of a husband or father remained a serious problem. Sati, the custom of burning a widow on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband, raises moral, cultural and ideological issues of gender, religion, and the treatment of the body. Colonial discourses on Sati posit the woman's body as the abode of all danger. The discourses on widowhood and Sati in colonial Bengal repeatedly emphasized the desexualization and dehumanization of the female body. In both the novel and the film *Chokher Bali* the figure of the widow, Binodini, rehearses the vexed issue of widowhood in multiple ways. In the film the scopophilic pleasure evoked by Binodini's physical representation is deliberately deployed to highlight her difference from Mahendra's wife Ashalata.

In the movie Rituparno Ghosh makes conspicuous Binodini's enticing, disruptive sexuality. The representation of Binodini's body turns into the most crucial site for witnessing the production and reproduction of power. The representation of the body and of feminine identity is a social space involving the complex workings of power and knowledge. Ghosh uses the marginal space of the widow's body as source of both sexual titillation and threat, and his representation conflates the use of the female body both as material object and as a discursively produced entity. We are not allowed to forget for once that the body of Binodini is a problematic social entity. Through her body and beauty she induces power primarily but in the case of Binodini the beauty is not only skin deep but she is intelligent, talented and English educated unlike the other women from rural Bengal.

Ashalatha on the other hand is a naive and innocent girl who is uneducated and inexperienced. She doesn't even know how to look after a household. She is not as beautiful as Binodini. Ghosh in his movie chose Aiswarya Rai who was the Miss World 1994 and considered as one of most beautiful women in the world to do the role of Binodini. For the character of Ashalatha he chose Raima Sen. The physical appearance of these actresses itself shows the difference between the two women. Visual contrast between Ashalatha and Binodini in the movie is also notable. The former wears colourful saris, the colour associated with the bliss and fulfillment of the married state; the latter wears white sari, the typical attire of the Indian widow and a mark of the renunciation of worldly pleasures. Yet, Binodini's eyes and body language clearly exude a seductive charm, as does the white sari worn to show off

her voluptuous body.

Binodini always believes she is superior to Ashalata, as she was convent-educated and, back in the day, could read and write in English and held clear and definite opinions about the politics of the day. She was also a great conversationalist who could hold her own against anyone in any sort of a conversation, unlike Ashalata, who was simple, naive and not even as skilled at domestic chores as Binodini. It is no wonder, then, that the initial bout of envy evolves into stronger and stronger resentment and a sense of entitlement, which led Binodini to believe that Mahendra deserved better, that he deserved someone like her and not a simpleton like Ashalata.

Binodini is shrewd and cunning woman and she begins to attract Mahendra with her striking appeal of her beauty and day by day she becomes successful at her attempt. Being very impulsive in nature Mahendra who once rejects Binodini to marry gradually fascinates towards Binodini. Binodini wants to grab everything whatever Ashalata has. But innocent and honest Ashalata is indifferent to Binodini's conspiracy. But Binodini is very vindictive, after being successful in bringing Mahendra in her web she begins to treat him with contempt. Then she begins to play another game where she wants to involve with Bihari. She begins to show her weakness towards Bihari. But she remains unsuccessful in her attempt as Bihari is completely indifferent towards her works and beauty. She cannot lure elusive Bihari towards her with her magic of beauty. After knowing the evil traits of Binodini who has tried to tear down the conjugal life of Mahendra and Ashalata, Mahalaksmi throws away Binodini from her house. She describes Binodini as mayabini, enchantress, on learning how she has ensnared Mahendra. She hails like a tempest from nowhere to wreak havoc in the lives of Mahendra, Ashalata and Bihari, and then disappears without leaving an address behind.

After being thrown out of Mahendra's house, Binodini reaches Bihari's place. She adorns herself with bridal ornaments hoping that Bihari would be easily drawn to her beauty, but again miscalculates her move. Binodini's proposal for marriage seems so outrageous to Bihari that he bursts into laughter and refuses to accept her. She even pleads to serve Bihari as a maid in lieu of shelter. Bihari, who had borne some respect for this woman, is tormented to see that Binodini could degrade herself to this level and points out that they are living at a time when people are talking about freedom and not servility. All scenarios have got drastic change and frustrated Binodini comes back to her own village. Fascinated by the vivacious and sensuous personality of Binodini, Mahendra leaves behind his compliant wife and ill mother and follow shrewd Binodini.

Ashalata is the simple and honest lady who always treats her husband as her God or Idol and likes to make him happy, receives a lesson seeing the upheaval of her life. She becomes victims of the false friendship of Binodini. But at this point when her husband leaves her for other woman she upholds self-assurance to stand on her own feet beyond her own suffering as well shows her greatness by taking care of her grief stricken mother-in-law. In this novel Tagore shows Ashalata's character a complete contrast to Binodini's character. Everyone bears disregard and hatred for Binodini while Ashalata gains high regard and affection from everyone. Despite lack of education and wit Ashalata rises above educated Binodini with her morality and greatness. After several twists and turns at last Mahendra comes back to home. This time though he is completely changed man but still he is immature in many ways as earlier. He wants back his good wife Ashalata but Ashalata grows to be a mature woman with the upheaval of her life and has been treated him like an equal human being instead of an idol.

This shows that beauty is not always skin deep. Eventhough Mahendra falls for the beauty of Binodini at last he realizes that the love of his life will always be Ashalatha. Binodini also realizes the true beauty of Ashalatha as she writes a letter to Bihari confessing that he gave her the courage to discover her real identity by showering all his pity and admiration for Ashalatha because she is naive and simple and therefore beauty is always amenable to character.

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## Induced Body Dysmorphic Disorder : A Study of Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* Series

It is almost criminal to attempt to provide a singular definition for something as subjective and variegated as beauty. Repetition and reproduction are the easiest and the only ways to make something new - like the beauty standards - normative and acceptable in any given society. What happens when a few people get to decide the beauty standards and enforce it rigorously with the help of the advancement in the field of medical science. This is among the various themes explored in Scot Westerfeld's *Uglies* series which is set in a post-apocalyptic, post scarcity dystopia, where becoming beautiful is not a choice, but mandatory. The aim of the paper is to show how science is used as a tool to reformulate the bodily features to fit a certain definition of beauty and the mental and emotional effects of such procedures on the subjects. Keeping the novels as the setting of the study, instances will be taken from the medical world to show how cosmetic surgeries have a direct bearing on the increasing cases of body dysmorphic disorders among the people, especially in the developed world.

Since the paper borders on interdisciplinary research, the study will take place in the interface between literature and medicine. Instances will be taken from the medical world to explain cosmetic surgeries and body dysmorphic disorder, while the contexts of the novel will be used to establish a link between surgeries for body reformulation and their mental effects on the patients (if they can be called so), thus proving how manipulation of body to fit the beauty standards can be a cause for what Enrico Morselli called dysmorphophobia, as discussed in the series. The paper will conclude by showing how there is a possibility of 'achieving beauty standards' becoming another dividing factor between the rich and the poor apart from creating a sense of inferiority among the people and a simultaneous development of negative opinions about their body (normative discontent).

When beauty is objectified, it can be discerned as a stimulus that evokes a pleasurable response from the perceiver. Several attempts have been made by scholars since time immemorial at commenting on the glorious realm of beauty. George Santayana, the renowned philosopher came up with three defining features of beauty: Value positive, intrinsic and objectified. Thomas Aquinas defined beauty as that which gives pleasure at sight (*id quod visum placet*). Beauty being an abstract noun is intangible and hence difficult to gauge, yet we all have our own perceptions of beauty. That which influences the notion of beauty, though, appears deceptively straightforward behind the façade of the subjectivity of human emotions. To obtain a better grasp of this idea, a deterministic explanation is imperative which underscores a person's lack of control on his/her own actions, perceptions, and life events in general to be determined ultimately by causes considered external to the human will. In simpler terms, the parameters of what is regarded as beautiful are dictated by the dominant beauty discourses of the time and have a direct bearing on the standpoint of a person. In Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* series, the beauty discourses are influenced by The International Committee of Morphological Standards, commonly called The Pretty Committee, who are tasked with regulating the operation standards of beauty. The story takes place three hundred years in the future, where enforced conformism extends to morphological similarity. Here the natural appearance is regarded synonymous with being

ugly, which they remain till the age of sixteen, when they are subjected to a series of highly invasive surgeries for purely cosmetic reasons and are transformed into the “Pretties”, with their assembly line allure.

Since time immemorial, human beings have indulged in morphological violations to conform to the cultural archetypes of beauty as a part of collective identity formation. The broad spectrum of body modifications includes colouring, dyeing, tanning, the use of cosmetics, tattooing, body piercings, BOTOX and body fillers, not to mention the more recent invasive cosmetic surgeries. But now, with the advancement in medical science, the extent of what can be changed and modified has been redefined and it fills the impressionable minds with unreflective expectations. Earlier the inexpensive nature of the procedures made it accessible to the public in general, but the latest cosmetic modifications are expensive and hence not accessible to the people at large, thus creating an amplified discontentment to the point of it getting metamorphosed into a type of somatoform disorder which requires psychiatric intervention.

Friedrich Schiller in his play *Don Carlos* (1787) writes as follows about beauty: “truth exists for the wise, beauty for the feeling heart.” Here the author is speaking of unadulterated beauty that can evoke pure emotions in the subject's mind without any external factor at play as the catalyst. What happens when beauty is not pristine, rather stage managed and contrived with the aim of evoking a certain desired effect in the beholder. It is tantamount to mental and emotional manipulation, as is delineated by Westerfeld in his *Ugliestripecta*. The Pretty Committee is more than successful in making the populace oblivious to the 'enforced conformism' by making it appear desirable through their insidious schemes. In the post scarcity society where everybody is provided everything by the government, where class division has ceased to exist, the division is based on something as superficial as the physical appearance. The inhabitants are taught to view themselves as divided into two broad categories: the Ugliers and the Pretties.

The indoctrination begins at the most fundamental level of language and history. The politics of language goes a long way in moulding the mental make-up of the denizens along with the tweaked historical facts. In the essay “Discourse Analysis” by Gabriele Griffin, he mentions how language is invested and not a neutral tool for transmitting message. For example in *Uglies*, the words 'ugly' and 'pretty' are used by the inhabitants as a means of identifying someone and not merely as adjectives. Thus, any mild natural dissatisfaction that a person has with his /her body is augmented to the point where it is viewed as something jarring, that needs to be taken care of. This is especially the case when they are taught to like a certain kind of beauty: “Big eyes and full lips like a kid's smooth, clear skin; symmetrical features; and a thousand other little clues” (Westerfeld 16). When Tally asks Shay to make her 'morphos' using the body morphing simulations, Shay replies, “This whole thing is just designed to make us hate ourselves” (Westerfeld 44). A 'prettier' version of a person staring at him/her from the walls is a constant reminder of the inadequacy of their mien. Thus, by the time a kid reaches the age of sixteen both technology and language together manage to transform a general concern for once appearance into something similar to “Normative Discontent”.

Normative Discontent is not a psychological aberration or an anomaly that needs to be treated by psychiatric intervention. It is nothing but a general displeasure that people tend to have about the existing state of affairs or things, which can be good or bad depending on how

deep this dissatisfaction runs and for what purpose. However, a sempiternal discontentment regarding the body image can be a source of concern if it affects their lives (both personal and professional) adversely. In Westerfeld's dystopia, the technology serves as a conduit for the pathologization of this condition by constantly digging into the insecurities of the gullible population by reminding them of their physical flaws. This takes place in two different ways: Indoctrination and the use of technology. It initiates within them a series of sustained interchanges that reifies their insecurities through imagined morphological imperfections.

It was in the United States of America that the term 'Normative Discontent' became popularised, especially during the 1980's by the researchers who noticed widespread negative body image issues among the people, particularly women. It is hence no surprise that Westerfeld, a native of Texas, United States, decided to make it the central theme in his young adult fiction trilogy. Culture plays a significant role in influencing the tastes of people, i.e. for the good or for the bad. Tally, when she was in her city saw people in dichotomies- as an ugly or a pretty- but when she was in the Smoke, her perception changed under the influence of David who corrected her skewed perspective. Though Shay had on her part tried to convince Tally of the very same idea, the constant reminders of the city culture made Tally question Shay's logic as delusions. But her life in Smoke provided Tally an altogether different point of view that was nothing similar to what she had been taught back in her city. It was almost as if Tally had been brought face to face with an altered or rather alternative reality where an individual could hold on to their identity as well as cultural identity simultaneously without subjecting one to the other.

The linguistic politics, social conditioning and distortion of history thus give rise to a generation that are oblivious to their passive subjectivity because of the lack of access or awareness about any other alternative. This results in the buildout of a cognitive bias within them that is purportedly adaptive as is evidenced in Tally's changed mindset which can be viewed as a natural corollary of the change in her station ( from her city to the Smoke). When Tally was in the city, there was not second thought about how she looked at herself- as an ugly. When she manages to sneak into Prettyville to see Peris, she gets anxious about how he would receive her: "Tally was nothing here. Worse, she was ugly. But she hoped Peris wouldn't see it that way. Wouldn't see *her* that way" (Westerfeld 7).

The ersatz nature of Peris's beauty does not evade her, yet she sees him in a different light which is caused by what is known as the 'Halo Effect', a term that was popularised by the American Psychologist Edward Lee Thorndike in a paper written by him in the year 1920. "It is the outcome in one area due to the factors derived from another" (Wikipedia Contributors). The following lines from the novel bear testimony to it: "On their expeditions she and Peris had sometimes spotted pretties who looked familiar, like Ugliers they'd known. Sort of like brother or sister – an older, more confident, much prettier brother or sister" (Westerfeld 13). Here, the Pretties appear more respectable to the Ugliers owing to a mere change in their appearance, a typical example of Halo Effect.

Here it can be seen that materialisation of the ideal marks the beginning of the pathologization process. An invasive medical intervention is usually sought when the body is diseased and needs to be fixed. Decorative modifications that are non-invasive, and resorting to medical help for body beautification are two different scenarios. When a normal person seeks doctor's help to reset his body, the usual implication is that there is something wrong with it. In the city, the indoctrination in schools sowed the seeds of normative discontent in

the minds of the kids which was tended to further by the body morphing simulations that they were encouraged to use upon themselves as a game to augment the feeling of insecurity regarding their body image. The software was designed to morph the face of the Ugliers to that of the Pretties by bringing about symmetry in them and by sticking to the guidelines of the pretty committee. When Tally tries to morph Shay's face despite her protests, this is what happens:

“The software took over: the eyes gradually grew, reducing the size of the nose between them, Shay's cheekbones moved upward, and her lips became a tiny bit fuller (they were already most pretty sized). Every blemish disappeared, her skin turning flawlessly smooth. The Skull moved subtly under the features, the angle of her forehead tilting back, her chin becoming more defined, her jaw stronger”.( Westerfeld 43)

Here we find that every time the software makes an adjustment to Shay's face, it appears like ironing a flaw in her feature, making her feel like in need of improvement. Through cosmetic reconstruction, at the age of sixteen, these changes are made to their body and the person is surgically transformed to a standard pretty. Since the physique appears transformed for the better after the surgical procedure, the people are convinced of their former anatomical imperfection. This is where BDD (Body dysmorphic disorder) is spawned as a psychological disorder in the psyche of the Ugliers. The fear of being deprived of the surgery and remaining ugly for the rest of their lives is nothing short of the fear of a pathological condition. Dr. Cable preys on this fear to convince Tally into betraying her friend and the rest of the Smokies.

The disorder's essential feature, as defined in DSM III-R, is a preoccupation with some imagined defect in appearance in a normal –appearing person; or, if a slight physical anomaly is present, the concern is grossly excessive. Patients may complain, for example, of “devious – looking” eyebrows(1), an excessively large nose (2), or head (3), small genitals (4), or a “stretched” mouth (5) - supposed deformities that the patients feel are unbearably ugly. The preoccupation can be persistent and pervasive, leading to social withdrawal as well as repeated visits to dermatologists and plastic surgeons in an attempt to correct the imagined effect. ( DSM-III-R)

Thus a look at the bigger picture shows how technology can be a cause of body dysmorphic disorder. What Scott Westerfeld has shown as taking place in a dystopia set three hundred years in the future is actually happening in our society. There is a constant projection of the ideal beauty standards by the print and visual media that engenders insecurity regarding body image in people and they take the help of medical advancements to satisfy their need for the perfect body while unwittingly falling prey to the misplaced beauty ideals and the business minded health professionals. Thus this work of young adult fiction can also be viewed as a commentary on the existing social world, pointing its fingers to the pitfalls in the existing system with the benefit of hindsight that the fictitious future provides. Also, achieving the beauty standards proves to be easier for the rich than for the poor under the present conditions thus ending up becoming a dividing factor since ours is not a 'post scarcity' world like in the novel.

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## Impact of Beauty on Power : A Short Analysis of Indu Sundaresan's *Taj Trilogy*

### Abstract

*What provides a perceptual experience of pleasure and satisfaction in the mind is nothing but beauty. It may be images or moments. The happiest times in everybody's life are the happiest moments. By images, it means the vision of anything which has aesthetic quality. Man's aesthetic sense helps him to discriminate which is beautiful and which is not. Thus he determines a beautiful face as in the case of women. In this age of increasing atrocities towards women, it will be a good thought to find out whether beauty is the only thing which makes space for women in the world in the light of Indu Sundaresan's Taj Trilogy. The novels in the Taj Trilogy are The Twentieth Wife, The Feast of Roses and The Shadow Princess.*

India has a multi-cultural legacy due to the transgression by many world powers including Persian-Muslims, Mongols, and British etc. Among them the most prominent were the Muslims especially Mughals – the descendants of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. The Mughals were a Muslim dynasty of Turko-Mongol origin that ruled most of northern India from the early 16th to the mid-18th century, after which it continued to exist as a considerably reduced and increasingly powerless entity until the mid-19th century. Muslim aristocratic women during the Mughal Dynasty were talented and capable royal women. In a society where patriarchy dominates, it imposes some social ethics on its inhabitants. But some of the royal Mughal women tear off their veils and exerted an immense power on the emperor and empire throughout their lives. Indu Sundaresan's *Taj Trilogy*, characterize the life of these women including Nur Jahan, Mumtaz Mahal and Jahanara Beegum. The novels in the *Taj Trilogy* are *The Twentieth Wife*, *The Feast of Roses* and *The Shadow Princess*. Indu Sundaresan was born in New Delhi and is settled in US. She came to the field of literature with the historical novel *The Twentieth Wife* (2002) followed by the other two novels in the trilogy.

*The Twentieth Wife* is the first in the trilogy of Indu Sundaresan, the other two being *The Feast of Roses* and *The Shadow Princess*. *The Twentieth Wife* is the story of the empress Nur Jahan. Indu Sundaresan makes a deliberate attempt to reveal the identity of Mehrunnisa, the woman hidden behind a veil. Mehrunnisa stepped beyond the bounds of conventions that chained the seventeenth century India. Mehrunnisa is an extraordinary woman who, at the mature age of thirty four, marries Jahangir and subsequently rules the empire in his name. The novel begins with the birth of Mehrunnisa on a stormy night in a rural campsite in Qandahar. Thirty four years later, this child of the stormy night came to Jahangir's imperial harem as his twentieth wife. Born and brought up at Emperor Akbar's palace, Mehrunnisa first encountered with Prince Jahangir on his wedding day. She is only eight years old when she decides she will be his wife one day. Before her marriage to Jahangir, she was married to Sher Afkun, who was slaughtered by the imperial army. Emperor Jahangir first presented on her the title Nur Mahal, *Light of the Palace* and later in 1616 changed it into Nur Jahan, 'Light of the world.' By her enchanting beauty, she captured the emperor's attention. As time passes by, Emperor Jahangir became the mouthpiece of Nur Jahan.

Nur Jahan, withstand all norms by refusing to be confined to the duties of an empress and dares to re-define her role as a “decision maker”. She was well aware of the restriction that a woman suffers in her time. But she was courageous enough to challenge those restrictions on her. Women in history are defined by male historians as marginal. It is an imperfect representation. Nur Jahan deconstructs the stereotypical role of women in the Mughal court.

*The Feast of Roses* is a sequel to *The Twentieth Wife*. *The Feast of Roses* is a fictional account of Mehrunnisa's life as Empress Nur Jahan. Mehrunnisa formed a junta of sorts with her father Ghias Beg, her brother Abul Hasan and Prince Khurram (Shah Jahan). Mehrunnisa is the first and only woman Jahangir marries for love; all others are for political reasons. As a mark of his deep devotion, he transfers all his powers of sovereignty to Mehrunnisa. Thus she can control Emperor Jahangir mentally. Jahangir gives her the right to hold the imperial seal which arises jealousy in other empresses in the harem. Mehrunnisa had a rival in the harem, Empress Jagat Gosini, who has schemed and plotted against Mehrunnisa from early on. And in the court also, she had to battle with ministers for supremacy. They questioned the authority of a woman on the outside world, an instance of oppression of women in the Mughal's reign. Mehrunnisa's junta disintegrated, leaving her without supporters. She showed great strength of character and cleverness for what she wanted. Blinded with the supremacy of power, she ignored even her daughter, Ladli's love. In short *The Feast of Roses* is the story of the transformation of a Persian refugee to empress and the most powerful woman in the Mughal dynasty.

In the novel, *The Feast of Roses*, Mehrunnisa thinks why the other wives of Jahangir, especially Jagat Gosini, never demanded any share in the administration of the Empire. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Indian women were usually banished from public and political activities due to the patriarchal structure of Indian society. In such a time she thought of opposing the patriarchal society and creates a new social structure that will give adequate space to women.

For Sundaesan, Nurjahan is a symbol. There would have been hundreds of women lived in the bygone years like Nur Jahan, but their achievements had been abolished from history. Various historians are of the opinion that Emperor Jahangir had been completely subsumed before Nur Jahan in the matter of administration of the Mughal Empire. But she had been avoided only because she was a woman. As the historian Eraly wrote, “But there was one fatal flaw in her. She was a woman...And in the prejudice of the age women had no public role, and ambition was the prerogative of men” (*The Lives and Times of the Great Mughals*. 86).

*The Shadow Princess* is the third in the Taj trilogy. The novel begins with accession of throne by Shah Jahan as Emperor and his wife, Mumtaz Mahal and children. Mumtaz also known as Arjumand Banu Beegum, was not just a beautiful woman with whom Shah jahan was in love; she was his helpmate, the anchor on which he docked himself. He was as dependent on Mumtaz as Jahangir or Nur jahan. Shah Jahan consulted her on all important state matters, and it was she who placed the royal seal on the firmans, which gave her a chance to examine the final drafts of documents. Mumtaz accompanied her husband on his wanderings through Bengal. She insists him never to stop the battle with Jahangir and her aunt Mehrunnisa until success would be theirs. But unfortunately Shah Jahan failed in the battle. At this time also Mumtaz Mahal never ceased to support her husband and became a dutiful wife. Shah Jahan's decision to construct an enduring tomb to Mumtaz Mahal shows

the influence exerted by Mumtaz on him. She bore him a child almost every year. Mumtaz Mahal died in 1631 during her fourteenth child birth.

With the death of Mumtaz, Emperor Shah Jahan loses interest in everything and his sons conspire and scheme to gain control over the empire. Jahanara, Shah Jahan's most favourite daughter is only seventeen when the burden of power thrust upon her. She sacrifices her own life and dreams for the sake of her father. Shah Jahan depends upon her so much that he even refuses her to getting married. Jahanara rises to the power of an empress. She controls the revenue, business and the major ports, which is unusual at that time. She shares some common characters of her great-aunt Mehrunnisa. While Nur Jahan mentally controlled Emperor Jahangir, Jahanara became a soothing medicine to Emperor Shah Jahan's agony. Along the story of Jahanara we also get some hints about the progress in the construction of Taj Mahal. Among the seven children, Jahanara captured attention of her father only because her face reminded him of the deceased queen Mumtaz Mahal, and her ability to command the empire and its subjects as well as the royal harem. As the title suggests Jahanara is a “shadow princess” who exerts her power and mental support as from a shadow to the age old Emperor Shah Jahan and the ruling Emperor Aurangzeb.

Jahanara spent her days in the royal harem; the most protected and secluded places in the land. She spent her nights with her father and mother, painting, writing poems, and helping her father plan reconstructions of other palaces and monuments. She had a very good relationship with her brother Dara, who shared her love of the arts, but was hostile towards Raushanara and Aurangzeb, both said to be in league with each other and very devious and disrespectful towards their mother, their father, and even other minorities in the harem, such as the Hindu wives and Christian wives of Shah Jahan. Jahanara planned weddings alike. She saw to Dara's betrothal to Nadira Banu Beegum, and planned out the wedding. After almost thirty years as the lead woman in the empire, Jahanara took on another duty: to tend to her dying father. Although Shah Jahan was still living, Aurangzeb declared himself the Emperor and had his father locked up in his palaces in Agra. Jahanara lived with her father for the rest of his life. Jahanara died on September 6, 1681, at the age of 67. Aurangzeb ruled for another twenty six years. He is remembered today mostly for his inhumanity and dogmatist ways, yet he did strengthen the empire in many ways, at the price of others. Jahanara is a revered Indian icon today, woman who had numerous powers in a time when royal women were secluded and not allowed many liberties. She was an engineer, a writer, a painter, and an activist.

As Aristotle said personal beauty is greater than any letter of reference. Aristotle's words shows the impact of beauty – whether it would be of face or mind – on human world. *Mehrunnisa's story tells us that a beautiful face was not an especially valuable asset in a harem filled with beautiful women. She has intelligence, wit and immense abilities as a stateswoman and a politician. Mumtaz Mahal also has considerable influence on her husband Shah Jahan. While accompanying him to several battles, she continues her support to Shah Jahan, and becomes a major part in the process of his ascension to the role of an emperor.* Jahanara, who in her 17<sup>th</sup> year becomes the most powerful woman in the Empire, consoles her grief-stricken father and saves his reign from collapsing due to strife and chaos. She assumes much of her father's power, issuing royal edicts and running her own intelligence network. These three prominent women characters use their will power to capture the attention of the male rulers and establish their position in the history of womanhood.

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## **B for beautification : A Study on Colour Symbolism in Changing Scenario of FILMS**

### **Abstract**

*Considering film's genesis in black and white, it's not astonishing that many filmmakers have an obsession with colour in films. From wardrobe choices and colour gels to post-production filters and fonts, movie color schemes play a pivotal role in a director's vision. Black is the darkest colour among the leading colours, the result of the nonexistence or complete absorption of visible light. The etymology, history, art, science and culture explore black is a colour of evil demons and stark realities of life. Past couple of years the colour black has no life and rhythm. It intimated a soul without soulmate. But now the situation is changing to a new horizon of togetherness. The pre-eminent era of colour films was 1939-1949, when the name Nathalie Kalmus as Technicolor consultant guaranteed the genuine three-tone article before Eastman Colour greatly reduced the visual quality of films. Today, most films have the same look and texture. Colour is seldom used with imagination, in which colour has been used intrinsically and creatively. Currently, design experts are all aware of the impact of colours while using them in media. The movies posters themselves show several layers of information through colour symbolism; if stripped of colours, they will not convey the message in a powerful manner as they normally do. Naturally, age, culture, political views and geographical locations all impact how colour symbolism in the movies is interpreted. Each genre of movies: be it romantic, Sci-Fi, Action etc uses certain favoured colours to create individual identity for each movie. Colours are used not just for aesthetic purposes in movies but also for emphasising dramatic developments, or for giving a movie a certain look and feel it is evident that film directors put a lot of effort and thought in using colours symbolism in their movies in a manner that helps them connect with the audiences.*

**Keywords:** filmmaker, etymology, imagination, creativity and aesthetic.

“Colours, like odours and tastes, become mixed according to the variability of who perceives them and can only reveal themselves to be 'secondary' phenomena of scientific interest with respect to those considered 'objective', such as form, movement and numbers.”

- Galileo Galilei

Colours convey emotions. And they usually explore emotions in a very subtle way, but also in a much uncontrolled manner. Colours are undoubtedly an important aesthetic component in any artistic creation. This component can be consciously used or not, depending on the artist and on the process. But it is always there. Colour has the potential to turn a good film into a great one. Certain film directors have become famous for treating their films like paintings-putting immense detail into the colour palette of each shot to evoke particular emotions in the viewer.

If you've ever seen a Michael Bay's film then you would've noticed the teal and orange filters that are applied to each shot-the teal brings added depth and tension to the serious scenes, while the orange makes the action scenes more energetic and invigorating. Some of Wes Anderson's more recent movies have also made excellent use of bright, vibrant colours, to help more people realise this, graphic designer Roxy Radulescu created an amazing website called *Movies in Colour*, which collates screenshots from hundreds of different movies and then lays out a palette of all the colours used. As Roxy herself writes, *Movie in Colour* is “a tool to promote learning and inspiration”, and you'll be amazed at how accurately the colours on their own depict the mood and feel of each film.

Ridley Scott's classic *Gladiator*, you can see how the dark black and deep crimson red reflects the brutality and bloodshed in the film, while the earthy brown hues bring to life the ancient Roman culture. On the other hand, the vibrant colour palette of the *Toy Story* has been chosen by director John Lassiter to bring back nostalgic memories and evoke a sense of childhood innocence.

Another imaginative use of colour is the below shot from *Skyfall*, which has been graded with a green tint not only to emphasise Bond's connection with his homeland, but also to hammer home the desolate feeling of the Scottish Highlands. Both Bond and M are in danger at this point in the film, and the ominous grey fog combined with a brooding, dark colour palette reflects this.

Visionary directors such as those mentioned above continue to defy the expectations of how colour is used, and in turn they have made films more immersive than ever before. We often watch movies, rarely paying attention to the colour symbolism depicted in them. But if you study the history of movies, you will find that all great directors have consciously used colour symbolism and psychology to effectively communicate with their audiences.

Colour can serve as a powerful visual element that acts as a code that provides a deeper level of meaning to those who are able to interpret the signs. Consider how much less information a map would provide if it were in black and white – the different types of road would not be so distinguishable, and you may even confuse contour lines for rivers and streams. The simple yet effective use of colour provides a visual code that allows us to correctly interpret the image that we are seeing (Zettl 1999).

### **A Brief History of the Use of Colours in Films.**

In the beginning, colour in films was only applied using manual tinting. This was a time consuming and expensive project where every object in the scene had to be tinted manually. The best examples of earliest films using hand tinting in this manner include *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) and *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1926). By 1915, Kalmus's Technicolor came into being, solving the problem of time needed in tinting objects in films. His process helped capture natural colours of objects. It involved using two films along with dye transferring to create a single film but it still had many colour limitations. Therefore, by 1930, Depression Era, most directors gave up making coloured films due to expense and other difficulties (and the fact that most audiences were just not bothered by lack of colours. They simply did not mind watching movies in Black and White). By 1932, luckily, Technicolor solved the expense problems by using the 3 films and 3 cameras technique of tinting objects. The audiences by then were thirsty for coloured films and Walt Disney further explored and revolutionized these processes. Critics however started paying attention to colour

symbolism in the movies by this era. For example, the overuse of certain colours was frowned upon, especially colours like Blue etc.

### **Colour Symbolism in the Movies Today**

Today, design experts are all aware of the impact of colours while using them in media. The movies posters themselves show several layers of information through colour symbolism; if stripped of colours, they will not convey the message in a powerful manner as they normally do. Naturally, age, culture, political views and geographical locations all impact how colour symbolism in the movies is interpreted. Each genre of movies: be it romantic, Sci-Fi, Action etc uses certain favoured colours to create individual identity for each movie. Take the example of the movie Kill Bill- the yellow colour posters were used to grab attention but they also depicted Uma Thurman's character's madness and instability.

### **Colour Symbolism for Transitional Aspects**

Colours are used not just for aesthetic purposes in movies but also for highlighting dramatic developments, or for giving a movie a certain look and feel. As early as the Wizard of Oz, directors used colours to show transition and change: Dorothy's dream was shown in colour while reality was depicted in Black and White. Likewise, colour symbolism in the movie Pan's Labyrinth (2006) (which won 3 Academy awards including one for the Best Cinematography), used colour for showing several transitional aspects.

But perhaps, the best example of colour symbolism that depicts transition in movies is seen in the film The Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon. Jen, the leading character is always shown in white; however, once she falls in love, she is shown in red. There are various other instances of colour symbolism in this film: the other main character Yo Shu Lien is always seen wearing lilac for representing energy at its peak. The poison that kills Li Mu Bai is also Purple Yin poison that depicts the colours' link to death and mourning.

### **Colour Symbolism for Expressions**

In 2001's Amelie, which again won many Academy awards, the director used colours to show the inner reality of the characters. The cinematographer used green-gold-red palette to depict her fairy tale view of the world.

### **Colour Symbolism to Give a Clue**

M.Night Shyamalan is known to use red to leave certain 'clues' in his films. For example in The Sixth Sense, he used red to depict objects that were touched by the other worldly beings. He also used red in the Village. Other movies directors like those of The City of Lost Children also used complementary reds and greens to depict danger or caution as well as the menace and eeriness of the evil character Krank's world.

### **Colour Symbolism to Transport Viewers to Another Time and Place**

Directors Joel and Ethan Cohen have also used colour symbolism to transport viewers to another era and place. They used dry and dusty colour palettes to take viewers back to the post Depression era in the film, O, Brother Where Art Thou? (2006)

The usage of unusual or unexplained symbolism is particularly something to avoid in television or film. Paintings, drawings and other still images allow for easy examination: if the viewer is unsure or unclear about the message that the artist is trying to convey, then they are able to closely study the piece in question in order to ascertain what the symbolism is

intended to say. On the other hand, moving images do not lend themselves for detailed analysis without some effort on the behalf of the viewer. As such, if the artist wants to use symbolism that is conveyed by colour then they must ensure that the message is instantly recognisable. Furthermore, if you wish to establish a colour as a symbol for something other than what convention dictates, then your chosen audience must be provided with sufficient clues so as to enable them to learn the new association (Zettl, 1999).

The symbolic use of colour should be orchestrated such that the viewer will be able to understand the intended message, based upon their culture and experience. Colour can therefore be seen as a logical process, whereby a symbol or idea can be understood through our experience of the world around us (Brusatin 1991).

“Since colour occupies so important a place in the series of elementary phenomena... we shall not be surprised to find that its effects are at all times decided and significant, and that they are immediately associated with the emotions of the mind.” (Goethe 1840 cited Brusatin 1991)

Colours can also be specifically selected in order to make us feel a certain way (Zettl 1986). They can provide a very useful method of establishing a particular mood, or even signifying the essential quality of an object or event. In industry, package designers are very careful in the choice of colours they use to represent a particular product (Zettl 1986). For example if you wanted to purchase a variety of tea that was intended to have a calming and relaxing effect, you would probably choose a tea packaged in a pale green box over the variety packaged in a bright red box. The associations that we automatically make with certain colours have been learned over a period of time and ingrained into our culture, and as such are inherently difficult to disregard.

As visual artists we need to think about how colour affects the impact of our work: does it reflect our cultural background and the message that we are trying to communicate? Who is our intended audience, and will they be able to interpret our intended message correctly, based on their own understanding of colour symbolism?

As artists and designers we have control over what our audience sees, and we need to be aware that, unless we are careful, we may be sending the wrong messages because of the influence that we can have over the way that they respond (Freisner 2000). An example of the way that the inappropriate use of colour can have the completely wrong effect on an audience is the original design of the signs at the Euro Disney theme park. The bright colour scheme was meant to visually compete with the red used by Coca Cola, and the colour purple featured prominently. However this turned out to be a serious error because much of Europe is Catholic, and as such purple is a symbol of death and the Crucifixion. It then emerged that the only reason the colour was chosen in the first place was because the CEO liked purple (Anon 27/3/06). It is therefore to be seen that the consideration of how colours are used is particularly important when dealing with media that potentially will be viewed all over the world, such as films or websites.

When dealing with media viewed on computers it is also necessary to take into account the way that there is an extremely wide variation in the way that monitors are calibrated. Thus if a company such as an airline had a elegant dark blue background on their website, it may in fact appear to be black to some people. As the colour associated with death, particularly in the Western world, this is not the colour you would want to be suggestive of the dependability and safety of your airline (Anon 27/3/06).

Colours are perceived in film and theatre as the result of several components: set, props, costumes, make up, lighting, and each of these components has an impact on the overall colour perception. Colours have a direct impact on the emotions of the viewer and are usually chosen for that purpose. There are some aesthetic rules that can be used as guidelines and some cultural differences that can be taken into consideration. But in the end, much of the creative process happens in the subconscious mind and is the result of several factors: what directors know about colours, their culture, their experience in using colours, the questions they ask themselves about colours, the possibility of them having a dialog about colours with their lighting designer or their cinematographer, the show or the film they are directing and its needs in terms of colour.

It is evident that film directors put a lot of effort and thought in using colours symbolism in their movies in a manner that helps them connect with the audiences. So, the next time you watch a movie, try and note what colour symbolism is used therein?

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## Problematic Beauty : A Study of “Love Crimes” in India

India has been and still is undoubtedly a patriarchal society. From the time of Manu, women have been recognized as the secondary sex, incapable of independent existence. *Dharma Shashtra* outlines how men have to regulate and dominate women's lives. With years of misogynistic conditioning, mistreatment of and violence against women are considered the norm in our country. Brinda Karat, the then general secretary of the All India Democratic Women's Association, on Sept 9, 2000, at a talk show hosted by Chandigarh Press Club, pointed out that over 11,000 women have been murdered in their homes in the last two years and this number is more than the soldiers killed in the last four wars fought by the country.

While things are definitely looking up for women in aspects of status and education, there still is a lot of scope for improvement. In the essay “The Women's Movement in India: Emergence of a New Perspective,” Mazumdar and Agnihotri points out a contradictory trend post-independence: on one side, there is a “steadily rising crime graph within which crimes of violence against women—domestic, social and political,” and on the other side, there are “innumerable examples of heroic struggles by women and men of different classes and backgrounds to find innovative and constructive solutions to the many maladies that characterize society.” (227)

The mythological character of Surpanakha from *The Ramayayana* is an early victim of violence against women. In Shashi Deshpande's novel *a Matter of Time*, Sumi feels sympathy towards this character: “She's as ugly as Surpanakha.” She has heard Kalyani say. And she has been thinking since then of this demon sister of the demon King Ravana, who fell in love with the Aryan prince Rama. An unpleasant story, it's occurred to her, with the two princes Rama and Lakshmana mocking and ridiculing her and finally mutilating her by cutting off her nose. (191)

While Surpanakha's lack of beauty made her subject to brutality, the possession of beauty has become problematic today. There is a reversal in the roles, yet women remain the victims of violence.

This paper looks at an issue of contemporary relevance in the Indian society—various crimes directed at young women, simply because the assailant found her “beautiful” or “attractive,” because he “loved” her. For the want of a better term, this paper will refer to such crimes as “love crimes.” The paper further endeavours to seek the reasons behind such crimes, and how they can be curtailed.

Feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey originally theorized male gaze in her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975) to bare the concept of gender asymmetry in Hollywood films. Through this theory, she says how the perceived work, the beautiful, becomes a femme signifier, and hence, the perceiver automatically becomes male. In order to satisfy the male gaze, and through extension, the male audience, women often get objectified in art and literature. This exploitation of voyeurism affects a negative impact on the audience's psyche; they are conditioned to believe that women are meant to owned and

devoured—any resistance on her part is, therefore, seen as a transgression and countered with violence. The many “love crimes” inflicted upon young women in India such as rape, acid attack, and murder can be attributed to this mentality. The psychology behind such “love crimes” is simply this: “she hurt my male ego. I wanted to possess her beauty, which if I cannot have, no one else should have it.”

For instance, in Dharampura, Punjab, on 18 March 2016, six schoolgirls of VIII standard were attacked with acid by their batchmate who was aided by his two friends. The accused, Sajan, had been stalking one of the girls for quite some time, and when her family reported his behaviour to his parents, he decided to attack her. The other girls got injured when they tried to protect their friend<sup>1</sup>.

The many cases of acid attacks on young women show that Indian men just cannot handle rejection: “They are so used to getting exactly what they want at home that when they enter the real world they cannot take any form of feedback let alone rejection” (Vaz). This is exemplified in the latest case of acid attack in Warangal, Hyderabad too. The woman, identified as C Madhuri, was attacked by her lover a week after she lodged a complaint with the police as he was pestering and threatening Madhuri to marry him<sup>2</sup>.

In her blog, Vaz reminds the readers how a patriarchal nation such as India treats violence against women in a light manner. She uses the example of the Sati Regulation—though it was initially passed in 1829, the government of Rajasthan was forced to enact the Sati Prevention Act in 1987. Similarly, even though the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was modified for the first time in 2013 to regulate acid attacks, it does not seem to be enough:

[...] the desire to lash out and inherent disregard for women in specific and human suffering in general seeds the thought, but the lax laws—both to limit availability and to counter the crime—is what lets the perpetrators convert their thought into action. (Ghosh)

When everything from paints and household cleaners to car batteries can be used for the purpose, regulation indeed becomes difficult.

Acid attack can be termed as a form of “gender terrorism” that rarely kills the victim, but leaves them scarred—emotionally and physically—for the rest of their lives. In a way, it is meant as a warning message to any woman who dares to put a toe outside the line:

As repulsive as it sounds, the attacker knows that a woman's “market value” and strength as a human being is utterly destroyed when she is either attacked with acid or raped. Add political connections to the equation, the woman is completely silenced. It is the ideal recipe for female subjugation. (Kasana)

The object of acid attack on women is, thus, to deform a person, inflict severe pain, and more importantly to destroy their “beauty.”

Rape is yet another form of gender terrorism meant to put women in their “rightful place.” The shocking gang-rape and murder of Jyoti Singh Pandey in Delhi in December 2012 was a new awakening for the people of India: the unfortunate incident and its aftermath created a wave of awareness. *Human Rights Watch* reported a 39 percent increase in the number of

<sup>1</sup>Courtesy: The Indian Express. Dt. 18 March, 2016.

<sup>2</sup>Courtesy: the Indian Express. Dt. 30 November, 2017.

rape complaints reported to the police, from 2012 to 2015<sup>3</sup>. However, victims of sexual assault, especially from poor and marginalized communities fail to receive legal assistance.

In matters of sexual nature like rape, victim-blaming is a hurdle between crime and justice. The society, from the victim's kin to the four pillars of democracy (legislative, executive, judiciary, and the media) puts the weight of the blame on the victim under which she cowers. An instance of this is Abhijeet Mukherjee, an MP and the son of the then President of India Pranab Mukherjee's comment regarding the women protesting in Delhi against the gang-rape of the young woman: he called them “petty ladies” who have “no connection to the ground reality.”<sup>4</sup> *AIB*, in connection with Kalki Koelchin, made a sarcastic video named “Rape—It's Your Fault” to expose the ridiculousness of victim-blaming. It makes fun of the hateful comments directed at women by influential people in the society—from pointing the finger at “provocative” clothing and working late to stupid suggestions to prevent rape such as “calling the rapist 'bhaiyaa’<sup>5</sup>,” not eating chowmein, and not using mobile phones<sup>6</sup>.

The act of blaming the victim for their overt sexuality is confined neither to India nor to this age. P. B. Shelley's verse tragedy *The Cenci* throws light on the impossibility of justice in case of rape as Beatrice Cenci is seen as the femme fatale. The tag of femme fatale itself inflicts the blame on the victim. In *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, a book that looks at the Arabic-Islamic view of Byzantium, El-Cheikh talks about how medieval Muslims looked at Byzantine women:

One quality that the Arab Muslims inevitably assigned to the Byzantines was beauty. [...] This characteristic, beauty, is associated with Byzantine women in particular. Byzantine women are described as being white-complexioned blondes, with straight hair and blue eyes. (124)

She further explains how this beauty became strongly associated with sexual immorality: “constantly a potential threat, particularly due to blatant exaggerations of their sexual promiscuity” (125).

“Love crimes” of the abovementioned nature result from a sense of superiority that objectifies and de-humanizes women. Guy Sircello, an American philosopher put forward a theory of beauty in his work *A New Theory of Beauty*. He argues that beauty is accounted for by “beautiful properties,” that is, properties that constitutes something's beauty (14-15). Thus, the beholder of beauty in a rape culture such as ours sees beauty, even that of a person's, as possessable, and an act of violence is seen as endearing or normal. The complex set of beliefs regarding the act of possession was demonstrated in the murder of P. Lakshmi, a final year physiotherapy student of MG University's School of Medical Education in February 2017. Lakshmi was set ablaze by Adarsh Suneethan, a former student of the same institution, who claimed to have been in love with the former. In the incident that happened in Kottayam, Kerala, the boy poured petrol over the girl, set her on fire, and embraced her to die together<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>India: Rape Victims Face Barrier to Justice.” Human Rights Watch. YouTube, 7 Nov. 2017, [youtu.be/CcwnOVWnbpl](https://youtu.be/CcwnOVWnbpl). Web.

<sup>4</sup>Courtesy: NDTV India. Dt. 26 December, 2012.

<sup>5</sup>Godman Asaram Babu landed in controversy for blaming the victim of the Delhi gang-rape case by saying she should have called the rapists “bhaiyaa.”

<sup>6</sup>Jitender Chhatar, a local leader from the infamous Khap panchayats attributed Chinese fast food to rape. He said that chowmein leads to hormonal imbalance evoking an urge to indulge in such acts. Vinay Bihari, a member of BJP from Bihar, believes that non-vegetarian food and modern technology are leading causes for rape.

Violence against women cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon: it is rooted in our patriarchal culture and fuelled by the misogynistic collective psyche. In her work *Transforming a Rape Culture*, Emilie Buchwald views that within rape culture, sexual violence is normalized—it encourages male violence against women, and condones physical and emotional terrorism against women as the norm. When the tendencies of rape culture are coupled with the precarious male theory, the motives behind violence against women can be easily understood. Put forward by J. A. Vandello and J. K. Bosson in their work *Psychology of Men and Masculinity* (2013), the precarious male theory argues that manhood is seen as socially precarious, and unlike womanhood, has to be earned and tenuously maintained. At times when gender status is uncertain, in order to uphold the male ego, men tend to indulge in risky or maladaptive practices. In today's India, when gender roles are being erased, and women are beginning to get equal opportunities in most fields, manhood is perceived to be in a precarious position. For instance, in most households, men are not the sole breadwinners as in the olden days, and thus they have lost the privilege of being a man. “Manhood” is a socio-cultural construct and within the earlier mentioned rape culture, a rejection is seen as a threat to manhood, and men tend to lash out in stereotypical gendered ways that manifest as violence against women.

So as to prevent or curtail violence against women, it is impertinent that law be enforced from a feminist perspective. Though the law has been evaluated and strengthened in the past few years, it fails to get enforced due to corruption and lack of proper implementation. Moreover, to rectify the problem at its roots, proper awareness and education must be given at school level itself: there is an unhealthy curiosity that surrounds the female body because of the many restrictions and secrecy that the Indian society imposes in the name of “tradition” and “Indian culture;” sex education should not be an option or a free hour in schools, it ought to be mandatory. Apart from this, from a Humanities perspective, the collective cultural notions of beauty need re-evaluation. As Martinez puts it, there should be a resistance to the concept of problematic beauty:

Resistance to paradigms and public discourses of beauty was found both among women who perceived them as a disturbance, a risk or damage in their own lives, and among men who refused to find their attraction for their female partners in such paradigms and discourses. (153)

Art and literature tends to portray women as “a thing of beauty,” an object. This objectification, as Laura Mulvey said, is problematic and degrading as it encourages the male gaze. Mulvey's views find counterpart in John Berger too: “The surveyor of woman in herself is male.[...] Thus she turns herself into an object of vision: a sight.” In BBC documentary *India's Daughter*, a commentary on the sensationalized Delhi gang-rape case of 2012, the defence lawyer for the rapists M. L. Sharma compared a woman to a diamond, and went on to justify the brutal act by saying, “If you put your diamond on the street, certainly the dog will take it out. You can't stop it” (Udwin). This mentality is at once both frightening, yet contagious. As follows, it has become imperative for the creators of art and literature to realize the impact of their works on the audience and humanize women rather than objectify them. As Nabaneeta Dev Sen emphasized in her speech “Women Writers at the Turn of the Century” delivered at a conference held by the Sahitya Akademi in 2001, what we urgently need is androgynous creations that eliminate gender roles, gender binary, and domination.

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<sup>7</sup>Courtesy: Deccan Chronicle. Dt. 02 February, 2017.

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