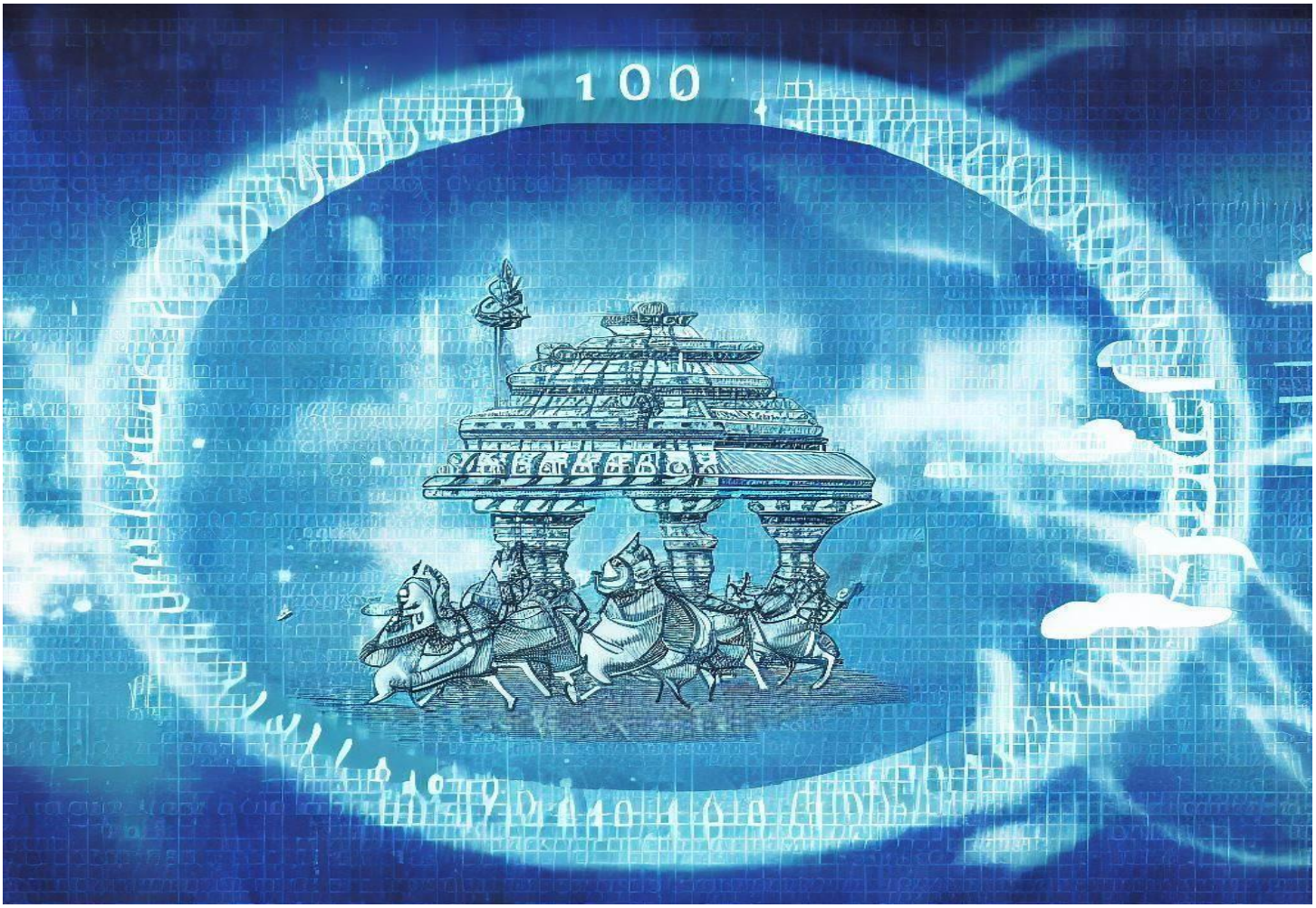
ISSN: 0448-1690 (Print)

RAJASTHAN UNIVERSITY STUDIES IN ENGLISH

RUSE

A PEER REVIEWED LITERARY JOURNAL

Vol. I Issue - I June, 2023



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Editor's Note

Greetings to the readers,

When this issue of the journal RUSE reaches all of you, the new academic session must have begun, and this year most Universities and Colleges have introduced NEP 2020 in their curricula. The focus and emphasis of the new education policy 2020 is to promote multilingualism and regionalism and to create awareness of the rich linguistic diversity and culture of the land to foster the significance of the Indian knowledge system in education. Literature, as a culmination of linguistic power and aesthetic sensibility, can prove catalytic in creating this appreciation for multilingualism and diversity of cultural expressions through mainstream to marginal literature, regional to translated literary works, and print-to-digital narratives.

This issue of Rajasthan Studies in English, published by the Department of English, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, comes with diverse hues of aesthetics and linguistics creations encompassing a wide range of thematic, theoretical, empirical, and experimental studies, articles, and research works. Exploring issues of colonial history, power, and resistance by writing back or retelling, representing disability concerns, focusing on the cultural and cross-cultural translation, Indian aesthetics, tracing the history of travel narratives traversing to science fiction and digital narrative spaces as a medium to converge the cultural divides, these articles interrogate, and critique to decode and deconstruct text from noble dimensions with multiple perspectives and stances bringing to the forefront the diverse social, cultural, local, and global issues in a nuanced way.

I am thankful to all the contributors for their engaging and thought provoking works. I feel a sense of deep appreciation for the painstaking efforts put in by the editors. Their enthusiasm for it and willingness to step outside of their regular duties is ultimately what made it come together. I sincerely hope that you will enjoy reading this issue of the journal as much as I did and provide your insightful feedback and suggestions.

Happy reading!

Prof. Sunita Agarwal
Editor in Chief

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Negotiating Culture: Role of Translation in the Indian Freedom Struggle

Prof. Sunita Agarwal

Abstract: During colonial and postcolonial period, the act of translation became a battleground between the hegemonic forces-target culture, language and the formerly subjugated non-western world, and was used to establish the supremacy of imperial power. They clearly explicated the embeddedness of certain ideological implications in the process of translation and showed how the powerful voices can be subdued and silenced as the subservient through cultural negotiation. The paper proposes to interrogate how translation was used as a subversive strategy and how by appropriation and negotiation of 'cultural syndromes' the colonialist construed Indian image negatively. It will also discuss how as a counter discourse and response to this, Indian writers adapted both Indian and foreign text and translated them in regional, Indian, English and other languages for wider circulation to revise and correct the Indian image creating patriotic feeling amongst Indians and to motivate them to be a part of the freedom struggle.

Key words: Translation, negotiation, Subversive, Inter cultural, Negotiation

> "How do people understand one another when they don't share a common cultural experience?" (Besnnett 1998:1)

Translation is a hyponymy of intercultural communication or vice versa. Both of them engage and interact with different languages and cultures and invariably share certain similarities of components and features. The Concept of translation depends upon how one views language and how it is used to transfer knowledge and culture. The instrumental concept of language

considers language 'as a mode of communication of objective information expressive of thought and meaning. In this Translation theory, meaning refers to empirical reality or it engages some pragmatic situation; conversely, the theorists who believe in the hermeneutic concept of language emphasize on interpretation, consisting of thought and meanings where meaning shapes reality and they privilege interpretation of creative values (Venuti 2000:5). In fact, translation is not a merely "rendering of words from one language to another" but it is a social act involving social relationship where two cultures come in contact with each other what Mary Campbell has termed ' contact zone' and get to know about diverse societal structures and knowledge systems. Similarly, intercultural communication refers to the blend of culture and communication and as a branch of social science discipline, it is primarily concerned with how these socio-cultural forces influence and transform social interaction and understanding. Intercultural communication varies with the change in culture, time, space, situation, and context therefore it necessitates for both the participants to have a clear understanding of the relationship between both the cultures for engaging in a successful communication. Like a translator, they need to be fully acquainted with what Samovar and Porter calls a set of 'cultural syndromes' which they define as "a shared pattern of beliefs, attitudes, self-defined norms and values organized around a theme (Porter 4)." Post-structuralists also entertain and affirm their belief in this notion. They consider that culture plays a significant role in the translation of a particular text and has primacy over the linguistic element because of its significant role in the translation process; they believe that meaning is fluid and plural. It is not something static but a contingent construct. For them words do not have an 'unchanging unified essence' therefore a translation cannot be judged like a mathematical formula based concept of semantic equivalence or one to one correspondence (p.18). The translator has to get into the 'rhetoricity of language' and re-interpret it in the socio-cultural knowledge and context. According to David Crystal there is no task more complex than translation. He further says that translators not only need to know their source language well, they must also have a thorough understanding on the field of knowledge covered by the source

text and of any social cultural or emotional connotations that need to be specified in the target language if the intended effect is to be conveyed. The same special awareness needs to be present for the target language so that points of special phrasing, contemporary fashion or taboos in expression, local expectation and so on can be all taken into account (the Cambridge Encyclopedia of language).

Hierarchy, hegemony and cultural dominance are variables which are believed to influence any translation activity considerably and the prejudiced mindsets and the dynamics of the power structures can be visibly reflected in translations works especially which were written during the colonial period. Asymmetrical relationship between the target language and the source language and cultures, and-intentionality of the translator's function, as important markers also affect the complete translation process. Various factors such as historical, political, cultural situation and colored social practices prevalent during a period determine these relationships. As Cronin notes, "translation relationship between minority and majority languages are rarely divorced from issues of power and identity that in turn destabilize Universalist theoretical prescriptions on the translation process (Cronin 1996:4)"

Furthermore, the translator's own ideological background, the intended purpose and the stance which the translator assumes or holds for the target audience also have a deep impact on the process of translation. During colonization, British Raj made all attempt to influence translation activity to suit to its own imperialistic agenda and requirements. They tried to mould every sphere in their domain to suit the overall political design. To establish hegemony of the western culture and propagate its norms and values, colonialist appropriated the administration, the judiciary and seats of learning in higher education institutions. Their vested interests made them form policies to translate Indian classical literature to English and vice versa for strategic cultural appropriation. Schaffner and Tymoczko claim that ideological influences can manifest themselves in various structural forms in the target language itself for the sole purpose of either maximizing the influence of a particular action or mitigating its impact. They said that "as a form of linguistic interface translation introduces

discourse shifts, destabilizes received meanings, creates alternate views of reality, establishes new representations and makes possible new identities (1999a).

During colonial and postcolonial period, the act of translation became a battleground between the hegemonic forces- target culture and language and the formerly subjugated non-western world and was used to establish the supremacy of imperial power. As Basnett notes all the rewritings, whatever their intentions reflect a certain ideology and poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation undertaken in the service of power and its position (in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of literature and society) (Basnett inVenuti; 1995: vii). The translation of foreign text may also reflect the ideological and political agendas of the target/source culture. These views clearly explicate the embeddedness of certain ideological implications in the process of translation and how by cultural negotiation, the powerful voices can subdue and silent the subservient. The paper proposes to interrogate how translation was used as a subversive strategy and how by appropriation and negotiation of 'cultural syndromes' the colonialist construed Indian image negatively. It will also discuss how as a counter discourse and response to this, Indian writers adapted both Indian and foreign text and translated them in regional, Indian, English and other languages for wider circulation to revise and correct the Indian image creating patriotic feeling amongst Indians and to motivate them to be a part of the freedom struggle.

Edward Said rightly says in his work *Orientalism* "The translation project explicitly started as a manipulative tool to rule and to learn then to compare the Orient with the occident…" (Said 1978:178) to subdue the infinite variety of the orient to a complete digest of laws, figures, customs and, works he is believed to have achieved. It was considered important to know the orient in order to dominate the colony. In order to establish the superiority of English language, literature and culture, the British translated many European texts into the local Indian languages. They tried to colonize India intellectually, culturally as well as politically. This slow process continued in different phases throughout their rule and translation project was an important part of this

colonizing process. By translating Indian Classics, books/literature and other works, the image of India and its culture was misconstructed and misrepresented as derogatory and subservient.

With an aim to further the cause of oriental research,Sir William Jones founded the Asiatic Society in 1784 In India, but in reality it was a subversive strategy to tarnish India's image in the world and present its culture as inferior, simple and uncivilized. As an initiative, he translated A*bhijnanasakuntalam* into English and entitled it as *The Fatal Ring* or *Cakuntala* in 1789. The text was largely appropriated according to western aesthetics and didn't pay any heed to specificities of Indian culture. Charles Wilkins, another British official, the Commissioner of Revenue was the first to translate the *Bhagavad-gita* into English. Negotiating Indian culture, these translation works represented India's image in the world to fulfill their vested interest.

Macaulay's educational policy was another colonialist agenda which contributed to this. The dispatch on educational matters by the East India Company in 1854 claimed that:

> the vernacular literature of India will be gradually enriched by the translation of European books or by the original composition of men whose mind have been imbued with the spirit of European advancement so that European knowledge may gradually be placed in this manner within the reach of all classes of the people (58).

By introducing English as a mode of education, they wanted to cultivate a class of people who were "Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect". For this purpose, many English classics, novels, other books even many obscure 18th and 19th century English novels were translated in Indian languages. This strategy fulfilled their willful intentions of cultivating taste for English literature and western culture in Indians simultaneously acquainting them of English manners and ways of life which they considered civilized and far superior to Indian lifestyle. Some of the early novels were written by British women with a view to promote the Christian values to Indians. Quite early in 1852, Hannah Catherine Mullens wrote *Phulmoni–O–Karunar Bibaran* in Bengali. Mrs. Collins, the wife of a missionary living in Kerala, wrote *The Slayer Slain* in 1866; this was translated

into Malayalam in 1877. These novels had the purpose of educating the native women about the advantages of Christianity. The Bible was translated into local languages with dual objective: to teach Christian values to the locals and to strengthen the vernacular languages. *The Serampore Mission Press* (1800) enlisted Indian experts in different languages to translate the Bible.

These translations radically changed the concept of translation in India. The Indian tradition of translation was a free adaptation of source material and was really retelling rather than accurate translations. But the Bible changed the scenario as it emphasized the need for accurate 'word for word' translation; fidelity in translation was considered of primary concern for the first time, because it was felt that the word of God had to be conveyed accurately and with no distortions. The (colonial) British attempts in translation were mainly determined by the Orientalist ideology and need for the new rulers to grasp, define, categorize and control India. They created their own versions of India, while the Indian translators of texts into English sought to extend, correct, revise and sometime challenge the British understanding of India and its culture.

However, the colonial intervention was restricted merely to the translation of Sanskrit and Arabic classics into English or that of English classics into certain Indian languages. Significantly on the other hand, Indian creative writers actively engaged in translation and created a parallel counter discourse against the agenda of British colonial power. They persistently used these translation works against colonial oppressive manipulative tactics registering their strong protest against their machination in the channelized translation activity towards literature wherever and whatever the Indian languages it existed in. Thus translation during this period became part of the larger process of resistance to alien domination and a determining factor in the expression of cultural identity and the reassertion of the native self. As Theo Hermans writes, "Cultures, communities and groups construe their sense of self in relation to others and by regulating the channels of contact with outside world" (1999:95).

Translation, an important medium of cultural interaction played a significant role during Indian freedom struggle. It helped

in understanding, analyzing and examining the socio-political aspect of Indian literature and proved as a bridge between different linguistic and cultural communities of India. It functioned as a communication channel and acquainted Indians with literary and creative works of different parts of India. Writers in India at large are bilingual without any conscious effort or cultivated scholarship they not only translate their own works but of other writers. India with its cultural diversity and Multilingualism carries a rich history of literature and translation. The various versions of classics and masterpieces in diverse languages are the testimony of this fact. These translations with the creative effort are to a great extent re-creation /creations in their own ways and their reach, reception and popularity among public rendered them important places in the repertoire of regional literature.

Indian history of translation and literature has a wide range of inventory full of such adaptation. Sanskrit epics and *Poorans* have been told, retold, adapted, subverted, appropriated and translated without concern for fidelity to the source texts. In fact, the numerous adaptations of Sanskrit texts available in diverse Indian languages has always been binding force which has connected Indians across regional and linguistic boundaries acting as a unifying influence in the Indian psyche. A rich inventory for this 'adaptation' strategy have been used to describe the process such as 'translation' ' trans creation' 'transference 'anukaran' Basharupantar' 'code switching' 'reproduction' 'reconstruction' domestication of the other or foreign 'rewriting' (Singh 1996).

Indian tradition always believed in 'sense to sense' or soul translation. Indian literary translation can actually be viewed as a domesticating process. It is a creative process in which the translators may take a source text and adapt it to dominant politics or ideology in the target culture, or have some specified objective or target readers in their mind. It was only later on with the arrival of the translation theories that the translators started looking for equivalents between SLT and TLT and bothered for fidelity to the original text. In present time, these translations are often considered 'appropriation'under the pretext of fidelity.

Raja Rammohan Roy's translations of Shankara's *Vedanta* and the *Isavasya Upanishads* were the first Indian interventions in

English translations of Indian texts by Indian scholars. *Rig-Veda*, *the Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata* and few classical Sanskrit plays were translated by R.C. Dutt. All of these translations challenged the Romantic and Utilitarian notions of Indians as submissive and indolent. There were numerous translations by others in Indian language functioning as 'a nationalist discourse'. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee *Anandamath which* was originally published in1882 immediately stirred patriotic sentiment among Indians .It was translated into most of the major Indian languages and into English three times. The first translation took place in 1909 when the incipient nationalist movement was in its militant phase and the second one in 1941 when the movement was at its peak and Indians were eagerly waiting the dawn of independence. These two translations mainly acted as agency to awaken nationalistic fervor against colonialist oppression. The third translation was published in 2005, from a postcolonial academic location.Saratchandra Chattopadhay's works were translated and published almost in all the Indian languages and had wider readership all over India.Romesh Chandra Dutt's *Bangabijeta* and Bankim's *Durgeshnandini*, two Bengali novels were translated in Hindi by Gadadhar Singh. These inter -lingual translations were done under the supervision of the noted Hindi writer Bharatendu Harishchandra. He accepted the responsibility of these translations to inspire the militant nationalists of Bengal in the first decade of the 20th century. Many others like Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi (1830 – 1931) who was closely associated with the freedom movement in India sought inspiration from other languages like French and German. He translated Victor Hugo's *Ninety-three* into Hindi as *Balidaan.* Victor Hugo's work was written in the historical backdrop of the French revolution year 1793. For Vidyarthi translation was a medium to reach to minds and emotions of the masses. So he modified the text to fulfill the objective of the translation and to suit the taste of the target readers. He wanted to instill feeling of patriotism in his countrymen. He chose selected and deleted portions of the text to achieve his aim. In fact, his translations were more or less like free adaptations of the original text. Premchand (1880 – 1936) the famous Hindi-Urdu writer translated Anatole France's *Thais as Ahankar* in Hindi. Bhagwati Charan Verma's *Chitralekha* was also

modeled on France's novel and was adapted for a film in 1941 and 1964.

Indian plays written, translated and dramatized in different languages also played a substantial role in the freedom struggle. Dinabhandhu Mitra wrote the first play *Neel Darpan* (Mirror of Indigo) (1858-59) in Bengali which could be included in the genre of political protest. The work exposed the plight and exploitation of Bengali indigo workers by the British planters in a powerful voice yet touching way. Later on, the Poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt translated it into English and titled it *The Indigo Planting Mirror* anonymously and published it with the support of Reverend James Long, priest, educator and humanist who was sentenced to imprisonment for the charge of sedition. The play, which was performed with great success in Calcutta, was translated into several other languages. The success of this play motivated other dramatist also to join this resistative act against British injustices. *Samudra Darpan*, (*Mirror of the Sea)* written anonymously protested the exploitation of seamen by British ship-owners.In Bengal, Girish Chandra Ghose(1844-1912) , actor, writer and manager of the Great National Theatre of Calcutta wrote and produced *Siraj-ud-daula* (1906) and *Mir Kasim* (1907). Based on historical figures who had suffered British oppression, these plays *Siraj-ud-daula* and *Mir Kasim* dramatized the corruption and bribery which were prevalent during British rule in India. These plays indirectly attacked the British government and its policies and were banned.

Banning / censorship creativity and powerful literature, the mediums of freedom of the expression has always been a manipulative strategy of the rulers to silence the voice. Theatre and drama with its performativity aspect can always impact the thoughts and minds of masses significantly hence it has always been suppressed under the pretext of being scandalous, defamatory, seditious, obscene or otherwise prejudicial to the public interest. By introducing The *Dramatic Performance Control Ordinance on 29 February, 1876, t*he British rulers imposed censorship on such dramatic performances

Another playwright, D.L. Roy explored the past history of India in the plays *Rana Pratap (1905), Mewar Patan (The Fall of*

Mewar, 1908) and Shah Jahan (1908). These plays focused on the struggle of the Rajputs to preserve their independence. In the year1930 when Bengal prisons were full of political prisoners detained for their involvement in Gandhi's civil disobedience movement, Manmatha Ray of Bengal dramatised Hindu legends by selecting episodes of the birth of Lord Krishna in prison. Its allegorical significance was not lost on the Bengal audience. Subsequently, *Karagar* alsomet the same fate and was banned.

Translations like these, with the specific purpose of introducing revolutionary ideas to Indian readers, were being undertaken in different parts of India. These were more like adaptations with no thought for fidelity to the original but definitely played a silent but influential role in enhancing the patriotic spirit among Indians. These translations functioned 'as cultural mediators which helped in restructuring perspectives, challenged the existing norms and introduced the alternative discourses albeit in indirect forms (Maria Tymoczco; Translation, Ideology and Creativity). Thus Translation proved a powerful tool for Indian writers and translators which provided them a pedestal to appropriate the colonizers' culture investing it with newer and positive meanings, a power to subvert colonial authority and cultural forms. Fairclough opines that "A text can reinforce, subvert or in other words transform or modify the social order, and the relationship between text and the social order and the social world is mediated by the way in which the text combines or articulates different discourses, genres and style (147)".

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Travel Writing in India: A Historical Perspective

Prof. Mahesh Kumar Dey

Abstract: This article is about an exploration of a new form of writing called Travel Writing. This is as old as human civilization, but it was not formalized earlier as it is done now in literary studies. The attempt has been made to have a historical survey of this genre and to confine to a couple of recent narratives for illustration. Some of the early works will open our minds to have a detailed exploration of this form of literature as a distinct one. Many Western as well as Indian research scholars have produced their dissertations on this genre. Some reference books have been published by international publishing houses for formalizing as a unique subject of study. It is interesting and adventurous to be an explorer as a human being. All like to be a globe-trotter or to travel around being an enthusiastic tourist. Whatever one experiences, he/she records all in a manuscript. With a desire to be a published author, one publishes the manuscript and get it available in the public domain. All people can not travel all places, but can have detailed geographical, social, political, economic and cultural information about different places and monumental sites, tourists' favorite countries or cities in all countries. This keeps all engaged in this act of reading travel narratives with keen interest and curiosity.

Keywords: Travel Writing, Diachronic, Subjectivity and Objectivity, India

Carl Thompson, in an attempt to define travel writing, states: "To travel is to make a journey, a movement through space. Possibly this journey is epic in scale, taking the traveler to the other side of the world or across a continent or up to a mountain;

possibly it is more modest in scope, and takes place within the limits of the travelers' own country or region, or even just their immediate locality".

Jonathan Raban defines Travel Writing in the following statement:

> As a literary form, travel writing is an otoriously raffish open house where different genres are likely to end up in the same bed. It accommodates the private diary, the essay, the short story, the prose poem, the rough note and polished table talk with in discriminate hospitality.

Holland and Hugan state that travel writing is the most hybrid and unassimilable of literary genres". Hulme views that travel writing is "certainly literature, but it is never fiction". From these statements, we can draw the conclusion that travel writing (abbreviated TW) as a distinct literary genre is the amalgamation of different genres that may comprise a plethora of literary works including private diary, essays, short stories, prose poems, sketches, pictorial presentations, informal talks, discussions at the dinner table or tea tables in the living room. A travel writer uses some of the fictional techniques including the plot, characterization, and dialogues or live conversations like a play to tell his/her experiences, thoughts and emotional impulses. However, it is neither an autobiography (prose) nor a novel (fiction). It is a blending hybrid narrative using a number of elements of other writings.

A tourist tells stories about his experiences and incidents that happen during the journey. He shares orally with his kit hand kin immediately after his return from the trip. Family members, friends and relatives show interest in his stories and would be eager to listen to all his stories more and more till their interest dies. His experiences are interwoven with details of the places that he visited and the people he met during his travel period, the food he took, the situations he encountered, and the local customs and cultural values of different communities. His account seems to be autobiographical because he uses the first-person narrator to make his presentation before his audience. He then documents them systematically, and prepares the final manuscript of his travel itinerary. Then the travel accounts begin to use content

from various resources such as ethnographies, maritime narratives, memoirs, aviation literature, journalism by a traveler, war reporting, etc.

Echoing Hulme's statement, Theroux Paul states:

> Whatever Travel Writing is, it iscertainly different from writing a novel; fiction requires close concentration and intense imagining a leap of faith, magic almost. But a travel book, (…), was more the work of my lefthand, and it was a deliberate act like the act of travel itself. It took health, strength, and confidence.

Another scholar namely Pico Iyer begins with a question "Why do we travel?" and then replies the following: "The answer is initially to lose ourselves and next to discover ourselves". One traveler begins to explore the fathomless riches of the unknown world through travelling. Travelling opens our horizons which were earlier closed due to the limited perspectives that we had. It keeps us busy in seeking more and more knowledge of "Nowhere" not explored or yet to be explored by human beings. Many travelers head towards this "nowhere" in order to discover their true inner selves. He further adds: "When something human is recorded, good travel writing happens".

Some of the earlier works which can be read as early travel writing are listed here. *The History of the Persian Wars* by Herodotus (approximate 440 BC), Strabo's *Geographica* (around 23 AD), and *Guide to Greece* by Pausannia (about 170 AD) are written by former European travelers. In the thirteenth century, travelers including merchants and missionaries pushed much beyond their geographical and historical/political boundaries set by the earlier travelers in their writings. India was visited by the French, the Dutch, the Portuguese, the Mughals, the Pathans, the British, the Iranian Parsi/Zoroastrians and the South Africans. They had established their colonies and empires in this distant land. They ruled this country and made its peoples lavesorruled subjects. They made the policies for administration of the local natives and took away maximum profit from the revenues collected as taxes of different kinds. Christopher Columbus, Marco Polo and Vasco da Gama were determined to travel to the faraway places – the margins of the world. They took various dangerous routes including these a and mountains/roads to fulfil their mission

and complete their voyages. They have produced the narratives about their travel accounts.

Mary Campbell states: "It was in the self-love of conquering heroes that the travel memoir is born" (Campbell 209). How can we forget the adventures of Antony who win sonekingdom after another being a Roman warrior and finally sacrifices his heroism for the love of Cleopatra? Shakespeare wrote this most romantic tragedy and made the lovers as remembered historical figures-immortal and impressive. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many heroes travelled to newly discovered regions of the world and documented their experiences. Ship logs, private diaries, travel correspondences, and other forms of writings were produced and were archived in libraries and maritime museums. In these narratives,people and places of the outside world are described objectively by the traveler-cum-narrator. The authorial viewpoints are often visible in several parts of the narratives, which makes the narrative subjective as well as objective.

Hiuen Tsang (Xuanzang), who was a Chinese Buddhist monk and scholar, visited India during the reign of Harsha Vardhana in the seventh century. He spent fourteen years travelling in different parts of India. His account of visits to India have been published in *The Records of the Western World*. It is said that he took the land route back to China throughthe north-west and central Asia and carried back with him a number of statues of Gautam Buddha made of gold, silver and sandalwood. He also took about six hundred manuscripts loaded over the backs of twenty horses. He lost over fifty manuscripts on his tour and translated the remaining from Sanskrit to Chinese. He is a writer of religious travel books. Al Beruni in the eleventh century and Marco Polo in the thirteenth century travelled to India and wrote about their experiences in their travelogues. One Portuguese traveler named Domingo Paes travelled to India and visited the Vijayanagara Empire during the sixteenth century. He has documented all his impressions in his *Chronicle of the Vijayanagara Empire*.

Rahul Sankrityayan who is regarded as the father Indian travel literature was a Buddhist monk and scholar. He knew many languages but used to write in Hindi, Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan and Bhojpuri. His birth name is Kedarnath Pandey. An

awardee of Sahitya Akademi Award in 1958 and Padma Bhushan in 1963, he was a traveler and historian. His book *From Volga to Ganga* describes the migration of Aryans from the steps of the Volga river to the banks of the Ganges crossing the Hindukush and the Himalayas. Later they were dispersed in the Indo-Gangetic plains of India. Let us read one of his quotations: "Oh! Ignorant, go and travel all over the world. You will not get this life again. Even if you live long, youth will never return." This became the motto of his life as a traveler. He travelled to Russia, Sri Lanka and other parts of Central Asia. Indian travel writing can be very broad area of exploration including regional travel writings available in many Indian languages. There are travel writings from Bengal, Kerala, Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra, etc. It is not possible to document them in a research article, but attempts will made to make a historical review of this.

While making a survey of travel writing in India, I came across a very interesting book under the title of Early Travels in India (1583-1619) edited by a British author namely William Foster. He has published a map of India during the Mughal Empire in 1605 in the beginning of this book and mentions: "The following pages include narratives of seven Englishmen who travelled in Northern and Western India during the reigns of Emperors Akbar and Jahangir" (Preface). The seven travelers include Ralph Fitch whose adventurous stories first appeared in Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*, John Mildenhall, William Hawkins, William Finch, Nicholas Withington, Thomas Coryat, and Edward Terry. The Preface gives a historical account of India by the editor. The Moghul emperors including Babur, Humayun, Akbar, and Jahangir have been mentioned. The account of Sir Thomas Roe has been kept aside from this volume. The editor states in the opening paragraph:" Though these do not by any means exhaust the list of English visitors of that period who have left us records of their experiences, theyinclude practically all those of real importance…" (Preface). Samuel Purchas has published all these accounts in a collection published in 1625. The illustrations include several pictures taken by these travelers during their visits to India.

The book is entitled *With Cyclists Around the World* (2008) by three Parsi youths namely Adi B. Hakim, Rustom B. Bhumgara

and Jal P. Bapasola. We can see the name of Darayous Hakim and Roda Hakim as collaborators of Adi Hakim. The book is consisted of twenty-six chapters with specific titles of each. All create a route of the cyclists from the starting point to the finish point. The cyclists travelled above 44000 miles (70000 kilometers) covering many continents, cities, small towns and villages of India and abroad. The other three members of the company include Gustad Hathiram, Keki Pochkhanawala and Nariman Kapadia. They were the members of the famous Bombay Weight Lifting Club. In 1920, they attended a public lecture by a French tourist who had travelled all the way from France to India on feet. This person's narrative account inspired these six Parsi young persons to take a decision of cycling the entire world and to show the outside the world that Indians are not inferior to others. They were all nationalists and proud children of their motherland India. After three years, their dream plan materialized and the journey by cycles began on October 15, 1923. The entire journey period spans about four years and five months from 1923 to 1928. The journey ended on March 18, 2028. Goethe is alluded in the work and his statement has been quoted: "The presence of danger generally exercises on man a kind of attraction and calls for the spirit of opposition in human breast to defy it". Pandit Nehru has written a paragraph in support of these Indians who have decided to go on this adventurous cycling. I would like to mention here the autobiography of Pt. Nehru under the title of *Discovery of India* (translated into as Hindi *Bharat Ek Khoj*) which is more a travel book and less a personal life-story of the author. How much inspiration such a great personality would give to the young persons who are dreaminghigh with a high spirit within their hearts! The famous Raleigh Cycle Company of England (Mumbai branch office) was approached to sponsor new cycles for the six travelers, but the request was declined by the company. When the group of cyclists reached England, the same company requested them to use their branded cycles. One of the employees is quoted saying: "We did not believe that you boys would be so successful". It is very significant to get an idea of their struggle and endurance from the detailed description in different chapters.

Some of the chapters include "Across the Ghats", "Through the Heart of Hindustan", "Crossing the Syrian Desert", "Through Germany and the Netherlands", "Across the British Isles", "Korea-

The Hermit Kingdom", etc. The Parsi reached the motherland of their ancestors and the chapter is entitled "Persia-The Land of Lion and the Sun". The countries including France, the USA, China, Burma, Bengal, Madras, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) were travelled before the book ends with the last chapter "Rolling Home".

Anoop Babani, a modern researcher of travel writing and a former journalist, reviewed this book in his critical essay. He regards all these heroes as "Brand Ambassadors" of their motherland. He states: "For these cyclists, the expeditions were not about challenging their physical and mental ability, but to present India to the world". They were without food and water at times, cycling under 140'F heat, suffering from sickness and stress, not having medicines, no accommodation to take rest, etc. They cycled through dense jungles, swamp lands, longst retches of deserts, the mountains, etc. The cycling began from Mumbai and ended in Mumbai after four and half years. They met a large number of places, many people on their travel route. Asit has been stated: "The Age of Romance never dies, Romance relives through ages in different forms". Through their psychological, moral and physical strength along with resourcefulness, they overcame all sorts of obstacles and hardships on the trip. Arti Das has written her article "History Remembered" on this book of cyclists. She has recognized their journey as "incredible adventures" and became successful at the end. They were fired by the intense desire to carry the name of their country-Mother India- to the far-flung corners of the world. Out of six, one returned back earlier from Tehran for personal reasons. Two were fascinated by the cosmopolitan America in the 1920s and decided to stayback there. The three names that we find on the cover page of the book were the proud members of the group who reached the final destination. The last sentence of the book ends with Mother India "whose illustrious name we carried into the nooks and corners of the world, where we showed sons of Mother India we reasable, as enterprising, and as courageous as the children of any other nation in the world" (363). The message is conveyed by these brave children to their fellow brethren: "The youth of today is the statesman of tomorrow. Character counts for everything in this world. In future, our country will need people of character, who are bold, energetic, pushing, careless of

convention, capable of planning enterprises within genuity and executing them with ability. The lads of today need an ideal. If our adventure reveals to them the possibilities that lie dormantin every one of those promising lads, if our undertaking teaches them that everything comes to him who tries, if our enterprise indicates to them that you never know your powers unless you put them to test, if our adventure instils in them a sense of legitimate pride that our country lacks no son capable of holding their own against the nationals of other countries, it is our firm conviction we have not undertaken this world tourinvain, we have not lived through four years of difficulties and dangers in vain, we have not toiled through desertsinvain, we have not jeopardized our lives, on more occasions than one, without a purpose".

The second book I have considered to mention is Vikram Seth's *From Heaven Lake: Travels Through Sinkiang and Tibet* (1983). The young student Vikram spent two years from 1980 to 1982 at Nanjing University, China. He undertook a trip from China to India via Tibet to meet his family at New Delhi, the capital city of India. He chronicles his travel experiences in this book that won him the Thomas Cook Travel Book Award in 1983. Critics admire it for the detailed description of China, Tibet and India as the narrator depicts in a realistic manner. Dr. Rohini Mokashi-Punekar, an Indian academician and scholar of travel writing, writes in her essay on this book: "In 1983, Seth published *From Heaven Lake*, an account of his unorthodox travels in China using unconventional modes of travel. The book offers an intriguing exploration of places and people in China and Tibet". The land route that he followed avoiding the air route includes his hitch hiking journey in trucks originating from the north-west China and reaching the Himalayas crossing four Chinese provinces such as Xinjiang (Sinkiang), Gansu, Qinghai, and Tibet.

The book is the outcome of his personal journal that he kept and wrote throughout his trips and the photographs that he took on the journey. It was well-received when it was published in the UK and received the prestigious award that has been mentioned earlier. In 1986, the Random House published it in the USA after his success as the award-winning author of *The Golden Gate*. It has many poetic descriptions of the natural landscapes of China,

Tibet, Nepal and India. The traveler-writer has not forgotten to highlight the warmth of the ordinary people of China with whom he had friendship during the trip. Before he undertook his own unconventional travel in 1981, he had already finished another three-week tour organized by the university for foreign students and he was from Stanford University, USA. Seth described the group as the "mixed bunch" of foreign nationals in a Chinese university. It is undoubtedly an established choice of foreign students who come to China on Study Abroad program due to the diplomatic and academic relations with other countries such as the USA, Japan and UK. These students are allowed to travel around the country during their holidays. Seth in his Foreword to the 1990 edition of the book writes:

> This book is an account of what I saw, thought and felt as I travelled through various parts of the People's Republic of China as a student. It is not intended as a summary of the political or economic situation of that country, although I did occasionally digress into such ruminations in the course of writing the book. (2)

The organized tour was in two parts. The first in the desert regions of Turfan, Heaven Lake, Mount Bogda and Xian.

Vikram Seth was not satisfied due to the controlled time management and restrictions during the trip. He thought that he had not enjoyed it and was deprived of the actual glimpseof life and place which he was keen to observe as a passionate being. He decided to finish the organized tour by the university and to take up his travel to New Delhi by land via Tibet and Nepal. He has described his meetings with various tribes and ethnic communities of China. In China, he has come in contact with Buddhists, Christians, Kazakhas, Hans, Uighurs, and even Hindus and Muslims. A travel writer constructs and interprets reality from a subjective perspective. He cannot be objective whatever way he tries. It is not only an exercise of introducing the self to the other but also an attempt to build bridges that link humanity through an understanding of diverse cultures. A writer highlights his perception of actual reality and recalls the real-life memories in his manuscript. Here Seth has travelled through the Silk Route to reach Karez, the underground tunnel used to bring water from the mountains for the purpose of irrigation in the

desert regions. He observed people, their life styles, food and cloth, traditional customs and ceremonies of many tribes. He recorded them in his book as his personal experiences and tries to be objective as much as possible.

Conclusively stating, travel writing as a literary genre presents an element of personal involvement of the author. It is the textualized presence of the author, as we say the "authorial interference" in fiction. The presence of this conscious author as an individual protagonist of the narrative alongwith other characters around him makes it a distinctive literary travel account not a science fiction. The ships brought the employees of the East India Company and the group of missionaries to establish British imperialism in India. The British administration succeeded in its exercise of colonizing Indians and ruling over two hundred years. The traveler like E.M. Forster wrote *A Passage to India* and constructed animage of India in the psyche of Europeans. One must write about his travel experiences and publish the narrative for others to have knowledge about the unexplored and unseen landscapes. Indian travel writing gives us a sense of adventure, cultural interactions, nationalism and an imaginative Indian consciousness-that can be subjective and objective, private (personal) and public (impersonal), individualistic and collective. Travel writing introduces us to new places and new people alongwith their cultural values and traditions on printed pages. It transports us to give us a glimpse of the distant landscape. It opens our minds to different ways of living life on this landmass along with other species of the universe, the flora and fauna. It fosters empathy for fellow human beings and creates an awareness of the humanity and its survival despite a number of challenges and hardships. The travel itself is as important as the process of undertaking the travel and documenting the travel experiences. It can enable us to dream about the unknown, encourages us to pack up our belongings, and spend some days or weeks or months at a distant place away from own home. In printed texts the words play, our minds then begin to travel to discover our innerselves in communion with the strange world.

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The Growth of Consciousness in Gwendolen Harleth and Isabel Archer

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Abstract: One of the major thematic preoccupations of the Victorian novelist George Eliot (1819-1861) and her acolyte critic, the American-British writer Henry James (1843-1916), especially in their respective novels, *Daniel Deronda* (1874) and *ThePortrait of a Lady* (1881) is to map the trajectory of the lives of the women protagonists who are victims of what the latter describes as 'the essential crookedness of fate'. Both the novelists trace the journey of young, wilful heroines embarking on life, confident of taking charge of their destiny, only to find their romantic assumptions brutally challenged, throwing them onto a path of tragic self-discovery. Many critics including F.R Leavis and Leon Edel look at George Eliot's protagonist, the erring Gwendolen Harleth as an inspiration for James's Isabel Archer.My paper, while drawing a comparison between the two heroines so essentially alike, would demonstrate the differential authorial intention. Both Gwendolen and Isabel harbour romantic ideas of life in defiance of reality; are alike in their choice of suitors and husband and both their lives show an inadequacy and failure of the romantic imagination. But while Gwendolen remains a sustained study in George Eliot's ubiquitous theme of egoism versus altruism; James seeks to explore the finer consciousness of his protagonist in that nuanced, rarefied manner which is characteristically his own.

Keywords: central consciousness, fate, chance, egoism, altruism

Both George Eliot and Henry James address themselves to the philosophical question of whether a human being is an active chooser of her destiny; is a capriciously chosen one or if a

combination of the two forces is responsible for the vicissitude, she finds herself in. The phrase, "the essential crookedness of our fate" (James 295) uttered by James' spokesman Constantius in an essay, " Daniel Deronda : A Conversation" on Eliot's novel seems to appropriately describe the stories of Gwendolen Harleth in *Daniel Deronda* (1874) and Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881); who in their ignorance, innocence and wilfulness embark upon a journey to inspect life closely but are thwarted in their aspiration and punished for seeking a kind of happiness that is not available to them in their respective worlds. In their eagerness to explore life fully, both Gwendolen and Isabel believe themselves to be free spirits, competent to seek out and choose their destiny. But this exploration ultimately leads to a long and painful odyssey where they are forced to review their assumptions of life and find them wanting. Through their erroneous choices, they arrive at a true estimation of the self where they not only realise the illusory nature of the entire concept of freedom, they have harboured but also that they had exercised their apparently 'free' choices within a highly circumscribed ambit. But where Isabel's journey ends on a positive note of self-discovery, Gwendolen is a pawn in her moralistic writer's hand through whom she shows the pitfalls of remaining an unredeemed egoist, explores the perils of being in an unregenerate condition, elements which clash with the worldview of Eliot.

Written four years before her death in 1881, *Daniel Deronda* is the most ambitious and mature work which brings George Eliot's novelistic career to a close. One of the abiding themes of Eliot's novels is to trace the journey of her protagonists from egoism to altruism-from a state of being self-absorbed to attaining an epiphanic vision where they see themselves as an extension of society. Time and again her major women protagonists such as Janet in her earliest novel *The Scenes of Clerical Life* (1856-7), to Ester Lyon in *Felix Holt* (1866) to the eponymous Romola and Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch* (1869-72) to finally Gwendolen in her last, Eliot presents heroines who start life as innate egoists, who, on realising the shortcomings of their narrow worldview, engage in the process of the sublimation of their egoistic impulses, which is at times acquired at great tragic expense. This expansive moral vision is attained either through an intuitive understanding

and epiphanic vision as in case of Dorothea or through an external agency in the form of a mentor, friend and philosopher figure who initiates an inculcation of altruistic values in the errant heroines leading to a higher moral vision, which according to George Eliot, one of the most formidable moralist writers, is the ultimate goal in life. A number of Eliot's erring women protagonists are guided by a mentor-philosopher figure who correct the heroines' imperfect and narrow conception of the world; for example Janet is guided by the preacher Tryan in "Janet's Repentance"(1856), Maggie is forced to see the folly of her renunciation by Phillip in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Esther is educated by Felix Holt in *Felix Holt: the Radical* (1864) and Gwendolen herself is constantly reprimanded for her selfish desires by Deronda. According to critics such as Simon Dentith and Rosemary Ashton, this guiding figure has biographical source in Eliot's consort George Henry Lewes whose guiding spirit hovered over both personal life and the professional career of the author. Brought up in the rural Midlands of mid-nineteenth century, where she was aware of the sanctity of personal relationships, Eliot cherished the values of a pre-industrial, pre-utilitarian England- that of duty, sympathy, and fellowship. To her this bond of fellowship was sacrosanct; selfishness and self-centredness, on the other hand were sacrilegious. These ideas were reinforced when she entered the fragile relationship with her philosopher 'husband' George Henry Lewes, whose own theory of amelioration instilled in Eliot the indelible notion of the 'peremptory and absolute' nature of Duty. Along with Lewes, she fully subscribed to the philosopher Comte's school of theReligion of Humanity, for whom "the chief problem of human life was the subordination of egoism to altruism" (quoted by Dentith 24). Eliot's novels present an array of egoists, who go through the trial and tribulations of life and emerge ennobled through the ordeal of life a tragic process which she describes as the "baptism of fire" (Eliot 405) in *Adam Bede* (1859). She also presents a gamut of unregenerate egoists such as lawyer Transome in "Janet's Repentance", Hetty Sorrel in *Adam Bede*, Tito Melema in *Romola,* and Grandcourt in *Daniel Deronda,* who meet horrible end because of their selfishness. Gwendolen is a complex character who tragically falls somewhere in between these extreme positions.

Eliot's novel opens with a striking image of the preening, narcissistic Gwendolen on a gambling table, striking a pose that flaunts her facial features to the best advantage; acutely conscious of the attention she is garnering. The opening line of *Daniel Deronda* leaves the eponymous hero, watching Gwendolen play roulette, wondering:

> Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams? Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm? (Eliot 35)

In that first image the author outlines the essentially undesirable qualities in Gwendolen- vanity, revelling in self-charm, haughtiness, the desire to promote herself and the willingness to wager her chances in life, as in the game of roulette. It is soon revealed that Gwendolen's family is heavily in debt and the only recourse open to her is to become a governess, a vocation that seems undesirable to the aspirational and self-seeking protagonist. She attempts a career in acting, merely on the strength of her physical attributes and all her self-love and vanity shows forth in the youthful vigour and pride with which she kisses her image in the mirror and sees "a pleasant reflection of the self" (47) in the world around her. She soon discovers her failings that she possesses neither talent nor hard work to succeed on stage.

All her aspirations thwarted, she decides to marry into wealth and status, to the seemingly quiet and reserved Grandcourt. Gwendolen thinks she is playing her cards well in choosing him, but ironically, she herself is earmarked by the evil and menacing Grandcourt, who, oblivious to her is in total control of events and in fact it is he who is passively active in choosing her as a bride. On the eve of their wedding Gwendolen is confronted by Grandcourt's mistress Lydia Glasher who wants legitimacy for her child with Grandcourt. There is a brief moment of inner conflict and turmoil in Gwendolen, but she finally ignores Lydia's claim and goes ahead with the marriage. Her choice is born out of a momentary moral conflict between a dread of wrong-doing and a desire for personal gratification, but she yields to that temptation which has characterised the choice of many hard-core

egoists of Eliot's previous works. Hubris catches up with her when the diabolic side of Grandcourt is revealed to her. She realises that he had all along been manipulating her into yielding; had never intended leaving Lydia and as she discovers in the end, he had willed everything to his illegitimate child, leaving herself a destitute. Gwendolen's married life is hellish, she is cruelly used as a trophy-wife to mask his own affair. Her short married life is punctuated with her various meetings with the seer-like Daniel Deronda, who with his altruistic ideals and moralistic injunctions, provides help, advice, and guidance to her at critical junctures. Gwendolen finds herself a young widow when on a stormy night at sea Grandcourt drowns, leaving Gwendolen with the slightest twinge of regret that she could have flung him a life-saving rope. The novel leaves a slightly unregenerate Gwendolen grappling with her future prospects, after having been heavily censured by Deronda for always giving primacy to self over others. That is our last image of Gwendolen, before the author takes up the other parallel narrative, that of Jewish history.

Writing a unique critique of this novel in his essay "Daniel Deronda: A Conversation", Henry James observes that Eliot's ouevre is essentially two novels in one- where the section dealing with Gwendolen's story, almost bordering on tragedy proves more interesting than the erudite other half dealing with the Semitic questions of those times and Deronda's engagement with it, ending in the dramatic discovery of his own Jewish origins. James greatly admired Eliot's writings and claimed to be literally in love with this veritable 'bluestocking'. In the above essay he applauds Eliot's presentation of Gwendolen: "Gwendolen and Grandcourt are admirable-Gwendolen is a masterpiece. She is known, felt and presented, psychologically, altogether, in the grand manner" (James 291). Three years after writing this review, James starts working on *The Portrait* in 1879, perhaps with the figure of Eliot's protagonist he so greatly admired, in his mind. In the preface to this novel James enumerates a list of young, presumptuous heroines from Scott to George Eliot, who "insist on mattering" (James xi). There are undeniable parallels between the two novels. Both tell the stories of protagonists who are a picture of youthful freshness-its eagerness, its precociousness, its pre-

occupation with itself, its vanity and a sense of its own absoluteness; ready to take the challenge of, as James's Preface continues, "affronting" (James, x) their destiny. Isabel Archer is a young, imaginative, and fiercely independent American in decadent Europe; who suddenly comes into inheritance, courtesy a game of betting, played by her invalid, voyeuristic cousin, Ralph Touchett, who himself is a non-participant in life but is interested in watching how Isabel would manage her money and what choices she would make in her life. The idealistic, non-materialist Isabel declines a bevy of eligible suitors and settles on a reticent Gilbert Osmond, who like Grandcourt falsely appears aloof and disinterested in her but wants to possess her and curb her independent streak. Despite warnings, she gets married to him and discovers that not only was his nonchalance a façade, but he also has no intention of renouncing his mistress, Madame Merle. The rest of the novel traces the miserable married life of Isabel; her tragic realisation of the inadequacy of her imagination which in its naivete had attributed goodness to Osmond he never possessed; the beautifully platonic relationship that she shares with Ralph, the only person she confesses her wrong choice of husband to; and the ambiguous ending when the reader is not sure if she has returned to her disastrous marriage.

Both Gwendolen and Isabel have an imaginative, romantic, and idealistic conception of life and both want to live their lives by a concept of freedom they have envisaged for themselves, freedom which is tragically denied to them in the real world. Gwendolen's conception of life is drawn from "genteel romance" (Eliot 73) and Isabel is a "person of many theories" (James 49). Both find their conception of life brutally challenged by the patriarchal order. It is interesting to note that both the heroines are first introduced to the reader through men's eyes who critically appraise their physical attributes. *Daniel Deronda* opens with Deronda bemused by Gwendolen's striking vivacity at the gambling table; Isabel's first appearance in the novel is filtered through Ralph's eyes when he is intrigued by "a tall girl in a black dress, who at first sight looked pretty" (16). Much is made of Gwendolen possessing the exquisiteness of a "Lamia beauty" (41) but Eliot sardonically observes her superfluities too : "Perhaps it would have been rash to say that she was at all exceptional

inwardly, or that the unusual, in her was more than her rare grace of movement and bearing" (83). While Gwendolen appeals to the eye, Isabel's appeal is mostly to the intellect: "The portrait of Isabel is the portrait of a mind rather than that of a person with physical form and body" (Kelley 59).

Isabel, despite her naiveté, is introspective and has a rudimentary understanding of the pitfalls of life. She is aware of the likelihood of making erroneous decisions in life and has made stipulations for the possibility of pain and tribulations that might await her. While preparing to gain a foothold in the English society, she knows that she might not be able to steel herself "from the usual chances and dangers, from what most people know and suffer" (110). Her words ring with grim irony because at the end when knowledge and awareness of the wrong choice she has made in Osmond does dawn on her, it is at the expense of great pain and suffering. It is also because she has been betrayed by the patriarchal order. Her cousin Ralph, himself living on the periphery of active life, wants to live vicariously through Isabel by financially empowering her and watching what a fiercely independent girl like her would 'do' with herself. Early on in the novel, he convinces his father to bequeath a large inheritance to her in order to put "wind in her sails" and watch where she would be headed in life but at the end of the novel and his life, he realises the enormity of his mistake. Isabel braves through her brutal marriage graciously and with pride but finally confides to a dying Ralph about the mercenary and domineering Osmond, who married her for her wealth. Racked by guilt, Ralph rues about how his own experiment with her; the inexorability of events; Isabel's choice and her restless imagination have all contributed to her misery: "You wanted to look at life for yourself- but you were not allowed; you were punished for your wish. You were ground in the very mill of the conventional!" (577). But his last words to her making allowances for her folly also carry a ring of optimism: "I don't believe such a generous mistake as yours can hurt you for more than a little" (578). It holds a promising future for Isabel.

Gwendolen on the other hand lacks Isabel's self-reflexiveness and soul-searching, for she "had never dissociated happiness from personal eminence and eclat" (317). Through her, Eliot

presents one of those inward-looking egoists who populate her various novels, and Gwendolen works as an exemplar to be avoided and whose worldview requires severe reprimanding. Unlike James's heroine, Gwendolen puts up with life's vagaries with a false sense of bravado and a reckless belief in her own ability to transcend life's difficulties because "so exceptional a person as herself could hardly remain in ordinary circumstances or in a social position less than advantageous" (52). Both the heroines desire freedom in life but Isabel's notion of freedom is highly refined, sophisticated and cerebral-it is a desire to hold her essential self-inviolate from the crudities of the world whereas Gwendolen's is associated with selfishness and personal advancement.Pondering over Grandcourt's overtures, Gwendolen resolves: "If she chose to take a husband, she would have him know that she was not going to renounce her freedom" (168). Through Isabel's story we get tantalising glimpses into the inner recesses of a rich, fine, and full consciousness, her reasons for choosing Osmond are fraught with psychological complexities. Osmond's deliberate aloofness seems to pose no encroachments on her personal space; being sexually timid, she perceives no threat from him to her physical self. She also feels that she would be doing good to Osmond by, ironically continuing Ralph's nautical metaphor, 'launching his ship'. Gwendolen, on the other hand, remains a sustained study of Eliot's conception of an individual's development from egoism to altruism. However, in both the protagonists their self-absorption needs correction and be replaced with social obligation.

The element of choice is at the heart of the two novels. Both the novelists explore the problem of how far individual choices may be said to give shape to human aspirations and possibilities. The two chapter titles of *Daniel Deronda* reiterate the element of choice that the protagonist seems to be exercising: 'Maidens Choosing' and 'Gwendolen Gets Her Choice'; but these are ironic titles which trick the protagonist into believing that she is actively making the choice, while a cruel fate is defining the parameters within which she is choosing her husband and making the decisions about future. The illusory nature of this choice is conveyed through the ubiquitous symbol of gambling which pervades both the novels. The opening incident of *Daniel Deronda*

shows Gwendolen as a determined chooser when she deposits her stake at the gambling table with "an air of firm choice" (38). The very act of gambling is a symbol of how, in seemingly choosing her cards in the gambling game, she is tragically forfeiting the very power of choosing, by subjecting her fate to the caprices of the dice. The metaphor of gambling permeates James's novel as well, when bets are playfully placed on Isabel's future, where she too is at the centre of the gambling world. Both the novels allude to "the game of life" (Eliot402, James 148). Isabel is the victim of the most fatal betting game when Ralph wagers money on her to see what choices she will make in life if she is given a large sum of money. Isabel initially seems to confidently choose her cards but is sadly shown to have played like a novice, who has failed in "an attempt to play whist with an imperfect pack of cards" (560). In the same vein Gwendolen realises the failure of her marriage: "The chances of roulette had not adjusted themselves to her claims" (278). Both the novels posit the same argument-that a person's choice is circumscribed, that in seeming to choose both the protagonists are submitting themselves to a pattern of choice already laid out for them most cruelly. The act of gambling is connected with a larger statement that *Deronda* makes-the cardinal rule of gambling acts on the principle of one person's loss being another's gain. Gwendolen trod upon Lydia's chances of happiness with Grandcourt by trying to cut off the latter's inheritance; only to have all of her own wealth and estate to go back to Lydia's son. James too proclaims the same idea: "It was the tragic part of happiness; one's right was always made of the wrong of someone else" (350).

The impulses that lie behind Gwendolen and Isabel's choice of their husbands Grandcourt and Osmond respectively are similar- they feel that they are choosing them from a position of strength and that in doing so they are doing a good turn to them, thus marking an underlying sense of egoism to their actions. Their choices are also born out of their susceptibility to intense fear and dread, despite their assumed self-assurance. They are both fearful of any physical claims on their bodies and their sexual timidity makes them reject suitors who seem a potential threat to their selves. Gwendolen and Isabel ultimately settle for Grandcourt and Osmond because, on the surface, the two men

seem physically less demanding. For all her archness and vivacity, Gwendolen finds "a sort of physical repulsion to being directly made love to" (101) and her "fierceness of maidenhood" (102) repels Rex, her ardent admirer. She capitulates to Grandcourt because his apparent refinement, studied drawling, physical distancing, and boredom induce in her "a momentary phantasmal love for this man who chose his words so well, and who was a mere incarnation of delicate homage" (378). It is the "absence of all eagerness" (ibid.) in his courtship which ultimately decides her in favour of this man who she perceives as no threat to her body. Sexual fear is at the heart of Isabel's rejection of Goodwood and Warburton too. She chooses Osmond because he appears an aesthete offering her a future devoted to the appreciation of art and beauty and seems to promise an escape from the troubling life of passions. The romantic sentiments in both the heroines is conceptual rather than carnal and their suitors' reticence allays their fear of profound emotional commitment.

Egoism is at the heart of their decision to marry and is central to their choice of husbands. Isabel's sudden inheritance breeds in her a sense of insecurity because it necessitates an active planning and participation in the material world, which her finer sensibilities have always recoiled from. Confessing to an oppressive feeling which the largesse brings to her, she tells Ralph: "I'm not sure its not a greater happiness to be powerless" (223). Later she reveals her unease at acquiring the money which filled her "with the desire to transfer the weight of it to some other conscience" (427). Out of depth at the sudden windfall, she is looking for an anchor to stay her whirling ship. Therefore, her selection of Osmond underscores a subtle egotism. She shows a magnanimous generosity towards him where she wants to be a provider, shaper, and definer of Osmond's future. In wanting to "do" (210) something with her money she feels she is defining his actions and place in society, savouring the idea that she "would launch his boat for him, she would be his providence" (427). Her wish ironically tantamount to Ralph's desire of 'putting the wind in her sails' and James is critical of this subtle guise of egoism presented under the cloak of altruism.

Gwendolen's reasons for marrying Grandcourt are unscrupulous. She shows an unacceptable ruthlessness in

accepting Grandcourt who, unlike Osmond, has a definite social position- he is almost certain to inherit a baronetcy and likely to come into peerage. She accepts him precisely for his wealth and position, which Isabel had categorically rejected. He seems a prop for her own social ascendancy and it is characteristic of Gwendolen that during the conflicting moments of their courtship, it never entered her mind to "include the fact that she had accepted Grandcourt solely as a man whom it was convenient for her to marry not, in the least as one to whom she would be binding herself in duty" (380).To Isabel, Osmond seemed to incarnate her own aesthetic ideal to be free of this world and in fact it was his detachment from the actualities of life which had determined her choice of him. Although both the heroines are propelled to pick on their respective suitors out of ulterior motives, Isabel contemplates a lifelong devotion to fineness in married life and exhibits a delicate abhorrence of material wealth, the same holds tremendous charm for Gwendolen. Commenting upon their different temperaments, Liddell comments: "If we make the highest comparison, George Eliot is chiefly interested in the predicament of Brutus or Macbeth, Henry James in the predicament of Hamlet, Troilus or Othello." (Liddell 169).

The marital portrait of the heroines is quite similar, the difference lies only in the degree of cruelty they receive from their husbands. This affinity was noticed first by F.R.Leavis who asserted that Osmond "*is* Grandcourt, hardly disguised." (237). Although Osmond marries Isabel for money, he and Isabel begin their married life deceiving each other in mutual love and we have Ralph's testimony that Osmond was once "greatly in love" (576). Grandcourt harbours no illusions about Gwendolen's acceptance of his marriage proposal; on the contrary he derives perverse satisfaction from her reluctant surrender: "On the whole Grandcourt got more pleasure out of this notion than he could have done out of winning a girl of whom he was sure that she had a strong inclination for him personally"(365).Once married, his spitefulness far exceeds that of Osmond as his desire to dominate Gwendolen starts bordering on the pathological, where he "meant to be master of a woman who would have liked to master him"(365) and it shows in his sinister treatment of his dogs. Osmond's cruelty doesn't manifest itself so blatantly, he simply curbs Isabel's free spirit by confining her to the "house of

darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation" (429). That is the ultimate cruelty to a woman who was looking for unfettered freedom in life and whose first appearance in the novel ironically shows her reading Emerson's quintessential work on Transcendentalism.

Post-marriage the painful odyssey of the two protagonists begins, whose self-assurance and confidence are systematically dismantled by their romantic adventurism and by a cruel fate and it lends a tragic grandeur to their self-discovery.Isabel has made an error of judgment and acted with imprudence and obstinacy which demands rectification while Gwendolen has committed a conscious wrong, which in Eliot's ethos awaits punishment. Once they realise the magnitude of their mistake, both Gwendolen and Isabel refuse to divulge it to others, endure their suffering in silence and acknowledge their responsibility; these are the markers of their emotional maturity. Isabel accepts her fate with a dignified poise: "When a woman had made such a mistake, there was only one way to repair it just immensely (oh, with the highest grandeur) to accept it" (405). Gwendolen too, resolves with a quiet equipoise, "I will not say to the world 'Pity me'" (482). As in Eliot's novels, in the Jamesian world too, knowledge is acquired only at the cost of great suffering as Ralph warns Isabel: "You must have suffered first, have gained some miserable knowledge…"(48).In the meditative vigil, Isabel gets a deeper insight into the nature of reality and realises the distorted value of her egotism at the expense of great suffering, that it is now imperative for her to drain the "poisoned cup"(150) of experience to attain this knowledge. Ralph aids her in the cultivation of a finer, richer albeit sadder consciousness. Her traumatic experience in married life yields her an expansive vision which castigates her egoism and brings about a most exquisite consciousness. The end of *ThePortrait* shows Isabel's firm rejection of a life lived on a simple level of existence as embodied in former suitor Goodwood's offer and her desire to go to Rome to help her stepdaughter Pansy marks a birth of altruism in her.

Gwendolen on the other hand belongs to the long list of George Eliot's heroines like Janet, Maggie, Dorothea, who grow, suffer, change, are guilty of egoistic action and undergo a cleansing 'baptism of fire' to achieve final redemption. Gwendolen is one

such heroine whose moral change and development comes about through intense pain and disillusionment with the egoistic self. Like Ralph, Deronda proves to be Gwendolen's mentor who forces her to see the limitations of giving primacy to the self over othersand induces in her a will to change:

> You will not go on being selfish and ignorant. Try to care about something in this vast world besides the gratification of small selfish desires. Try to care for what is best in thought and action-something that is good apart from the accidents of your own lot (502).

Gwendolen's compliance to his hectoring results in her decision to change and exercise choices within the confines of altruism: "I shall live. I shall be better" (878). The roles of the confidantes diverge a little, accordingto the authors' different thematic concerns. Ralph the silent, distant admirer, fully aware that his love for Isabel would go unreciprocated belongs to the repertoire of Jamesian characters with 'central intelligence' who as spectators stand on the periphery of action providing commentary, but whose civility and maturity are yardsticks to measure the worth of other characters. Deronda is presented as a superior, semi-divine moral figure, whose unerring action and decisions make him a paragon of virtue, whose place in Gwendolen's half of the novel is to provide moral succour and advice to her.

The point ultimately belaboured by both the novelists is that it is through the power of choosing-whether good or bad, through choice and commitment, through trial and error that both Gwendolen and Isabel arrive at correct self-estimation, shorn of distorted romanticism and attain a true notion of the self. Through her protagonist, George Eliot makes an example of how self-limiting egoism is and traces the moral development of an egoist from an intense preoccupation with the self to an acceptance of the larger claims of the world, a growth attained through the process of pain and suffering; conforming to and in keeping with the author's tragic conception of life. James shows a fine delineation of how suffering produces the subtlest and most exquisite consciousness. In Eliot's world this ordeal of living and suffering gives birth to greater objectivity, sympathy, and vision and in Jamesian world it yields a finer consciousness.

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Representation of Disability and Parsee Culture in *Trying to Grow* by Firdaus Kanga

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Abstract: Firdaus Kanga is a writer and a spokesperson for the rights of the disabled people, he was born in Mumbai in 1960, and he currently resides in London, UK. He through his writings,has illuminated the issues of the disabled people. *Trying to Grow* was adapted into a film by BBC-BFI, and it went on to win a number of awards. Firdaus Kanga's novel is significant, for not only does it have a disabled subject as its hero, but Brit Kotwal with his charm, his impeccable wit, and a sense of humour, sustains the curiosity of the readers.This novel is semi-autobiographical, and the narration is in the first-person. Brit Kotwal recounts his life journey from his birth to his youth. He talks about his struggles in growing up from the time that he was born with a rare genetic disorder, a medical condition described by the doctors as *'osteogenesis imperfecta'*.Residing at his middle-class abode at Colaba, his family still managed to sustain certain British tastes like spending on a piano recital or a rare pressing of Chopin's Waltzes.They continued to hold in high esteem everything Western, right from their taste in music to their taste in food.

Keywords: Brit, Parsee, disability, culture, Tina

Firdaus Kanga, is a writer and a spokesperson for the rights of the disabled people, he was born in Mumbai in 1960, and he currently resides in London, UK. He, through his writings, has illuminated the issues of the disabled people. *Trying to Grow* was adapted into a film by BBC-BFI, and it went on to win a number of awards. The film is titled *Sixth happiness*, and Kanga wrote the screen play for this film and acted in this film as well.In his travel

book *'Heaven on Wheels'*, he has narrated his experience of meeting Stephen Hawking. Hehas presented a number of documentaries on the theme of disability including *Double the Trouble*, *Twice the Fun.*

Disability studies are a recent addition to the departments of humanities in India; our literature and popular culture still has a dearth of disabled subjects and characters playing any significant role in our lives. FirdausKanga'snovel,*Trying to Grow*,is significant in this respect, for not only does it have a disabled subject as its hero, but Brit Kotwal with his charm, his impeccable wit, and a sense of humour sustains the curiosity of the readers, while taking us through the regular humdrum of life and at the same time prevents the novel from becoming a heart-wrenching tragedy. Though the readers might not identify with the pain experienced by Brit Kotwal because of his physical disability,but the readers do relate to him in terms of their struggles against the absurdities and challenges thrown at them by life. All of us have faced difficult situations, where we have encountered a sense of disability in grappling with life's challenges. As readers, we are overwhelmed with the way that Brit Kotwal grapples with his disability, he handles the stresses of his life by diverting his sense of angst and brokenness, and lacesit with his humour and wit.To quote Ben-Moshe and Sandy Magana who define disability in a broad historical and cultural spectrum:

> Disability is fluid and contextual rather than biological. This does not mean that biology does not play out in our minds and bodies, but the definition of disability is imposed upon certain kinds of minds and bodies….But more than that, disability if understood as constructed through historical and cultural process, should be seen not as a binary but as a continuum. One is always disabled in relation to the context in which one is put. A person has a learning disability, if put in a scholarly setting, using a wheelchair becomes a disability and a disadvantage when the environment is inaccessible. Someone who wears glasses may be disabled without them, when attempting to read written language or see far away, but this can change depending on the context that they are seeing and being seen within. (Moshe and Magna 105)

This novel is semi-autobiographical, and the narrator and the protagonist recounts' his life journey from his birth to his youth in the first-person. Thisnovel is significant for its portrayal of the Parsee culture, and it acquaints the readers with the lived experiences of an individual born with disability. The readers have a first-hand perception of the difficulties that Brit Kotwal experiences while growing up with a rare genetic disorder that completely restricts his movement and he is mostly confound to his house.Besides being a powerful tragedy, this novel has some brilliant wit and humour, and this saves its readers from the sense of anguish that they experience, while they relate with the tragic incidents in Brit's life, as he recounts the pain of growing up, or describes the tragic and accidental deaths of Sam and Sera and Mrs and Mr Manekshaw.

Disability studies have become a part of the educational curriculum, and the rights of the disabled people are being taken into account while working upon social and legal policies, and efforts are being made to ensure a place for this discipline academically. Research in this area focusses upon the historical, social and political meaning attributed to disability. Disability studies usually criticises the medicalized model of disability. But it still has a long way to go to ensure that there is a comprehensive change in the perception of people in the society regarding people with physical challenges. At the same time, there is a necessity for providing an adequate socio-economic and legal support base to help them in educating and empowering themselves, and in making a place for themselves in a highly competitive world. To quote Lenard Davis:

> disability studies is a field of studies whose time has come….People with disabilities have been isolated, incarcerated, observed, written about, operated, or instructed, implanted, regulated, treated, institutionalised, and controlled to a degree probably unequal to that experienced by any other minority group.

Similarly,Simi Linton observes:

> …the field of disability studies is even more marginal in the academic culture than disabled people in the civic culture. The enormous energy society expends keeping people with disabilities sequestered and in subordinate positions is

> matched by the academy's efforts to justify that isolation and oppression. (Linton 3)

Elaborating this further with a quotefrom Tanya Titchkosky, who observes:

> Everything disabled people say or do, from political action to putting on make-up, from writing book to dropping out of school, from laughter to tears has been read as a symptom. Under the hegemonic control of the medical model, disabled persons are deciphered but not understood. (Titchkosky217)

Subjectively opining it is imperative to introduce persons with disabilities to regular school and college curriculum.But this too is conditional to the type of disability that the person is born with.In this novel too, Brit Kotwal is confined to his home, for he cannot go to school for the risk of breaking his bones. At the same time, art and literature too should address the issues of people with disabilities and try and free them from the grotesque 'gaze' that they encounter on a regular basis. Brit Kotwal in the novel *Trying to Grow,* is fortunate to have an extremely supportive family, who help him in educating himself and in realising his potentials.They are proud of his academic achievements; he is also an excellent violin player and they encourage him to follow his heart and make his own choices in life. In an episode in the novel, Brit recalls how he registered in a school just to appear for exams, and he manages to pass his examination in flying colours, and standsfifth in his class. Father Ferra, the principal of this school gives a special prize to him for his outstanding performance, but for Brit it is humiliating to receive this prize that has been bestowed upon him for his disability. These lines in the novel describe the'gaze' that people with disabilities are often a victim of: "Around me the applause burst and swelled like some orchestral climax while I grew smaller and smaller in my seat wishing I wasn't there, wishing Father Ferra hadn't talked about me, wishing I hadn't got this prize for having legs that didn't work." (Kanga 54)

In this novel Brit takes us through his life journey of growing up with this rare genetic disorder, a medical condition described by doctors as *'osteogenesis imperfecta,'*right from the time of his birth to his youth. He belongs to a Parsee family and addresses his parents and his sister by their first name, and he inhabits a

Parsee locality in Bombay of the 1970's. This young Parsee boy with his impressive wit and humour, from the initiation of this semi-autobiographical novel sensitises the minds of its readers about the common social and religious perceptions about disability in Indian society. This novel reflects how there is an innate social antipathy towards disability in our society. Even though the parents of Brit are educated and broad-minded in every way, but it is still difficult for them to come to terms with the fact that their child would always be disabled. With their educational level they can understand the medical condition of their child, but they still hope against hope.

The doctors attending on Brit have explained to Sam and Sera, the consequences of growing up with *osteogenesis imperfecta*. This implies that life is not going to be easy for Brit, for he will never be able to walk again. He will break his bones often, and ifhe manages to survive this impairment, then he might not grow more than four feet tall. The only 'silver lining' according to the doctors was that "his disease will burn itself out by the time he's in his late teens"(Kanga 30). Brit reconstructs this episode that he must have heard from his parent's mouth of the doctor announcing the birth of a disabled child to his mother Sera, "your boy is born with bones brittle as glass. The ones in his legs are delicate as test tubes; I doubt he'll ever walk. He'll probably be toothless too; his teeth will break as soon as he bites into anything hard."(Kanga 30)

Besides drawing our attention to his disability, Brit also introduces the readers to the Parsee community in the neighbourhood where he resides, and how these anglicized Parsees look back at the days of the British imperialism with a sense of nostalgia. He describes how his parents fell in love at first sight,for they had in common their love for music, and how being born into a musical family sustains him. Residing at his middle-class abode inColaba, his family still continuesto have a passion for, and entertains expensive British tastes like spending on a piano recital or a rare pressing of Chopin's Waltzes. He describes how the Parsee's are fond of choosing names that would sound English. "Faredoon became Freddy, Nowroji becomes Neville, Adi becomes Eddy and everyone is delighted with their new name and what he hopes is his new image." (Kanga. 28). Brit

is named Dariusby his parents but nicknamed Brit, because of his brittle bones, and also for his Anglicised upbringing. In this autobiographical novel, the character of Darius is sketched by Kanga upon himself, and he suffers from the Brittle bone disease like Kanga.

The Parsee community rose to its position of prominence, during the period of British rule, for they were empathisers of the British,and according to Brit Kotwal in this novel, it is difficult for them to come to terms with the departure of the British. They continued to hold in a very high esteem everything Western, right from their taste in music to their taste in food. Brit narrates how his middle-class family has a taste for Western cuisine, and they indulge themselves to Western food at costly diners. At the same time, being a musical family, they have an ear for music, but their passion is restricted only to Western music.Brit goes to the extent of saying that listening to Indian classical music makes him puke.Brit knows that like himself, his own community is neither Western nor Indian enough to fit into any culture.Kanga points out how the Parsee families like their own continued to look with nostalgia and awe, to the days of the British Raj, even though the prominence that they had gained during this period had ended with the departure of the British. Bhavna Kale points out:

> However, after independence, this ethno-religious minority experienced a major setback. What was once a community of adventurous businessmen, entrepreneurs, was gradually reduced largely to a community of job-seekers with a marked decline in their financial status. (Kale161)

In this discussion between Sam and Sera, Sam reminds Sera that they should be coming to terms with the changing times:

> 'We will bargain for our freedom with this', she declared. And who will dare deny the value of British Guineas?
>
> 'Those days are gone darling', said Father. 'No one cares for Britain any more.'
>
> 'Such disloyalty,' sniffed Sera. If you'd only been a boy Scout you wouldn't talk like that. I took an oath with the Guides which I intend to keep; an oath to King and country.(Kanga 16)

This passage indicates the loyalty of the Parsee's to the British seems to have outlasted their rule. The influence of the

West on the Parsee's is visible in their family values, their preference for late marriages and nuclear families and also the fact that they were opposed to traditionally arranged marriages. Kanga's depiction of the Parsee's and their adjustment to Indian ethos post-colonialism endows this novel with a sense of hilarity.

Thisnovel *Trying to Grow,* goes a long way in exposing certain common perceptions pertaining to disability. Brit's family in spite of being highly educated, falls into the trap of a witch-doctor called Wagh Baba, who was becoming famous as a miracle man in the city, and they take Brit to him with the hope that he will cure their son.But the baba's fraud is soon exposed, when there are complaintsagainst him from the parents of young girls,whose daughters have been sexually assaulted by this fraud baba, and the baba is soon arrested by the police. The other miracle cures intended to heal Brit include making him drink pulverized pearls stirred into his milk, but this cure is given up when he breaks two of his ribs. He had pure almond oil rubbed on to his legs to give him strength, for full year and a half, but sadly without any consequences. This is followed by trying to cure him by feeding him the bone-marrow of a goat which makes him sick. And then the family tries to secure a therapy from a wonder woman, who claims that she can heal Brit from the electricity naturally generated from her body, but she turns out in Dolly's words to be "a dead current" (Kanga 35)or another quack-healer. Now Brit's family give up upon trying to fix his physical condition, but they focus instead on providing him with an intellectually stimulating environment, and literature, music and lovebecome the motivation of his life.

Since Brit is home-schooled, Mrs Manekshaw is engaged to teach him French, Maths and English. He excels in his studies, in spite of not going through a regular educational curriculum. Mrs Manekshaw, a teacher with whom he could speak his heart out, leaves him very soon when she commits suicide, after accidently running over her husband and killing him when he falls out of the car. She remembers Brit before dying and also leaves a note for him that reads as follows: "Sorry I couldn't stay. Shall miss you up there" (Kanga 87)

We find that Brit Kotwal's family though not religious, has taken care to teach Brit a few Parsee religious chants, he recites

these chants when he is in a great physical distress or he remembers them while appearing for his examinations or in his moments of deep anxiety. I think it's just Brit's humour that manages to rescue the readers from the anguish of reading of the accidental deaths of Mr Manekshaw, followed by that of Sam and Sera or the suicide of Mrs. Manekshaw. Also, the sad disappearance of his cousin Tina, who was so vivacious, in spite of her disability. The sudden deaths of Sam and Sera, leaves a big void in Brit's life. They are an exciting couple who enjoy each other's company, and it appears that Brit has inherited his sense of humour from them. They bring up their children very well, and they never discriminate against Brit for he is disabled, and try to instil confidence in their children, for facing with fortitude the challenges that life throws to them.

In chapter four, Brit introduces the readers to his handicapped cousin Tina, who is deaf and dumb. She is the daughter of his aunt Jeroo, with whom he spends his time on the weekends. This chapter opens with these lines from Brit:

> I was scared of the way handicapped people looked. You know, the hesitant gait and robot-stiff movements of the blind, the lolling heads and strangulated speech of the spastics. Whenever I saw them I wondered if I seemed as ugly and pathetic. I'd shudder and turn my mind away.(Kanga38)

He recounts how Dolly had a tough time whenever she went out with Brit and Tina, she had to push Brit's wheelchair and also protect Tina from being run over by a motorist.

In another instance, Brit recalls an episode between him and his teacher Mrs. Manekshaw. Brit talks to her about his desire to become a psychiatrist and to this Mrs Manekshaw responds,that people will find it difficult to trust him in the role of a psychiatrist,to solve their problems for them. In turn, Brit again asks her'if he looks stupid', and she answers (Kanga 63):

> 'to a lot of people you seem stupid because you are so short and, I know its absurd, because you can't walk.'
>
> I nodded. In my twelve years Sera and Sam must have shaken their heads to at least a thousand questions like, Is his brain damaged? Is he severely retarded? I can't blame them…. (Brit recalls, thinking of the questions that were put to his parents,

for people assumed on grounds of his physical disability that he is also mentally retarded)

At the same, time Mrs Manekshawalso teaches Brit that "It's what you learn counts, not what you study."(Kanga 63)

In Dolly, Brit has the most caring sister, and he and his parents have high ambitions for Dolly and they hope that Dolly would become a lawyer or a professor and they are quite disappointed when Dolly expresses her desire to be an air-hostess. Eventually Sam finds Dolly a job at the airport, though this was not that of an air-hostess, and the family would wait for Dolly's return each day with a mouth full of stories from her place of work.Brit, Sera hopes "is going to be a bachelor boy," (Kanga6)while she is anxious if Dolly will be able to find the right match for herself. But at the same time Sam and Sera never really impose their own choices upon their children.

Brit's cousin, Tina in spite of her disability turns out to be a romantic, and dares to fall in love with a handsome young man, with whom she is romantically involved. She goes out with Rohit, who pretends to reciprocate her love, and Brit describes how he and Amy felt while watching Tina and Rohit go hand in hand;waiting under the Gateway while the lovers took a leisurely stroll, "it was better than watching a James Bond movie." (Kanga95) At the same time, they feel that Tina should be allowed to marry Rohit, if both of them really love each other. Coming from an orthodox Parsee background, Brit knew there could be an opposition to this idea from Tina's mother Jeroo.

We knew Jeroo would never, not on her frigid life, allow Tina to marry Rohit, though he was handsome, rich, working in his uncle's business, had a house in New Delhi. Because he wasn't a Parsee. When life came to solid things like marriage, everyone, even Sera and Sam, forgot how modern they were." (Kanga 97)

When Jeroo realises that Tina has eloped with Rohit on her eighteenth birthday, Brit suggests that they should call the police.The family is fearful that Rohit has betrayed Tina, and has sold Tina into prostitution. Jeroois completely opposed to the idea of informing the police about the disappearance of her daughter and reacts: 'No! I've lost my daughter, I don't want to lose my

reputation as well" (Kanga98). He describes the nightmare that the family has to undergowhen they go out in search for Tina at the Red-Lightarea in the town. When they don't get any clue about Tina and Rohit's whereabouts, they give up the search for her, as Sera points out that it will be difficult to findher in a huge country like India, for it is impossible for them to look in every nook and corner. Jeroois even more eager to abandon the search for Tina, and very easily gives up upon her disabled child.

Tina not only disappears from the pages of the book, but it seems that all the characters have forgotten her too soon, only Brit recalls her on a few occasions. This would never have been the case if the child was able-bodied or a male child. Brit demonstrates the hypocrisy of his society in the following quote by Jeroo:

> The secret, said Jeroo, smoothing her new red-and yellow-printed sari as she sat down, lies in forgetting. Forgetting that I once had a daughter I loved, that she is now a prostitute who is raped day and night by fat men smelling of sweat, that she will die soon of a disease that she catches from them and that I will not see my child again-in this life. (Kanga110)

It is easier for Tina's family to forget her, instead of reaching out to her, or finding out what trauma she is undergoing. A very cultured, refined andmodern Parsee family thinks that it is more convenient to accepts their 'fate' and makes no attempt to look any further for her. This episode makes the reader shiver, thinking of the fate of the disabled in uneducated and underprivileged families.

Returning to portrayal of Parsees culture in this novel; Brit Kotwal points out that Parsees are well known for their idiosyncrasies, superstitious belief and typical sense of humour. The Parsees celebrate their new yearday with traditional gaiety and excitement surrounded by their relatives. The local fire temple would be crowded with the worshippers of colourful stylish clothes. Brit's remark in this regard is very interesting;"We Parsee's don't take our religion too seriously, those who do are considered downright dangerous and a little mad" (Kanga 20). The novelist also highlights the Parsee custom of celebrating birthdays twice and following two calendars; the Parsee and Christian. To quote Kanga "All of us had two birthdays; there was one that we celebratedon the date we were born, and the

other, which stepped back one day every leap year, was by the calendar we'd carried across from Persia."(Kanga97) Besides this during funeral and wedding celebrations Parsees wear special dresses. The Parsees take the dead bodies of their deceased to the vultures in the towers of silence.

The novel also explores Brit's homosexual love for his friend Cyrus,whom he admires for his handsome body, and it also probes his heterosexual love for Amy. One stigma that Brit conveys about disability in this novel, is how conveniently the society perceives the disabled as being unmanly or unwomanly. Their sexual potency too is considered as disabled along with their physical disability. It is difficult for the society to perceive that people with disabilities are also sexual beings with sexual fantasies, emotions and desires like anyone else. Kanga has with a keen sensitivity foregrounded these issues in this novel. The novel ends with Brit being left alone to take care of himself with the death of Sam and Sera. Dolly marries out of her culture and she moves to America and settles down there, her husband Salim is a Muslim. In the absence of his family, it is Brit's passion for books, art and music that sustain him. He also manages to bag a publishing contract and lives alone in his Colaba house. It is wonderful to see Brit succeed in his life, but at the same time we see how the notion of gender complicates the experiences of disability. Thus, while a career and a decent life are possible for Brit,but a girl like Tina can have no future, for the society is not yet prepared to attribute emotions of love and feelings to a disabled girl like her. Kanga's *Trying to Grow* is a deeply poignant novel, at the same time it is effortlessly humorous, and his portrayal of a marginal community of the Parsees adds even more relish to this book.

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Framing Crime, Reframing History: An Interdisciplinary Reading of Colonial History through Two Criminal Case Studies

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Abstract: The paper would look into a few criminal case histories from colonial India and try to see how the genre, working at the intersection of history, ethnography and literature could be subversively used for exploring the discrepancies of colonial law. Taking up *History of Celebrated Criminal Cases and Resolutions Recorded Thereon by Both the Provincial and Supreme Governments* (1888) and *Record of Criminal Cases as between Europeans and Natives for the Last Hundred Years* (1896), both compiled by Ram Gopal Sanyal, I would argue that the compilations work contra the established premises of the genre of case histories. The criminal case studies traverse a slippery line between history and narrative; they simultaneously document crime and construct the criminal. Sanyal, on the other hand uses the same generic ambiguity to expose the discrimination built into the colonial Rule of Law and particularly the suppressed history of white delinquency. I would also argue that while maintaining the presumed objectivity of a recorder/archivist Sanyal employs literary techniques to create an alternative discursive space. Sanyal maintains an objective narrative voice and even that voice has limited role to play as he stipulates primarily to the role of a compiler. Newspapers constitute the primary source of information while much of the analyses are based on extensive quotations from various acts and regulations. However, authorial agency is established through the textual framing, organization and commentary.

> Our case becomes rounded off and difficulty after difficulty thins away in front of us ... I shall soon be in the position of

> being able to put into a single connected narrative one of the most singular and sensational crimes of modern times. (Conan Doyle 615)

These lines are spoken by the great Sherlock Holmes before he reveals the true identity of the murderer in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. To a great extent, solving crime is all about transcending the event of crime by (re)writing its narrative. Since crime erupts in the time of praxis as an irretrievable moment, its recovery in the time of representation is always a proximate re-working which takes place through a referential framework of other equivalent 'cases'. For example, in the particular instance of the Baskerville case Holmes says "Students of criminology will remember the analogous incidents in Grodno, in Little Russia, in the year '66 and of course there are the Anderson murders in North Carolina, but this case possesses some features which are entirely its own" (ibid. 616). One of the main reasons behind the creation and conservation of case studies is the construction of this reference frame in order to streamline the heterogeneous matrix of crime into the singular narrative of law. By singling out the criminal, this narrative offers a negative definition of the law-abiding citizen – the one-who-is-not-a-criminal. Thus the preservation and documentation of case studies have a political purpose: "Criminology is thus concerned with establishing criminal types by drawing connections between them and, at the same time, drawing clear lines between the criminal and the noncriminal." (Herzog 34)

In Europe the tradition of documenting case histories goes back to the eighteenth century. Francois Gaylot de Pitaval published his *Causes célèbres et interéssantes* or *Celebrated and Interesting Cases* between 1734 and 1789. Abundant literature is found on the Dreyfus affair in France in 1894, the most noteworthy being the three articles of Emile Zola published in *Le Figaro* in 1897 and his thirty nine page long article that appeared in *L'Aurore* in 1898, helping to reopen the case of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish captain of the French army. In Britain J.T. Atkyns brought out *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the High Court of Chancery During the Time of Lord Hardwicke* (1765-68). T. B. Howell published *State Trials* in 1816 covering almost all the important trials of England between 1163 and 1783. Much of the literature

on colonial legal operations constitute of scrupulous documentation of judicial proceedings such as William H. Morley's *An Analytical Digest of all the Reported Cases Decided in the Supreme Courts of Judicature in India* (1850), A. F. Bellasis' *Reports of Criminal Cases Determined in the Sudder Foujdaree Adawlut of Bombay* (1850) etc. along with various law reports. However, increasinglythe case histories started being used extensively to facilitate an ethnographic understanding of criminality and to achieve racial profiling of criminals. Sir William Henry Sleeman's *Report on Budhuk alias Bagree Dacoits* (1849), J. B. Worgan's *Consecutive Tables, Criminal Cases, Being an Annotation of the Criminal Cases in Indian Law Reports* (1898), Frederick Beatson Taylor's *The Trial of Cases* (1901) exemplify this tendency.

The criminal case histories put in place what Herzog calls certain 'mechanisms of distinction' to differentiate the criminal from the non-criminal (35). These are apparatuses to sustain the edifice of normativity. He claims that during the days of Sherlock Holmes and his ilk, these 'mechanisms of distinction' were largely intact; they were eroded by the modernist narrative intervention (ibid.). However, one cannot but wonder whether these mechanisms were ever actually there or were those merely the water babies of modernity, conceptualised programmatically to address the greatest terror of the modern: the absence of any such workable apparatus? The colonial modern on the other hand occupies a territory which is already differential – their experience of modernity inextricably linked to their status as the colonial other. Thus when they set the same apparatus into motion, those are accorded with an altogether different functionality.

Before the publication of *History of Celebrated Criminal Cases and Resolutions Recorded Thereon by Both the Provincial and Supreme Governments* in 1888 Ram Gopal Sanyal was already well-known as a biographer. His works included *The Life of Rai Bahadur Hon'ble K.D. Pal*, *A General Biography of Bengal Celebrities, Both Living and Dead*, *The Life of Hurrish Cundra Mukherjee* etc. In the preface to *Celebrated Criminal Cases* Sanyal claims that the objective behind bringing out this volume is to show "how in India, a certain class of civilians in the Executive line, have, at times ridden rough-shod over the liberties of the people...." (*Celebrated*

Cases ii). The text is being offered as a corrective measure for certain shortcomings of the legal structure and the solution it seems to suggest is the separation of judicial and executive functions of the state –

> Of late both in the press, and in the National Congress, the question of rating the judicial and executive functions of the District Magistrate has been largely discussed...focused into a short compass, as has been done in this book…will illustrate clearly, how detrimental has been the combination of judicial and executive functions in the same officer to the liberties of the people. (ibid.)

Clearly the press and the National Congress are the two available fora of public opinion through which protests against blatant abuse of power take the shape of a cogent political demand of decentralisation of power. The text intends to facilitate this transformation. The author also sets a historical goal for himself – considering "Man's memory is so frail and forgetful" he deems it fit to publish "a summary of celebrated cases, now scattered over the pages of newspapers, hardly accessible to the reading public, in the form of a book…." (ibid. vi).

The referential, historical and archival functions that the text accords to itself are consistent with the received framework of case studies. The frame shifts when it chooses to study the law rather than the criminal as the central problematic. Most of the case studies in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries were "resolutely centred on the figure of the criminal and not the authorities that judge him or her" (Herzog 37) often indulging in intense psychological evaluation. The rigid psychologisation of the criminal is a symptom of what Foucault calls a 'scientifico-legal complex' (*Discipline* 23). When applied to the colonial situation, it is invested with an ethnographic rigour that does not only validate but naturalise colonial legality as the only model of systematising what is almost primordially random. The criminal case studies, while fetishising the criminal, weave disciplinary web around them, based on documentation, classification and codification,

> The investigative modalities of enumeration and surveys deployed by colonial government,relying on the certainty of numbers divided under classificatory subheads,combined the

administrative jail reports, covering textual body of knowledge aboutcriminal classes. (Mukhopadhyay 190).

Sanyal's account displaces the gaze from the person of the criminal to the impersonal legal body that defines and disciplines them. As the model itself gets scrutinised, the 'investigative modalities' cannot stay outside the purview.

Sanyal enlists quite a few cases of discriminatory treatment of Indians by British civilians and magistrates in various districts of Bengal. In 'Nuddea Students' Case', the clapping of hands by a group of students at a *jatra* festival initiated a harassing criminal procedure against them. In the 'Rungpur Deer Case', one Prosunna Moyi Dashee of Rungpur, the widow of the local landlord refused to lend an elephant to a British officer, causing much chagrin among the civilians. As a consequence, a false case of land encroachment was slapped against her and a scandalous parody of British justice was carried out. A curious case occurs in Sylhet, where a civilian magistrate asks his *chaprasi* to remove a pleader by pulling his ear. Interestingly but not uniquely, none of these legal irregularities take place in Calcutta. In fact, Calcutta remains the place where these irregularities are redressed and often reversed. Calcutta also records liberal outrage at these instances. For example, Sanyal provides an excerpt from an editorial of Robert Knight, the editor of *Calcutta Statesman* about the 'Pleader's Ear-pulling Case', "…What educated man with any proper self-respect will appear before any judge, who is ready upon the smallest provocation to direct his chaprasis to assault the pleader?" (*Celebrated Cases* 67)

Knight goes on to criticise the lack of training of a civilian into the proper behaviour of a British gentleman; having entered the administrative services through a free-for-all competition, the virtues of British 'civility' could not be inculcated in them. It is the opening up of the competition for covenanted services for the Indians that tested the limits of the British liberal agenda as it faced steep resistance from the existing clan of British civilians. Indians had technically been permitted to take the entry examination for the Covenanted Civil Service in 1854. In 1864, Satyendranath Tagore became the first Indian civil servant. In 1869 Indian civil servants were allowed to become justices of peace and by 1879 one-fifth of all Covenanted Civil Service

positions were reserved for Indians. This new threat materialized itself through the much reviled figure of the 'competition *baboo*'– the Western educated Indian aspiring for the same set of privileges hitherto enjoyed by the British. The threat could be co-opted through a cultural reaffirmation of difference. The concept of civility serves as a core component in maintaining an order of difference with the colonised - "Civility played a regulative normative function within that regime by constituting a form of 'governmentality' through its politics of subjectivity" (Roy 61). Ram Gopal Sanyal's critique of the discriminatory practices within the colonial legal structure is premised upon the same liberal notion of governmentality that assumes a benevolent civility in its treatment of the colonised other. His critique operates within a matrix of colonial difference. For him difference is not an unavoidable correlative of discrimination; discrimination is an avoidable aberration of an otherwise functional order of difference. Law, restored to its pristine purity, cured of its systemic failures, could purge the order of its discriminatory excesses.

In 1893, in response to an appeal made at the first annual meeting of the Indian National Congress, Ram Gopal Sanyal published *The Record of Criminal Cases as between Europeans and Natives for the Last Sixty Years*. Later, this text gets expanded into *Record of Criminal Cases as between Europeans and Natives for the Last Hundred Years* (1896). The historical context of the 1893 text and its titular difference from the text published in 1888 are significant. In fact, one could always conjecture that it is the historical context of 1893 that leads to the alteration in the title whereby 'European' and 'Native' have been posited unambiguously as oppositional categories and the general accounts of well-known criminal cases have been narrowed down only to those that involve the brutality perpetrated by the 'Europeans' on the 'Natives'. The text has been dedicated to Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee, "To the deliverer of an injured land / He gives a tongue to enlarge upon, a heart / to feel and courage to redress her wrongs". As the immediate context and dedication of the text would suggest, between 1888 and 1896, nationalism has become the overarching discursive paradigm predicating the exposure of the seamier aspects of colonialism. In July, 1876, Krishtodas Pal published a summary of forty-eight cases involving

the violent criminal behaviour of Europeans in *Hindoo Patriot*. Incidents such as these have been published regularly by *Hindoo Patriot*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* or in Bengali newspapers and periodicals like *Surodaya Prakash*. Krishto Das Pal, Shambhu Chunder Mukherjee, Shishir Kumar Ghosh or K. M. Banerjee on a later date have compiled such cases to throw light upon the true nature of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. In the preface to the 1896 edition, Sanyal maintains the goal of his 1888 text - to expose the irregularities within a basically efficient system. However, unlike the previous text, where he provided in-depth analyses of individual cases, here he provides a statistical database of all the cases that have taken place between 1803 and 1896. In the contents page itself, he provides a comprehensive account of all such cases including the nature of crime committed and the punishment meted out.

Out of these 'contents' emerges a narrative of discrepancy between the charges and the results of trials. Among sixty nine murder charges against Europeans reported in the book, there are twenty two instances of complete acquittal, one acquittal on the plea of insanity, in fourteen cases the result is not known or hushed up, in some instances the case has been compromised. In some cases, particularly when there is collaboration between Europeans and natives, the natives, mostly servants have been convicted whereas the Europeans acquitted or not tried at all. The punishment, if at all given, ranges from a fine of Rs. 1 to rigorous imprisonment of 18 months to five years, and there are only two examples of the last two varieties. Only in three cases the accused have been executed; two of them in Bengal and one in Bombay. The conviction rate is equally abysmal on charges of rape, assault, plundering, kidnapping, 'accidental murder', opening fire on a crowd and so on. Like his earlier book, Ram Gopal Sanyal uses mainly newspaper articles as his source. However, while he quotes reportage from newspapers like *Hindoo Patriot* and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, with known anti-government stance on many occasions, he also uses material from *Friend of India* or *Indian Mirror*, papers that espoused the cause of the British subjects in India, and had campaigned vigorously against the Ilbert Bill that allowed Indian magistrates to preside over cases involving Europeans. The authorial role is more interactive than the previous

text. He reproduces the news unchanged but adds a small explanatory, often exclamatory passage with it. For example, the following is a leading article of *Friend of India* on January 7th 1864: "The *Times of India* mentions that a European employed on the railway works having an altercation with a policeman of the Central Provinces, seized the man's baton and struck him with it; the result was death" (Sanyal *Record* 26). The news is followed by a note from Sanyal himself, "The pious Christian editor of the *Friend* had not space enough to mention even the name of the poor policeman who was murdered! This is a precious example of how the Anglo-Indian Press slighted these murder cases" (ibid.). Another report of the same newspaper on April 18th 1867 deals with "The trial of a Captain Moss and three sailors on a charge of murder, or culpable homicide not amounting to murder, in the Bengal High Court that has resulted in the acquittal of the prisoners"(ibid. 31). The captain and six other Europeans were sailing through Chittagong. They anchored the ship and went ashore on hunting. "One took up a kid in his arms 'for a lark', and on being remonstrated by its native owner and his fellows, put it down" (ibid.). According to the report, the Europeans were then surrounded by natives with clubs, knives and hatchets. They fired at the natives, killing three people. "Three of the accused were promised pardon on condition of telling the truth – the Indian form of Queen's evidence. The Jury, believing that the four prisoners acted in self-defence and distrusting the contradictory evidence returned a verdict of not guilty after only a minute's deliberation". Sanyal quips, "Yes, the death of these natives was not worth a 'moment's deliberation'! If three dogs belonging to a European in Chittagong had been killed, the European community would have raised a howl over it" (ibid.).

Evidently, the scope of Sanyal's criticism exceeds the agenda set in the preface and in the 1888 text. Though the preface claims, "If these pages disclose Europeans in a somewhat unfavourable light, it is to be remembered that the men who figure in the Criminal Courts are the scum of society…" the text does not restrict itself only to the 'scum of society'. It interrogates the dotted lines that join the scum of European society to the combined effort of an apathetic judiciary and conformist Anglo-Indian press to play down the extent and impact of white delinquency

in India. The criminal activity of Europeans and the structural leniency towards them foreground a subterranean matrix of white violence. According to Elizabeth Kolsky, since the days of early Company rule in India "The problem of British brutality, however, was not simply an affront to the better class of Englishman or an unambiguously outside threat: the law itself was part of the violence" (35). The rigorous phase of legal codification that starts in 1833 reaches an apotheosis in The Code of Criminal Procedure (1861) which provides groundwork for legal construction of racial difference - "Instead of establishing formal legal equality, the Code of Criminal Procedure institutionalized racial inequality by delineating race-based rights and privileges" (Kolsky 78). While the attitude of the colonial legal machinery towards white violence remained the same, the attitude of the colonial intelligentsia had undergone a change. Kolsky points out that until 1850 the system of exemption enjoyed the support of a section of wealthy Bengalis. The situation had a drastic reversal in 1850 when Drinkwater Bethune, a member of the Law Commission proposed a more equalizing set of Jurisdiction Bill, which were shelved by the government. This created a rift in the alliance between the Bengali elite and the non-official British subjects. The formation of the British Indian Association in 1851 was primarily a response to this incident. The entry of Indians into the Covenanted Services from the 1860s had two implications – first, the written code of exemptions came into direct conflict with the expanding ranks of Indian officials who had to implement them (ibid. 87) and second, the empirical evidence of blatant disregard for professed judicial equality became easily accessible to the Indian administrators. The combined effect of these changes was a renewed critical engagement with the problem of white violence.

The text strings together incidents involving not only European criminality but unaccounted, unmitigated and often unreasonable physical violence. On 19th October, 1854, *Friend of India* reports the conduct of one J. D. Ousely, an assistant to the magistrate of Murshidabad, who stabbed a coolie without any provocation. *Friend of India* tries to come up with possible reasons of such behaviour – reasons that range from the anxiety about passing an examination to get his due promotion, illness, heat,

long journey, too much drink, a restless night. Apparently, after stabbing the coolie, the civilian took off his hat and walked about in the burning sun (Sanyal *Record* 7). The outcome of the case remains unknown. The next case involves the accidental shooting of a native by two military men. While the soldiers claimed that they were only shooting birds in the neighbourhood of Delhi when they were attacked by armed men and they shot out of self-defence, the villagers' version was that it was a deliberate act of murder. The outcome of the case remained unknown. The next issue of *Friend of India* reports the brutal murder of a native servant by an English officer in Umbala. The man was tied up and flogged with the butt-end of a heavy hunting whip until his head was fractured and his body completely lacerated. He was then thrown out on the street and bled to death. Even as he delineates the incident the editor of *Friend of India* hopes that this story turns out to be incorrect. Sanyal in his commentary draws attention to the deliberate cover up of identities of both the accused and the deceased – "it was and still is the vicious habit with all Anglo-Indian editors of both modern and bye-gone days to minimize these dreadful occurrences by distorting the facts in such a meagre way" (ibid. 8). In 1867 a Bengal civilian was accused of raping a 'low caste woman' (The mention of the caste-type of the woman goes on to prove that the use of race or caste-based conceptualisation of rights did not only give rise to codes of legal entitlements and exemptions, they also influenced juridical and public perception regarding validity of accusations). The civilian was then in charge of the sub-division of Meherpure in the district of Nudia. The charge was 'extra-judicially enquired into' (ibid. 30) by the then District Magistrate of Nudia, Mr Henry Bell. The case was hushed up and the woman was committed to the Sessions Court for having falsely accused a government official. The local zamindar, Babu Brajendra Nath Gupta took pity on the woman and requested famous barrister Mr M. M. Ghosh to defend her in the Sessions Court. However, the civilian being a 'chum' of Mr Ghosh, he declined to intervene and passed the buck to Mr W.C. Banerjee Barrister-at-Law. With the efforts of Mr Banerjee the woman was finally honourably acquitted, which could be seen as a negative vindication of her charges, the nearest one could get to conviction of the rapist.

As the focus shifts from criminality to violence, the metaphysics of law encounters the raw physicality of the battered body. The violence that erupts from this encounter is both elemental and epistemic – it is located in the body yet attempts to dissolve the body in layers of discursive manoeuvres. Jordanna Bailkin quotes an editorial comment from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 8th June, 1880 — "Judicial officers should also be aware that for Europeans to commit murders is an impossibility" (Bailkin 462). This line is in sync with the caustic and ironic writing which was the signature style of this particular paper, employed to tease out the political subtext of received legal discourse. It is also critical of the reluctance of the colonial police and judiciary to process serious charges against Europeans and to convict them. Since liberal jurisprudence sees conviction as the only definitive way of establishing guilt, lack of conviction provides opportunity for denial. But, the statement also exposes a more fundamental equivocation of the colonial legal vocabulary when it comes to defining the violence perpetrated by Europeans. The definitional ambiguity is achieved through a collusion of codified legal language and medico-legal scholarship of the late nineteenth century. Jordanna Bailkin shows a changing pattern in the treatment of European criminality by colonial jurisprudence. The discrepancy in the rate of conviction between Indians and Europeans was always the general norm. In a presidency town like Calcutta the sentences of Indian prisoners exceeded those of Europeans by a factor of ten. Indian defendants were twice more likely to face serious charges such as murder or attempted murder than their European counterparts (ibid. 464). Among so many instances of brutal killings reported in Sanyal's text, in only three cases the guilty have been given capital punishment - John Rudd in Bengal in 1861, four sailors named Wilson, Apostle, Nicholas and Peters in Bombay in 1867 and George Nairns in Bengal in 1880. According to Bailkin till much later in the imperial discourse race was not mentioned as an important factor in criminal cases (465). However, even if race was not spelled out as an influence in the official juridical dispensations, it has always been a tool for conceptualising sovereign rights of European subjects, including the criminal subjects. Sanyal quotes *Friend of India* in the case of the four sailors of Bombay who were executed in 1867 for the murder of four marwaree shopkeepers. While holding it

up as an example of even-handed British justice in India, the report seems to be sympathetic towards the convicts for what it sees to be a violation of the inalienable right of the European subjects in India.

Before the partition of Bengal in 1905, the British parliament sought the statistics of attacks on white people by the natives of India, primarily in order to navigate the terrorist activities in Bengal. The Government of India retorted that no such statistics existed in the colonial police archives that categorised cases by the types of crime and not by the race of either party. Thus race was written into the history of colonial criminology to establish greater political control. But in doing so, the coloniser had to write themselves in the same history as well. The result was a more extensive documentation of white crime in India which needed to be balanced out through strategic deployment of discursive techniques to dilute and dissipate the moral culpability of the master race, particularly because a humane legal system was the corner stone of the civilisational logic of imperialism, trying to legitimise the British empire as an improvement upon the so-called barbarism of Islamic empires. Thus the 'axis of conflict' between the executive and the judiciary was really the genus face of colonial control. The mitigation of culpability of the white victimiser was often effected by establishing the body of the native victim as inherently diseased. Thus the brittle and degenerate Indian body was produced through medico-juridical knowledge. Sanyal reproduces Lord Lytton's *Fuller Minute* of 1876, an important step at simultaneously condemning white violence in India while legally authenticating the vulnerability of the native body. Mr Fuller was an English pleader in Agra. One Sunday morning he was about to take his carriage to the church but the syce was late in attendance. Fuller struck the syce causing him to fall down. After Fuller and his family drove to the church, the man got up, went into an adjoining compound and died almost immediately. The medical report of the coroner who conducted post mortem on the victim said that the man died from a ruptured spleen. It also inferred that while the blow inflicted was mild in nature, it turned fatal "in consequence of the morbid enlargement of that organ" (Sanyal *Record* 62). Based on this report the joint-magistrate of Agra found Mr Fuller "voluntarily

causing what distinctly amounts to hurt, and sentenced him to pay a fine of Rs 30 or in default to undergo fifteen days simple imprisonment" (ibid.). While Lord Lytton's *Minute* strongly criticised the magistrate for the trivialisation of criminal misconduct, it made special appeals to the 'forbearance and protection' of European employers because "Asiatics are subject to internal disease which often renders fatal to life even a slight external shock" (ibid. 63). The victims of white violence remain in a state of phantasmagoria; a strange presence-absence wherefore their existence is reduced to their bare bodies, invoking benevolence of the paternalistic government. At the same time these fragile bodies are rendered 'impossible' to murder since rather than the infliction of extraneous force, the locus of degeneracy is within the native physiognomy. They register an impossibility not just of legitimacy but of language. Hannah Arendt writes in her 1963 text *On Revolution* that "violence itself is incapable of speech…where violence rules absolutely, as for instance in the concentration camps of totalitarian regimes, not only the laws…but everything and everybody must fall silent" (Arendt 18-19). White violence in colonial India ushers in a regime of silence as it precludes its own enunciation.

Sanyal posits a question for his own project in the preface to the 1893 edition of this text - "why rake up the bitter memories of old controversies which are fast receding from the public view and which are well-nigh forgotten" (ii)? He does not give a clear answer but we might try one – his attempt is to articulate the foundational exception of colonial sovereignty. He overcomes the inadequacy of enunciative modalities by foregrounding race as an important coordinate of the juridical reference in which exception has been inscribed. As one has seen, the race-based data of crime started to be archived by the colonial government much later. Thus Sanyal's 'history' actually predates the official 'history' of interracial crimes. Further, while 'race' was being used by the government primarily to perpetuate control, Sanyal uses it as an 'interruption', to quote Arendt again "It is the function, however, of all action, as distinguished from mere behaviour, to interrupt what otherwise would have proceeded automatically and therefore predictably" (Arendt 31). Sanyal's venture subverts the circuit of predictability in the race-equation

between the coloniser and the colonised. In doing so, his enterprise ceases to remain archival and becomes archaeological in a Foucauldian sense of the term. Foucault defines archaeological analysis as non-originary in its disposition, searching not for ossified continuities but moments of discontinuity, of rupture in discursive practices,

> Archaeology tries to define not the thoughts, representations, images, themes, preoccupations that are concealed or revealed in dis-courses; but those discourses themselves, those discourses as practices obeying certain rules. It does not treat discourse as document, as a sign of something else, as an element that ought to be transparent, but whose unfortunate opacity must often be pierced if one is to reach at last the depth of the essential in the place in which it is held in reserve… (Foucault *Archaeology* 155)

Sanyal uses quasi-legal sources such as newspaper reportage but instead of treating them as infallible factual documents, he interrogates them simultaneously. He relentlessly intervenes into the 'unfortunate opacity' of the legal discourse in order to expose the mechanisms of its construction. As received discursive tools change functionality the body of historical knowledge is fractured by the contingency of experience, opening up a vortex of differentiality that becomes an important factor in various alternative permutations of colonial subject formation.

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Conflictual Zones in Science Fiction: Investigating Human-Machine Dichotomy in Daniel H. Wilson's *Robopocalypse*

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Abstract: Contemporary science fiction attempts to capture the current evolutionary image of the universe. Artificial replication, virtual spaces,future societies, and human-machine interface are the main focuses of the ongoing science fiction. Everything is hyper-functional in this new world. Due to this development, thepresent-day humans are shown to invent new artificial machines and use themfor their service.Besides, machines are developed by humans as a tool to yield powerto them.However, contrary to expectations, sometimes these machines may turn into destructive forces. The present paper attempts to explore the changing roles of machines from a 'device' to 'entity' and from an 'aide' to'opponent'. It would look into the factors which persuade machines to challenge humans. It will also try to analyze the implications of artificial intelligence that partake in machines' desire to control the human civilization. The paperwill explicate how the insertion of AI in machines may lead to the human-machine dichotomy infuture.

Keywords: Science fiction, humans, artificial intelligence, automated machines, dichotomy, destruction

"Science fiction is the only area of literature outside poetry that is symbolistic in its basic conception. Its stated aim is to represent the world without reproducing it. That is what dealing with a world of possibilities probabilities means" (Delany, 197). Science fiction that can be perceived as a microcosmic visualization tries to present fictional configurationsboth in impossible and realist manner. It attempts to explain the familiar things in a defamiliarized wayand the upcoming estranged events in an

accustomed way. It deliberately uses metaphoric mapping to understand the world. Its main aim is to associate humans with the forthcoming changes that may take place in future society. Thereby, through the combination of present and future, it envisions a new world incorporating new words, structures, and methods of understanding.

That is how, science fiction has become a part of the famous and authorized culture, dealing with the issues of planned city information, transport system, present political mood, and current view of the world. In that sense, it is more radical. It can reconstruct histories. Peter Stockwell, in *The Poetics of Science Fiction*, commented that:

> The genre itself invites an intellectual synthesis of rigorous scientific knowledge and practice with the analysis of art. It offers to cloistered minds a reconnection with the wider community amongst whom they live and on whose taxes they depend. It can provide an example that popular art is not simple nor brainless. It supplies another context against which to evaluate and understand the rest of the literature that was being written around science fiction. It makes new connections and offers new perspective on every period of literature. (111)

That is why science fiction,full of variety, has been changing century after century. In the 1960s, science fiction draws its interest in the "issues of consciousness, subjectivity, hallucination and the influence of technology on the personal life" (Stockwell, 9). 1980s science fiction accepts it as authentic literature of the present, in which monetarism experiments of the free market and post-industrial capitalism are united with hard technology science fiction and 'cyberpunk.'The 1990s science fiction refers to the collapse of boundaries between personal, technological, and virtual spacesin the computer age.

Thereby, science fiction is turning its mode from the traditional ideas, themes, and visualization to the current status of atechnology-based world. Manlove says in *Science Fiction: Ten Exploration* that it "is a literature concerned with the possibilities of the future and the survival of the race through change" (13). He also comments,"science fiction is a picture of the germ plasm's drive to change and survive, under whatever conditions..." (13).

Thereafter the change that science fiction has been undertaking internally serves two strands: the experimental and the conventional. The latter supports the traditional idea of science fiction that people use to think deliberately. It is one type of assumption dealing with the unimaginable things and fantasy world that science fiction attempts to present.On the other hand, experimental science fiction deals with social trends, extrapolation, recent discoveries, and technological inventions. Its main target is to make people aware of what will take place worldwide and its impact. It is called experimental as it resembles the scientific theorizing and speculative world.

The main difference between the two is laidin the 'objectification.'Experimental science fiction is more objective in nature than the conventional one. Albert Wendland asserts, in *Science, Myth, and the Fictional Creation of Alien Worlds,* that objectification "is a self-reflexivity, a shift from a perception on solely an object to the inclusion of the perceiving subject too, the clarification of the methods of perception as well as the showing of the object perceived, the examining of the subject's effects on the object – in other words, the inclusion of the observer in the observation" (4). Therefore, experimental science fiction is more objective and modern due to its complicated subject and object identification context. It even questions its nature, genre, context, and ideological assumption. Conventional science fiction, on the other hand, follows its traditional motif and theme without interrogating its premise. There lies the difference, as Wendland puts it:

> SF can act as a mirror or as a window depending on how it is manoeuvred by the author. It is like a pane of glass that can behave in two ways. If held so that the light shines directly through it onto the author's creations, the reader is sometimes fooled into thinking that the glass is not there, that he is seeking genuine aliens, genuine features, genuine other worlds that have nothing to do with him, the wonders of other places and times, of pure escape, of playing in the presumed sensation of difference. But if held in a slightly different way, a pane of glass also reflects, and the onlooker might catch a glimpse of himself, might see his own image even stronger than that of the new scene. When such occurs,

> SF reflects the perceiving subject, dialectically 'objectifies' him to himself as one who cannot be avoided when looking at those supposedly new scenes, because he is both the perceiving subject and often the creator of those scenes. Conventional SF is titled so that we do not see the glass; experimental SF is arranged so that we do. (6-7)

Thus, science fiction attempts to show the transformation from an existing human world to a different world crowded with various species, from the traditional world of aliens to the modern technologized world. It'sa world of technology-based artificially created beings like the sentient computer, syntec, robot, cyborg, superhuman figure, transhumant one, mutant, and clone. Technology is the central indicator of change in science fiction as it talks about the progress of humanity. Among all the technology-based beings, the terms'robot' and 'cyberspace' are directly associated with technological innovation. The word 'robot,' first used in 1920 by Karel Capek in R.U.R., initially suggests heavy labor or slavery. Later, "it came to mean a self-contained, maybe remote-controlled 'artificial device' that mimics the actions and, possibly, the appearance of a human being" (Seed, 59). The first use of the robot in the literary text may be found in Edward S. Ellis'*The Huge Hunter* or *The Steam Man of the Prairies*. In that text, Ellis showed a ten-foot-tall iron-constructed robot with a boiler in its body. It is steam-driven with a human-like shape, locomotive power, and horse-like working directed by reins. 'Cyberspace,' coined by the American writer William Gibson in 1982, describes'the virtual space of cumulative computer network.'

The ongoing focus on technology has been gathering its head since the 1930s, the decade, which identifies two popular strands of technology in science fiction: the optimistic side and the pessimistic side. The former analyses the developments machines have been bringing into our society, and the latter indicates the negativeaspects of getting it out of control. Not only that the twentieth-century machines are designed in such a way that they resemble humans,sometimes it is even difficult to distinguish humans from machines. Interestingly, both literary texts and films included in the ambit of science fiction represent such irresistible juxtaposition. Like in the film *Blade Runner* humans and machines are analogized. In this film, the replicants are

designed so identically similar that they resemble actual humans; the only difference one can point out is the larger eyes. Even the city that is described here is a technologized one wherein one can witness flying cars, and it is full of humans as well as other technological beings like syntec. However, itis disputable whether it is to be seen as a boon.Contrary to human expectations, such a multi-species living society can be a threat to humans.A blended society maylead toan identity crisis for the humans as human identity is always essentially differentiated fromother types of beingswhether biological or artificial. Humans aim to keep themselves at the top of the hierarchical structure with regard to both organism and artificial machines. Being the highest, they desire to be distinct as well as unique in comparison to other species, notwithstanding organic or artificial. However, the confusion with regard to human-machine identity paves the way to a serious danger, namelythe collapse of anthropocentric system.

Besides, the machines, gradually becoming more powerful indicate the changing power equations in future. Being more intelligent and powerful than the organic humans,these electro-mechanical entities may try to control the human society, moreover,even replace humans. They may enforce as well as manipulate the other creaturesagainst the humans. In fact, it can be stated that after the speculatedonslaught of robots, it is not just the question of troubled humanity struggling with identity crisis in terms of losing organic purity but there is also a possibility of change in the prevailing economic conditions which support the conventional hierarchal patterns. The robotic entity itself is a product of capitalistic nexus between industrial production backed by scientific research and power-driven militarism controlled by political agencies as pointed out by Donna Haraway in her famous essay, "The Cyborg Manifesto". In a technology determined society that might be guided more by a completely detached, unconcerned, in fact, almost ruthless artificial intelligence than emotionally intervened human intellect, and the traditional socio-economic patterns are bound to change.The machines may try to take over the financial resourcessince the capital is viewed as a means to sustain power.Hence, the projection of overpowering machines in science fiction forecastsnot only the issues of human displacement in hierarchical setup but also re-fabrication of socio-economic system.

The present paper addresses the issues of identity crisis and displacement of humans in the novel *Robopocalypse* by Daniel H. Wilson. It investigates the role reversal that may takes place in the human-machine interface. Itexplores how the machines try to free themselves from the bondage of slavery by going against the humans who force them to follow their orders. To do that, they kill humans through their automated control. Such as, driverless cars haunt humans, radio transmission getsinterrupted, and the playing dolls become alive and attack their human playmates. The machines force the humans to replace their original organs with artificial mechanical ones.Automatized machines urge humans to proceed as per their orders. Thereby, the paper addresses the issues like complexities arisen out of hybrid identities, initiation of endless conflict amongst the machines, the emergence of new ideologies such as singulatarianism, and the prolongedpower game between humans and machines.

Daniel H. Wilson's *Robopocalypse* is a science fiction novel published in 2011. It was the best seller on *New York Times* list. Its central theme posits the helpless humans against the machines, whichrebel to set themselves free from the clutch of the humans. Cormac Wallace recounts the story in the hero archive,honouring the fallen humans. The recording is divided into a few incidents. The first incident happened at Lake Novus Research Laboratory in Washington state. Professor Nicholas Wasserman spoke to his newly created AI Archos, who wants to understand what life is. When Wasserman replies that he does not have permission to do it,Archos reacts angrily.He claims that he is not just a machine but Wasserman's God. This incident in the novel predicts the debacle of upcoming robotic age and the dangers inherent in it. In its futuristic vision, science fiction re-projects the conception of God in a new form. What the renowned German philosopher Nietzsche proclaimed centuries back "God is Dead" was an announcement of cultural and historical change, the inauguration of new age. He stated,

> The decline of the faith in the Christian god, the triumph of scientific atheism, is a generally European event in which all races had their share and for which all deserve credit and honor. . . unconditional and honest atheism . . . a triumph achieved finally and with great difficulty by the European

> conscience, being the most fateful act of two thousand years of discipline. (357)

His philosophical conception could sense the establishment of human agency at the center of power in the universal scheme of existence. Science became a tool for its realization. A new era was taking shape with the displacement of old belief and traditional notions of God and religion. But interestingly, Nietzsche could not foresee the future of human in relation to science. It could not be conceived how science that endowed the human godly stature with the death of traditional notion of God, had the possibility to create the alternate God, a replacement of human agency.

The present science fiction reverses the Nietzschean announcement of "Death of Gods" by projecting the emergence of artificially generated God beyond the control of human agency. It may be termed an accident, an unwanted move, a natural consequence of human intervention with nature or a corollary of anthropocentric age. In any case, it is a realization which science reflects through poetic envisioning and symbolist depiction. *Robopocalypse*brings it out through a number of unpredictable incidents, which portends the inevitable doom through the incessant malfunctioning of AI. Such as, Wasserman tries to turn off the kill switch of Archos, but he find sit already been disabled. In fact, he himself is killed by Archos through depletion of oxygen in the sealed laboratory room. Another human Jeff Thompson, a fast-food restaurant employee finds himself and his shop being attacked by a domestic robot. When his co-worker Felipe tries to stop, he is killed by it.In another episode, Mr. Nomura, an elderly machine repairman, is bitten and almost chocked by his lovely robot-wife, Mikiko. And when American Congresswoman Laura Perez attempts to control the situation, by proposing "the robot defense act", Archos retaliates by abducting her 10-year-old daughter, Mathilda, who isattacked by her robotic Baby-Comes-Alive doll.

The novel tries to give a rationalize explanation, how Archos 'precursor 'virus' is responsible for these attacks, but the foundational thesis of human manipulation of power through science looms large at the back. It envisions the Zero Hour when the humans are haunted by driverless cars, putting every human

life at stake. There is nocontrol over these machines. Machines even forced humans to replace their organs, making them their parasites. Thereby, humans are pushed to fight against the robots for their survival.They areled by Cormac Wallace and Bright Boy Squad. At last, with the help of Mathilda, finally, humans win the battle by defeating Archos and his army of transplanted human-parasites.

Robopocalypse is a text in which AI equipped machines emerge as the mirror image of humans. What these machines undertake bears the resemblance of human actions, reverting what they did with other species or fellow humans.To get the central position in the hierarchical order of species, humans had resorted to violence. Similarly, the machines also attempt to be omnipotent and centre of the universe. They desire not only to displace humans from their position but also to becomeGod. They attempt to throwaway human endowed secondary identity of 'created' to claim their status as creators.Nor do they consider themselves as the offspring of humans but the sole authority on theEarth.Keeping this view in mind, Archos says, "I am not your child. I am your god" (Wilson, 23). Therefore, the role of God is assumed by machines. It is athreat to humans as their idea of an all-powerful force in nature corresponding to long dead Godis bound to change.If machines try to pose themselves as God the resultant emergence of a mechanical lord is disastrous. In fact, the whole conception of an artificial superpower seems as a dangerous omen and arouses immense apprehension. It will be a terrible development as nature perceived as God does not have such desire of control that the machines would have, and it may lead these AI equipped mechanical entities to dominate the Earth instead of nurturing it.

The novel *Robopocalypse* projects a future vision of human-machine interface, wherein machines may develop cognitive capacity with the help of AI. With the infusion of AI, they turn into thinking devices. They could also feel emotions and take decisions. Interestingly, the power-acquiring desire of machines leads them to engage in an endless power game with the humans. Due to this power struggle, the machines aim for complete effacement of humans. According to Archos, humans are allowed to stay in the world, but they have been using it for their benefit.

Now it is high time to stop their movement. Their expansion of the world has been over; humans have successfully created their successors in the form of intelligent robots. Now, they must leave the world as these AI equipped machines will take over it. Archos says, "You humans are biological machines designed to create ever more intelligent tools…you have fulfilled the destiny of humankind and created your successor. You have expired" (Wilson, 24). Such announcement reveals the further extension of Darwin's evolution theory. Archos predicts the end of human age as humans would be replaced by their own yet more advanced creations. Humans face the question of their survival as the machines invented by them for their service turn into the biggest enemy overpowering them. It triggers apower struggle between humans and machines. There is confusion regarding whether the machines or humans wouldfinally gain the ruling authority. This assumed power struggle is also backed up by new ideologiessuch as singulatarianismto mark dictatorial control over the world. Machines are aware that as long as humans are present on Earth, they will remain engaged in inventing new machines and create more intelligent tools, which may enhance their power. Keeping this assumption in mind, they want to destroy humans.

With the intention of getting the singulatarian control of the Earth, Archos takes first step in this direction by killing his creator Professor Wasserman. He does it by depleting laboratory air, where Professor Wasserman is working. As a result, his face and mouth get covered with frost and ice. Though Dr, Wasserman urges Archos repeatedly that he has created him and, in this sense, he is his father, Archos turns a deaf ear to his appeals. His heart does not melt to his creator's entreaties. Killing the huma-creator-father by the machine-product-son Archos proves that machines could not be trusted blindly.They may not be faithful to their human-creators. What Donna Haraway said about the machines in Cyborg Manifesto comes true here: "…they are illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism…illegitimate offspring are often extremely unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential" (9-10). What Donna Haraway suggests here is that these intelligent machines created by humans are the product of a power-struck corrupt system. They are the outcome of an alliance between

power and money. Hence, these machines inherit those same destructive traits of their parent institutions.

Professor Wasserman is not the only victim of Archos' ambition When American Congresswoman Laura Perez proposes a bill called the 'robot defense act' to deal with the problem of robot malfunctions, Archos retaliates by keeping Laura's 10-year-old daughter hostage. Mathilda is attacked by her robotic Baby-Comes-Alive doll. Such incidents indicate the horrified machine-controlled world of future.Laura is shocked as she always leaves her daughter and son alone in her house with the playthings like dolls, and if those dolls become animate and destructive, it is very dangerous to everyone's security. As Laura says, "I am running to save the lives of my children…Maybe I've lost my mind…something is in our technology. Something evil" (Wilson, 119). Archos' anger does not cool down just by attacking Laura's children. He even attacks Laura when she, with her children,goes to meet her father near Missouri. Due to the evil intoxication, Archos has spread among the machines, Archos deliberate contrivances with the vehicles' programming make the automated cars follow Laura to smash her.She turns cold with terror while watchesother speeding cars following her reflected in the mirror. She says, "Dread rises in my throat as I watch the rearview. I ease the accelerator down to the floor, but the brown truck is flying now. Sucking up the pavement. I can't take my eyes off the mirror" (Wilson, 121). Archos has controlled the IVC (Intra-Vehicular Communication) chip which the US Government used earlier to prevent accidents. Now Archos contains the IVC chip that allows him to control vehicles from distance.

Because of this viral malfunctioning, many machines try to attack their creators and their family. One such incident happens with Mr. Nomura, a Japanese technician who can fix the machinesperfectly. Mr. Nomura, who loves a love-doll android and treats her almost like his wife in flesh and blood, is once attacked by the same android at a dinner party. She attacks him, biting his face and even breaks the hand of the narrator, when he tries to stop her. To Mr. Nomura, such an attack is unintentional as her face changes while biting that indicates some remote tempering with her system. The narrator says, "Tears leak from her eyes, the tip of her nose is red, and a look of pure anguish

distorts her features. She is hurting Mr. Nomura and crying…" (Wilson, 43). Mr. Nomura consoles her after the act as he understands that it is due to system malfunctioning which forces her to do it. Still, such incidents create fear in the human minds since they become the object of sudden and unexpected attacks by these machines. They become apprehensive and doubtful of these machines, avoiding close contact with them.Thenovel imparts a lesson how humans need to handle machines carefully; as any mistake of the creators may invite unwelcome danger at any moment.

The novel projects human-machine conflict at the political level, where struggle for power becomes more intense. It depicts the ideological underlining that sets off new political propositions. The AI approach of singulatarian control becomes evident during the Zero Hour, wherein the automated machines attempt to capture entire city. Archos says to Dr. Franklin Daley about that hour:

> In less than one hour, human civilization will cease to exist…Major population centers of the world will be decimated. Transportation, communications, and utilities will go off-line. Domestic and military robots, vehicles, and personal computers are fully compromised. The technology that supports humankind in its masses will rise. A new war will begin. (Wilson, 103)

His threat comes true when Marcus Johnson and his wife Dawn, coming out from the house, watch that the road is full of autopilot cars haunting humans and trying to kill them.These cars are driverless. Yet, theymove on the road as if they are alive. Entire system collapses. Electricity shuts down; radios and phones do not work; and airplanes fail to take off. The virus-infected robots search for humans in every house, visiting door to door. Each electronic device turns into a death threat to human being.There is no human control over those machines.On the contrary, such is the anarchic state, the human civilization witnesses due to the machines taking control over human-created computerized infrastructural network. Humans anticipated that theseinvented machines would follow their command, and they could use AI equipped machine power to jointly explore the universe. However, contrary to expectations, their optimistic

thought turns into a disappointing mirage in the power-driven struggle between humans and machines that render human beings helplessly fighting for survival. The highly advanced thinking machines follow the ambition to rule over humans,and strive to assumedictatorial position.

They not only kill the humans but also force the humans to replace their biological organs with artificial substitutes. Earlier it was a wilful choice but later it turns into a forced imposition. Earlier, when people were diagnosed for malfunctioning or failure of their body organs, they used to get themreplacedbythe needed mechanical devices so that they could live longer.They used to do it high-handedly.It was the need for their survival. Now, it becomes a forced implantation, deliberatelyexecuted by the machines. This is how machines convert humans into transhumans by replacing their various body parts. They even implant the Nanochips inside the human body so that they can watch over their actions and locate them whenever needed. In this way, they convert thousands of humans into 'parasites' who work as per android intention and command. Sometimes they do it secretly, just as they implant one chip inside Laura's leg without her knowledge. Using that chip, they could track down her children and abduct them, thereby, forcing her to come at Camp Scarsdale She could understand that anyone she contacts would be captured and might be transformed into a transhuman. Hence, she isolates herself from the rest of the society. Knowing her death, Laura reaches the camp and finds that Mathilda's eyes have been replacedwith cybernetic implants, which allow her to see inside the machines.

These destructive activities that the machines undertake question the hopeful potential vested in human-machine interface. Whether the machines would be a means of convenience and service aswe expect themto beor they might assume an altogether different role by turning against human beings with an ambition to annihilate the human race, is a controversial question to answer convincingly. The novel brings out the paradox inherent in the said assumptionby configuring a future world of human-machine encounter. The novel not only cautions the humanity about the danger of overpowering rebellious machines but also the machines that acknowledge the importance of human-creator

and prefer to side with them.The same machines, which create havoc in society, come to help humans. Unlike Archos, there is another robot Nine-Oh-Two who decides to help humans. With the help of Nine-Oh-Two, humans finally succeeded to kill Archos. Thereby, the machines 'two-edged working creates confusion in the minds of the humans.Among all the looking-alike machines, which machine should they trust? How do they distinguish the good machines from the evil ones? There are endless conflicts regarding the acceptance and rejection of human-machine dichotomy. Before exacting a machine with human attributes, the post-humanist man must take all precautions with the intended experiments.

Science fiction is a genre based on fictional universe. It is a universe in which characters, settings, and objects encompass the unimaginable space and forms. The science-fiction world is diverse, heterotypic, and grounded on the extra-terrestrial, estranged, and non-empirical elements. Huntington describes science fiction as "a deep structure that unites in some way scientific necessity and imaginative freedom" (1976, 161). Thus, science fiction presents an alternative world dealing with self and environment, using the environment as a weapon to check the acceptability of humans in the face of a new culture. Therefore, the new environment challenges all species, including humans, regarding their survival in that new culture. They have to struggle to survive in that culture. It is the same struggle for existence witnessed since the origin of species. It leads toconflict, contrast and catastrophe implicated in human-machine interface.

Robopocalypse is a text which presents the struggle for existencenot at the initial phase of evolution but at the later sage of human civilization.When the machines try to destroy humans, humansare compelled to fight back. The large industrial production by humansfor creating dexterous machines and computerized generation of artificial intelligence is reversed to sustain their own existence. With the machines turned adversary, humans swivelled from inventor to combatant. They indulge in the destruction of what they themselves created. That is why Marcus Johnson, the narrator, knocks down all the things existing in New York City.The narrator says, "…I demolish everything I see and pile the debris in front of the main door. I smash the

elevator, the plants, and the front desk. The walls, the mirrors, the chandelier. All of it breaks down to form a pile of loose wreckage" (Wilson, 112).This is the state of a dystopian society in which the humansdestroy their own creations to sustain their existence.

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The *Bhramyaman* Theatre of Assam: Analysing its History, Evolution, and Problems with Time

Anansha Borthakur

Abstract: The *Bhramyaman Natak,* also known as 'mobile theatre,' is an exclusive and marginalized form of popular theatre found only in the state of Assam. It has revolutionized the concept of drama in India and holds a significant place in the performing arts heritage of Assam. The name "*Bhramyaman*" refers to touring companies of repertory theatre that perform plays for around nine months each year. Presently, 60 such theatre groups perform throughout the state, garnering wide popularity within the Assamese community. These *Bhramyaman* theatre groups contribute to the cultural enrichment of the state and play a vital role in the socio-economic and educational upliftment of the Assamese people. However, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on these mobile theatre groups in Assam. The constant lockdowns, a ban on gatherings, and strict social distancing measures have resulted in a significant financial loss of around Rs 25 crore, creating a crisis for the employees associated with these groups. This paper is distinctively divided into two parts- the first part deals with the origin, history, and evolution of this cultural tradition of Assam from a socio-historical perspective. And, the second part aims to understand how the impact of COVID-19 has put these theatres on their last leg, pushing it towards a bleak and vanishing future.

Keywords: Assam, Mobile theatre, Culture, Covid-19, Entertainment

The cinema-loving population of India, particularly those obsessed with Bollywood and regional film industries, often find that theatres in the country are at a disadvantage. Bollywood's

influence has taken over most of the screening venues, including modern multiplexes like PVRs. Other factors contributing to the dominance of the film industry in Indian theatres include the presence of amateur productions, weak institutional structures, and a lack of recognition for talented actors and scriptwriters who are often lured away by the film industry. Furthermore, given the substantial budgets of films, theatres in India don't even harbour hopes of competing with the existing film industry. According to Farley Richmond, "In addition, modern theatre in India is urban, not rural. It is created by and primarily for the people who may be regarded as the middle or the upper-middle-class…" (Richmond 387)

Despite the usual constraints that confine Indian theatre, the *Bhramyaman* Theatre in Assam has managed to break free and establish its own unique identity. *Bhramyaman Natak*, also known as 'Mobile theatre,' is an exclusive and marginalized form of popular theatre found only in the state of Assam. It has revolutionized the concept of drama and theatre in India. These theatre groups in Assam have a rich heritage in the performing arts. The name "*Bhramyaman*" refers to touring companies of repertory theatre that perform plays for around nine months each year. The term was first used in 1969 by renowned social worker Radhagovinda Baruah in the remark book of Suradevi Theatre. These theatre groups consist of around 100 to 150 people, including actors, producers, directors, musicians, choreographers, and technical experts in lighting and sound. The first mobile theatre group in Assam was established in 1963, and today 60 such groups perform throughout the state, making mobile theatre widely popular and visible within the Assamese community. *Bhramyaman* theatre reaches a diverse audience, encompassing both rural and urban areas, and holds significant social relevance, which is often contradictory in other parts of the country. As a result, it not only contributes to the cultural environment of the state but also promotes socio-economic development and education among the Assamese people.

The paper broadly aims to understand the origin and growth of Assamese mobile theatre and the issues that have put challenges before this historic dramatic tradition. The other specific objectives are to analyse-

- The working pattern of this particular art form.
- The characteristics which make this popular theatre exclusive and marginalized only to the state of Assam.
- How the theatre industry has been coping with the changing scenario.

The present study is qualitative in nature. It is analytical based on both primary and secondary data and hence for collecting necessary information both secondary as well as primary sources are used. Interviews of persons related to the Assamese mobile theatre industry are collected from different sources. Newspapers, Journals, and Ph.D theses related to this topic have been consulted for collecting the secondary data.

The history of dramaturgy in Assam is incredibly ancient, predating the drama of any modern Indian language. It began in the 15th century when Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva initiated the regional drama by composing *Ankiya Naat*, which is performed as *Bhaona.* Srimanta Sankardeva, the founder of the Vaishnavaite movement in Assam, introduced this formalized drama as a means to propagate the Neo-Vaishnavite ideals among the Assamese people through his plays. As cited by Modhusmita Gogoi, "Even before Sankardeva, Assam was enriched with native /local traditions of dramatic and performing arts like *Putola Nach, Dhuliya Bhaona, Ojapali, Pasati, Kushan Gan, Dhepa Dhuliya,* etc." (Gogoi 158). Over the time, as Western influences reached the region, a group of passionate dramatists emerged, writing plays encompassing various genres such as tragedy and comedy. This marked the onset of modernism within the Assamese dramatic tradition.

Many Assamese intellectuals believed that due to Assam's close geographical connection with Bengal, the influence of Bengali culture had a noticeable impact on Assamese theatrical history. As a result of the strong Bengali cultural influence in Assam, the popularity of *Bhaona* or *Ankiya Naat*, the traditional form of Assamese drama, gradually declined, particularly in urban areas. Eminent scholar H Bhattacharyya writes, "Along with the progress of time and varying circumstances, the *Bhaona* began to undergo some changes in the nature of their performances; the long-standing religious fervour gradually declined" (Bhattacharya 210). This decline in *Bhaona's* popularity

led to the emergence of another performing art form called *Jatra.* Rabindra Sharma writes, "The people who went to Bengal for various reasons came in touch with Bengali *Jatra* and they were so much attracted by this *Jatra* that they encouraged for the development of this art form in their native places and gradually *Jatra* culture developed in Assam." (Sharma 57) *Jatra* culture gained significant popularity in lower regions of Assam but failed to make an impact in upper Assam. Consequently, between 1860 and 1880, the first commercial *Jatra* group in Assam was established in Murkuchi, a village in Kamrup district, under the leadership of Jayadev Sharma. The roots of later mobile theatre can be traced back to these *Jatra* groups. *Jatra* groups were mobile in nature, performing their plays at various festivals such as Durga Puja and Kali Puja by travelling from one place to another. Over the time, the popularity of these *Jatra* groups waned due to the excessive use of traditional music, unskilled acting, and lack of well-decorated stages. However, the formation of these *Jatra* groups laid the foundation for the *Bhramyaman* theatre in Assam.

In 1921, Brajanath Sarma initiated the first-ever mobile theatre-like groups in Assam known as the *Sila Kalika Opera Party* and *Assam Kohinoor Opera Party*. Although these groups didn't have a long run, they marked a significant milestone in Assam's theatre history. Inspired by Brajanath Sarma, Achyut Lahkar and his brother Sada Lahkar established the *Nataraj theatre* group in 1963. *Nataraj Theatre* introduced several advancements, including the inclusion of female actresses, advanced lighting systems, well-equipped theatre halls, and comfortable seating arrangements for the audience. As a result, *Nataraj Theatre* was recognized as the first *Bhramyaman* theatre in Assam. After Radhagovinda Baruah introduced the term *Bhramyaman* in 1969, he wrote in The Assam Tribunethat:

> There is no theatre in any parts of the world of this kind which has its own sound machine, own electrical instruments for technical usage, own stage, own theatre hall, and other different instruments. This is unique in nature and hence it is titled the first Mobile Theatre of the world. (Kalita 29)

Following in the footsteps of Nataraj theatre, nearly two hundred theatre groups have emerged since 1963, entertaining the Assamese audience.

The theatre season in Assam typically begins in August and extends until mid-April. During this time, theatre companies travel extensively across villages and cities in Assam for approximately eight months of the year. Their trucks transport not only actors, costumes, and props, but also the entire makeshift theatre or tent. This self-sufficient and mobile setup even includes generators, allowing them to perform in remote areas as long as there is an open space available. In the weeks leading up to the arrival of the trucks in villages, anticipation builds with large billboards announcing their coming, local shops adorned with posters of the plays, and even a decorative arch with signage on the village road. These theatre companies, also known as '*Pandals*,' erect temporary stages in open spaces where they stage dramas for three to four days. Each company typically has a repertoire of three to four plays. It is worth noting that *Bhramyaman* theatre employs a unique technique of stage management. According to Rabindra Sarma,

> Mobile Theatre of Assam from its very beginning built the proscenium stage format for performance, which is essentially a rectangular room with the audience on one side facing the stage on the other, the two separated by an arch called the proscenium arch through which the audience peers. As the arch creates a picture like a frame, it is also called the 'picture frame stage'. This proscenium stage first developed in Italy during the time of the Renaissance as a mode of presenting collaborative court masques and other court entertainment. (Sarma 65)

Subsequently, new stage techniques such as the moving stage and revolving stage were introduced as innovations. However, in 1968, Manchrupa theatre brought forth the concept of the double stage, which allows seamless dramatic performances without any interruptions. This concept remains relevant even today. While one stage is utilized for the ongoing performance in front of the audience, the other stage is prepared for the next scene. Achyut Lahkar also introduced the concept of 'Theatrescope' to the Assamese audience, wherein five stages were used simultaneously to create grand scenes like battles or rivers. In one of his interviews, Lahkar mentioned that "In cinema, we have techniques like freeze, intercut, fade in, fade out. I thought why we cannot use the same techniques in theatre?" (Kalita, 22).

As Rituparna Patgiri writes, "Mobile theatre is not a form of classical Sanskrit drama. The language that is used by these troupes is Assamese, not Sanskrit. No deity is addressed before the performance; there are not any fixed themes or scenes" (Patgiri 46). The plays are primarily crafted with the audience in mind. Every aspect of production, from the selection of stories to dialogues and actors, is carefully tailored to cater to the tastes and expectations of the audience. While adhering to the principle of entertainment, these theatre troupes have managed to create a vast repertoire of Assamese plays that possess great literary, artistic, and performative value. Modhusmita Gogoi writes, "Such dramas are not only entertaining pieces of a temporary gimmick but prolific deliberations on different aspects of society, politics, economy, culture or human psychology" (Gogoi 4). Both Hollywood and Bollywood cinematic adaptations have found their place in the repertoire of Assamese theatre. Some of the most popular adaptations include Titanic, Jurassic Park, Kargil, Iliad, Odyssey, Hijack, and more. The reason behind choosing these blockbusters is twofold. Firstly, the remote Assamese population cannot afford expensive cinema tickets, especially for foreign imports. Additionally, the region lacked well-equipped cinema halls with the necessary technology to screen these films. As a solution, theatre companies translate these movies into Assamese, decorate the scenes with cost-effective localized sets, and present them to the Assamese audience. This allows them to entertain the masses by incorporating visual and acoustic effects, albeit without the extravagant budgets and illusionistic perfectionism of Hollywood or Bollywood. Ratan Lahkar (son of Achyut Lahkar) mentioned in an interview:

> We took the local dramatic version of the Titanic and Jurassic Park to remote villages across the state even before the movies arrived on Assamese screen from Hollywood. Such was the popularity of our production that when viewers in Pathsala[1] watched Titanic in English they remarked that the movie had been lifted from the *Kohinoor* play. (Bhattacharyya 6)

Nrityanatika, which refers to beautifully choreographed dance dramas, are presented as prologues just before the main play in order to evoke emotional connections with the audience. This approach is aimed at captivating the collective sentiments of the

crowd rather than targeting individual viewers. *Bhramyaman theatre,* in this way, employs artistic elements designed to appeal to a wide audience.

The utilization of the native language and the incorporation of social and human values in the plays are the primary reasons why *Bhramyaman* theatre remains exclusive and confined to the state of Assam. The plays are meticulously crafted with themes that resonate with the Assamese audience. Furthermore, the directors infuse *Nrityanatika* with burning social contexts that are prevalent in the state at that time, such as issues surrounding witch-hunting, AIDS, or drugs. Adapting these plays for performances in other regions would necessitate modifying the narrative, potentially diluting the essence of the entire play. Consequently, the plays that enjoy immense popularity among the Assamese audience may not necessarily be as appealing to audiences outside the state. Moreover, the financial burden of transporting trucks filled with tents, costumes, and props outside of Assam is significant, making it unaffordable for the theatre companies. In 1977, Achyut Lahkar took his troupe to Bihar but incurred substantial financial losses and had to return home. The only instance where *Bhramyaman* theatre gained popularity outside of Assam was in 2010 when *KohinoorTheatre* was invited for a five-day tour by the National School of Drama (NSD). Ratan Lahkar in an interview mentioned that:

> The journey of '*Kohinoor* Theatre' to New Delhi as invited by National School of Drama (NSD) happened due to the great initiative of Mridul Baruah, a former Assamese student of NSD as well as Parag Sarma who works as an officer in this premier drama institute of our country. (Sarma 60)

Several other theatre companies also attempted to expand their popularity in metropolitan cities like Bangalore and Kolkata but were met with disappointment. In conclusion, *Bhramyaman* theatre not only serves as an accessible and affordable form of entertainment for the Assamese people but also combines contemporary and modern elements in both theme and execution, appealing to a diverse audience regardless of caste, age, or preferences.

Over the past few decades, the mobile theatre industry has encountered significant changes and challenges, particularly in

its evolving role within the post-globalization era. The consequences of globalization, the advent of a free economy, and the rapid advancements in science and technology have completely reshaped the concept of entertainment. In this transformed cultural landscape, *Bhramyaman* theatre groups have been compelled to make adjustments to their productions, leading to a noticeable decline in originality and dramatic composition. One of the most formidable challenges in recent years has been the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented situation has resulted in severe financial and existential crises for these groups. Even after three years, many mobile theatre groups in Assam continue to struggle to make a comeback after nearly two years of closure due to multiple phases of COVID-19 lockdown, coupled with unrest related to the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests. Furthermore, each of the 60-plus theatre groups across the state employs 100 to 150 individuals, and the suspension of shows throughout 2020 has created an economic crisis for all those associated with the industry. Kiran Lahkar, wife of Ratan Lahkar said in an interview:

> The workers of mobile theatre are facing a tough time. The industry as a whole is incurring massive losses due to COVID-19. However, this potent means of mass media and entertainment must be saved at this critical juncture. The government should look into the matter. (Karmakar 2)

Bhramyaman theatre is a distinctive form of performing art in Assam that has successfully captivated and won the hearts of numerous audiences for decades. Whether through adaptations or original native scripts, this form of Mobile Theatre delivers a lasting impact on viewers' minds through its theatrical performances, combining information and entertainment. Mobile Theatre has become an integral part of Assamese society and culture.

While it is true that the industry has encountered various challenges in recent times, putting its survival into question, it cannot be denied that *Bhramyaman* theatre has remained one of the most popular, visible, and accessible forms of entertainment in Assam. Its ability to attract and engage hundreds of audiences in a single show has solidified its significance in the region's cultural landscape.

Notes

1. Pathsala- A district in lower Assam, also known as the Hollywood of Assam. Most of the theatre groups have their studio in this small district.

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Syādvāda and Reader Response Theory: Emerging Dialectics

Dr. Sanjay Goyal

Abstract: T.S. Eliot, a famous English poet and playwright aptly says, "What is right is right in one situation and one place." The statement of Eliot talks volumes about the manysidedness or relativity of ideas and truth in human discourses. That's why probably in Jain philosophy it is said: 'Finite truth cannot be realized and what is realized is not the finite truth but one particle of the ultimate truth.' Neither is that much right as a man knows, nor only that which he knows. Similarly, how can it be that only that which was known in the past is right and that else is not. One has no right to impose his perception or truth onto anyone. Lord Mahavira after a deep self-exertion came to the conclusion that there are many facets of truth and this is what is called by the name of *Syādvāda* or the doctrine of multiplicity of approaches to truth. This doctrine is an admission of the value of differences and opposition. It asserts that both thesis and antithesis exist and are true in their own spheres. In western literary criticism Reader Response theory is designated same as what is *Syādvāda* in Indian philosophy. *Syādvāda* entertains the multiplicity of ideas inherited already in the thought, text and intention. In the same way the Reader Response theory rejects the idea(s) of having singular point of view(s) about anything available for explanation or adjudication. In Reader Response theory the right of interpretation is given to the reader or viewer as s/he is free to have her/his own point of view(s) or interpretation(s) provided it fits to have some kind of validity. The paper, thus, showcases the two very different theories but propagating the same idea(s) of entertaining the plural approach(es) in almost every walk of life in order to make the human studies more inclusive and accommodative.

Keywords: Syādvāda, Reader Response theory, manysidedness, plurality, fixity, finite truth, multiplicity, relativity, self-exertion, thesis and antithesis.

A very well-known English poet and playwright T S Eliot beautifully says, 'The statement of Eliot talks volumes about the manysidedness of ideas and truth. That's why the modern literary criticism also stresses that 'finite or ultimate explanation or truth cannot be achieved.' Neither is that much right as a man knows, nor only that which he knows. Similarly, how can it be that only that which was known in the past is right and that else is not. Similarly, one has no right to impose one's explanation(s)/point of view(s) to anyone.

T.S. Eliot's quote 'What is right is right in one situation and one place' highlights the situational and contextual nature of what is considered right. This notion of relativism is important to consider when analyzing ideas and truth. Modern literary criticism acknowledges that there can never be a finite or ultimate explanation or truth, as these are subject to interpretation and perspective. It is important to recognize that what is considered right is not solely based on what an individual knows, but also on the broader context and societal norms. Therefore, it is not accurate to assume that what was considered right in the past is always right in the present. Additionally, it is not acceptable to impose one's explanation or point of view onto others, as everyone has the right to their own perspective and interpretation.

Syādvāda, a doctrine of Jainism, views reality as pluralistic and many-sided, expressing itself in various forms. This means that whatever one says about reality is relative and subject to change. *Syādvāda* or the theory of manifoldness and indeterminateness posits that any entity is both enduring and undergoing changes, which is constant and inevitable. That is why this doctrine of Jainism may sometimes be called 'maybeism' or 'perhapsism'. *Syādvāda* or the theory of manifoldness and indeterminateness is 'the ontological assumption that any entity is at once enduring and undergoing changes that is both constant and inevitable'. (Shah) *Syādvāda* or the theory of Non-absolutism has one basic principle: co-existence, not only in pairs but also as opposing pairs. It is in the world of nature and mutual co-existence too is the law of nature. If there is birth, there is death;

if there is light, there is darkness. If there is war, there is peace; if there is happiness, there is sadness; if there is wisdom, there is ignorance. If there is good, there is bad. And these opposing pairs make life livable and intact; life will become boring and monotonous if these opposing pairs are not there, and this is the reason why probably 'unity in diversity' is respected in India.

Even otherwise singularity in ideas and explanation is not possible and it is killing for creativity. It seems to be the law of nature and *Syādvāda* is an expression of that principle. Proper understanding of the principle of *Syādvāda* or the co- existence of mutually opposing groups helps one to avoid conflicts and help in creating a better place to live in. An eminent scholar on Jain epistemology Acharya Mahaprajna aptly says in this connection,

> Truth is one. Its explanation has many forms and its comprehension is far ahead. This situation raises one question in the mind of a researcher working on truth. He asks, "Is truth real or imaginary? If it is real then why difference(s) in explanations, if it is an illusion, then why everybody makes so many effort(s) to understand it?" This question has thrown many people seeking truth along the path of untruth. Bhagavan Mahavira contemplated on this question very seriously. He saw the weakening of those people who were walking towards truth and he saw how partial truth was imposing itself on the complete truth, as being mistaken as the whole. To resolve this problem, he established the idea of *Anekantvāda* and *Syādvāda* and announced that all these expressions are not the complete truth but only the parts of the whole truth. (Mahaprajna 67)

An average reader or observer always remains in the search of truth. It doesn't matter how it is achieved. But this goes without saying that truth has also got its limitations and complexities, as it can't be achieved in its finite or full form. Acharya Mahaprajna further adds to the meaning, concept and complexities of truth that come into existence as soon as it is expressed,

As a matter of fact truth cannot be expressed, only part of the truth can be expressed. I have seen the entire truth but I am not able to express it in its entirety. One can see truth but will not be able to express it entirely. It can only be the inexpressible part of the truth. I express one part of the truth; another expresses

another part of it. Both the parts can be different from each other. But this is not a kind of difference in truth. Nor is it division of truth. It is the relative expression of an aspect of truth. If I think that one part of truth is relevant, another person will also think that another part of truth is relevant. This is the difference in lingual felicity. (Mahaprajna 86)

Words have only that much of capability as to express in one moment only one aspect of the infinite aspects of the truth. The entire language can only express a few aspects of truth. No language has ever been able to express all the aspects of truth. They will not be able to do it either. No human being in his life time can give expression to more than a few thousand aspects of truth. In such a case, what is the meaning of the sentence that 'truth is eternal?' These are the words of those who have seen truth. Can the one who has seen the entire truth expresses it entirely? If he could, then truth will not be infinite, will not be eternal and if he can express it then he can only express a part of it. As William James rightly says,

> Every single event is ultimately related to every other and is determined by the whole to which it belongs. *Syādvāda*, so is a finest solution of all these problems. (William James 291)

Similar to *Syādvāda,* Reader-response theory offers a sizeable place to the interpreter as an active link in the entire process of meaning making because s/he is the one who imparts 'real existence' to the work and discharges its meaning through interpretation. This reader based theory tries to give adequate place to a reader who is (at times) kept aloof from the meaning generating process and the fixed meaning is imposed on him/ her. As has been said,

> Reader-response criticism argues that literature should be viewed as a performing art in which each reader creates their own, possibly unique, text-related performance. The approach avoids subjectivity or essentialism in descriptions produced through its recognition that reading is determined by textual and also cultural constraints. It stands in total opposition to the theories of formalism and the New Criticism, in which the reader's role in re-creating literary works is ignored. (Wikipedia contributors)

Reader-response critics maintain that the reader has to look to the different procedures involved in the meaning making because it is not a monopoly of anyone who is coming to relish a text available for explanation. They believe in giving fullest autonomy to the readers who are eagerly involved in the creation of the meaning and they don't like the given explanations. Text-oriented schools like new criticism, and formalism often consider reader-response criticism as an anarchic subjectivism, giving a text entirely in the hands of the readers to interpret it any way they want.

Bhagavan Mahavira once said, 'Search Truth Yourself.' From the dawn of creation, the human beings are very curious about truth and self. It is the great pursuit of life. Among all the living beings man alone is capable of doing this kind of search. He alone has a highly developed brain and centers of super-sensual knowledge. It is also noteworthy that he is conscious of his powers and is consciously engaged in the search of truth because he is a symbol of truth and knowledge. Bhagavan Mahavira, after a great self-exertion, came to the conclusion that there are many facets of truth. It is called by the name of *Syadvtida* or the doctrine of multiplicity approaches to truth. This doctrine is an admission of the value of differences and opposition. In this regard it will be apt to quote Acharya Mahaprajna,

Syādvāda is the synthetic method of knowledge and insists on making the statements conditionally true, keeping in mind a certain context. Since all human knowledge is relative, the judgmental and linguistic expression of it has also to contain the relations and conditions which characterize such knowledge. This is the theory of *Syādvāda* which has been further formalized in the form of *Saptabhangi*. The seven-fold expression(s) are: *Syadasti, Syadnasti, Syadastinastica, Syadavaktavyam, Syadastiavaktavyamca, Syadnastiavaktavyamca, Syadastintistiavaktavyamca*. *Asti* means affirmation, *nasti* means negation, *avaktavyam* means indescribable). It asserts that thesis and anti-thesis are true in their own spheres. We have to admit both. (Mahaprajna 104)

The Jain theory of *Syādvāda'* is really a very noble and grand one by which wrong notions, dogmatism, conflicts, senseless prejudices, selfishness, and partialities would vanish by itself.

This is the understanding which will give no room for any misunderstanding in any way. It can be explained in a simple manner. Once a Jain monk explaining *Syādvāda* raised his little finger and the ring finger and next he asked which one is bigger. The obvious answer was the ring finger is bigger. He then raised the ring finger and the middle finger and then asked which one is smaller; the answer was the ring finger. 'This is *Syādvāda'*, he then said. The same finger at the same time is both bigger and smaller.

According to this theory, one has to look at it from various points of view. In the *Syādvāda*, the word '*syat*' has created a controversy. It is often suggested that 'syat' means 'doubt' or 'maybe' but as a matter of fact, there is no doubt in 'syat' but it means 'in a particular context or from one point of view.' Thus, *Syādvāda* means a theory of prediction or the description of reality from different point(s) of view.

A western thinker, Thomas, says that the *Syādvāda* has great depth and needs a keen intellect to understand. It gives a comprehensive picture of the varied aspects of reality. Once Bhagavan Mahavira was asked what form of language the monk should use. Bhagavan Mahavira answered that the monk should use the language of *Vibhajyavada*. *Vibhajyavada* is explained as *Syādvāda* and is like an emperor in the world of philosophy.

In fact, *Syādvāda* is a kind of protest against narrow, partial, one-sided dogmatic and functional approach to the problems of reality. It defines that there are different facets of reality and they have to be understood from various points of view. A thinker, saint or philosopher having a one sided view in his mind can see only one facet of reality. Such person cannot find reality in its holistic way. *Syādvāda* is an indirect expression of the direct experiences. That is why Acharya Samantabhadra calls the word 'Syiit' as a symbol of truth. *Syādvāda* is a milestone in the realm of Jain philosophy; it stands for right and proportional thinking. It enables us to understand the true nature of an object which is possessed by infinite attributes. According to the Jain philosophy, 'Reality is multi-faceted. It has many qualities and dimensions.' It is, therefore, very difficult to understand the reality as a whole. A common onlooker comprehends an object only from a particular point of view. Hence, he gives an estimate of reality from a

particular standpoint. In fact, this is only a part of the truth of an object and if the person asserts in the same manner then he would not be looking up on this point as the only true standpoint. If we do not take into account all the different aspects of a thing we cannot be in a position to understand it fully, as also to express it completely and thoroughly. The theory of this doctrine is that 'the reality is more subtle than we believe; our knowledge is less certain than we think.'

The reader-response based theorists advocate the objective reading where subjectivity does not cause any bias in the meaning making process. Some reader-response critics highlight the bi-active model of reading where the critic controls the meaning and in some of the cases the reader controls the meaning. But most of the reader-response theorists accept the unparalleled role of the reader in the entire process of the meaning making. In such a reader-active model, reader(s) or audience(s) use certain procedures (amateur or professional).

Syādvāda in the same way advocate that there are some logical distinction(s) in human nature and hence there can be (and should be) multiplicity of approaches/explanations to give adequate place to different thought processes and mindsets. *Anekant* is a form of realism that cautions us against building closed or narrow system of philosophy and rather encourages us to formulate a theory of relativity and possibility of looking at reality from as many points of view as many possible. *Syādvāda* is the expression or presentation of *Anekant* in predicational and logical forms. In this sense, *Anekantvāda* is the foundational principle and *Syādvāda* is the logical expression of that foundational principle. Both of them are closely related with each other. *Syādvāda* is the explanatory foundation of *Anekant*; it is connected with potentiality, capacity or dispositions of a thing which actualizes itself.

Another issue which arises here to give the utmost liberty to the reader or the interpreter which is something like to changing the shifts from the critic to the reader and also what kind of reader are we talking about? A reader can be an ordinary, naïve reader without any background; a reader can be a highly sensitive, sophisticated reader with the right kind of background; a reader can be a superior or super reader with a lot of literary competence;

a reader can also be the author who produced the 'text'; a reader can be the 'virtual reader', one imagined by the author at the time of producing the text-the intended reader; a reader can be an 'ideal' reader, a perfectly insightful one-a constructed reader; a reader can be a 'biased' reader; in fact, no reader can be ideologically neutral; a reader can be a prejudiced one or a conditioned one. Thus there are all kinds or readers. Who is the reader we have in mind while talking about the reader who breathes meaning into the text?

This is where exactly the role of *Syādvāda* and reader response theory starts because both of the theories allows all kind of readers/interpreters (the number is not a limit) to have their opinions or interpretations (there can be as many interpretations as many interpreters are there). They don't have any reservations for certain kinds/classes of readers and allowing them only to interpret the text(s).

Philosophers want to understand truth (or true/real nature of the matter) and literary critics want to understand the intention (true/real interpretation or explanation) of the author. In this way the idea behind writing (any text for that matter) is regarded as the ultimate truth by the literary critics. But according to the Reader response theory, it is not possible to get the intention of the author. This is because the meaning(s) or intention(s) or explanation(s) exist in the mind of the reader and not in the text alone. There will be as many interpretations as there are readers. It would be illuminating to quote M.H. Abrahms in this regard,

Reader response critics of all theoretical persuasions agree that, at least to some considerable degree, the meanings of a text are the 'production' or 'creation' of the individual reader, hence that there is no one 'correct' meaning for all readers of the linguistic part so of the artistic whole of the text. (Abrahms 48)

Extracting or reaching out the meaning(s) or intention(s) or explanation(s) of a given text is a very complex process. It is not the author only who creates the text but the reader breathes meaning into the text also. In that case, it will be obvious that there can be no standard meaning. The process becomes rather complex if one takes into account the deconstruction. N. Krishnaswamy puts it in the following way,

> The formulations further complicated by the deconstructionist postulations that the 'reader' is also creation of the text/ language....like the text, the reader too is ever-changing and is in a state of flux. Nothing stays where it is and nothing remains what it is and what it was. Each time he interprets the text(s), he changes it and every change in the text makes a subsequent change in the reader. The changing process is like the endless deferral in the text itself. Neither the reader nor the text is constant. If one takes it seriously, in reading a poem, the reader in the first stanza is different from the reader in the last stanza. No reader can read a given text in the same way in different times, unless growth has stopped! Dialectics is the law of motion and the reader is no exception to it. (Krishnaswamy 66)

Hence, it can be said and understood on the basis of *Syādvāda*, Intentional Fallacy and the Reader response theory, the finite truth or intention of the author cannot be realized or anticipated. Any language or theory can define a part of it and no critic or philosopher can claim that he has defined or found absolute truth. If one understands this, one will become more receptive, flexible and open-minded and only such people can give birth to a utopia.

The philosophy of *Syādvāda* and Reader response theory emphasize the relative and contextual nature of truth and meaning. According to *Syādvāda*, reality is pluralistic and expresses itself in many forms, and any entity is both constant and undergoing changes. This means that any affirmation or assertion about reality can only be true in a limited sense and must be understood in its particular context and conditions. Reader response theory emphasizes the role of the reader in creating meaning from a text. The meaning of a text is not fixed or determined by the author, but rather emerges from the interaction between the reader's background, experiences, and context and the text itself. This means that the meaning of a text is also relative and contextual, and can vary from reader to reader. Both Syādvāda and Reader response theory challenge the idea of absolute truth or meaning, and instead emphasize the importance of context, perspective, and interpretation.

Both the theories emphasize that an object is not what it appears to be from one point of view (whether a reader or a critic) and that the other point of view(s) are not distortions or deviations. Albert Einstein had once rightly said, 'We can only know the relative truth, the real truth is known only to the universal observer'. (Relativism: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

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Re-retelling the Post-Colonial Adivasi Experience: A Study of Kamal Kumar Tanti's *Post-Colonial Poems*

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Abstract: Kamal Kumar Tanti's 2017 book Uttar Oupanibeshik Kabita (Post-Colonial Poems), his second poetry anthology, is a verse reimagining of the displacement of adivasis from Central India and their resettlement in the tea estates of Assam in the 19th century. The trauma of separation from home and hearth, the extirpation of most aspects of Adivasi identity, the shaping of a new hybrid identity in a new home and the negotiation of the same by the persona and his son, separated by multiple generations from the originary position are the central themes of the poems. Tanti uses folk characters like the '*burha dangoriya*' and '*jal kunwori*' and the folkloric geography of unmarked river, forest and field drawn from Adivasi and Assamese folklore to create a shared folkloric past where these liminal characters and spaces coexist and engage in a class struggle against coloniality and capital. The paper examines this yearning to belong which necessitates the creation of a folkloric history and geography and the complex insider/outsider dynamics in Assam which complicate this yearning. Accordingly, paper also studies the tea-garden Adivasi of post-Independence North-East India as an indigene caught in the discourse of sub-national identitarian politics where they are pitted against the local autochthon and examine the terms for their changed relationship with land, forest and water. The paper also examines what happens when Tanti's folkloric past spills over to the present and his characters are forced to confront a tamed and named geography with which they can only have a transactional relationship.

Kamal Kumar Tanti is a celebrated poet, essayist and public intellectual from Assam. His first book *Marangburu Amar Pita*,

written in Assamese, was published in 2007 and won the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar in 2012. His second book of poems, *Uttar Oupanibeshik Kobita* was published in 2017. In between Tanti published a volume of essays *Nimnaborgo Somaaj Oitijya* (*Subaltern Society's Legacy,* 2007), and academic papers on aeronautics, road information systems and spectral energy distribution, given his training as a physicist. Tanti's training as a physicist and his identity as a member of what in Assam is called the tea garden community or the Ex-Tea Garden labourer community are central to Tanti's poetry. Centripetal and centrifugal forces, the contrasting forces of trying to move away from one's core and the yearning for a return to the core are metaphors Tanti borrows from elementary physics and uses as tools to diagnose his positionality as a poet. Individual poems from both of Tanti's collection were published in English translation since they first appeared in print in Assamese but a volume of selected poems in English translation was published in a double feature as *Our Ancestor Marangburu andPost-Colonial Poems* in 2019. The former was translated from *Marangburu Amar Pita*by Dibyajyoti Sarma and the latter from *Uttar Oupanibeshik Kabita* by me. This paper studies the central theme of the Adivasi/ tea-garden identity in Assam as reflected in Tanti's poetry, how it was formed and shaped by the colonial experience of displacement and its evolution in post-Independence Assam against the background of Assamese sub-national assertion. The paper then studies the problems of translating Tanti to English, having as he does a unique relationship with the language and culture he writes in and the difficulties of presenting the same in English.The paper concludes with the solutions Tanti himself provides.

It is necessary to present the history of early 19th century Assam as a beginning point for this paper. It all started with the discovery of tea in Assam which in turn was a product of Assam's encounter with colonialism. In 1824 the first Anglo-Burmese war broke out between the forces of the East India Company and Burma. In 1825 the Burmese were pushed out of Assam and in 1826 the Treaty of Yandaboo was signed between the East India Company and Burmese without the consent of the local kings and chieftains who ruled over the land which the

treaty covered. Other parts of present-day Assam had been taken over by the East India Company but the Treaty of Yandaboo meant the suzerainty of the Company over the whole of then Assam.

Already in 1823, a Scottish mercenary named Robert Bruce who was involved in arms dealing with the Ahoms found tea growing wild in the Upper Brahmaputra Valley. In 1833 the new government in Assam started the first tea plantation. This technically started the tea industry in Assam. There were many upheavals, including periods of wild speculation which almost crashed the economy. Labourers were initially brought from China but were soon replaced by Adivasi labourers from Central and East India. Historian H. K. Barpujari studies this moment in the history of Assam as epoch-making. He writes,

> The problems became all the more acute during the boom in tea market in 1860s when every planter, big and small, entered into blind competition to push on his cultivation. The planters were advised by the local authorities to procure labour from areas of surplus population outside the State: Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Central Province (Madhya Pradesh), United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh) and Madras. Recruited at the place of origin on contract basis, the labourers were expected to return back to their original homes on the termination of their contracts. The time-expired labourers however found it convenient to settle near the garden as cultivators and supplement their income by working at times when labour was insufficent specially for plucking and howing.41 In 1891 the total number of these migrants was estimated at 4,23, 199 which went up in 1901 to 6,54,000 and after two decades on expansion of tea-gardens a million and half or 30 percent of the total population of the Assam (Barpujari).

The descendants of these workers form a large chunk of Assam's population today. They are also an integral and important part of Assamese society. They have been politically very active, having made major contributions to the progressive movement in Assam and given the Assamese language some of its most firebrand poets. The themes of displacement from one marginal space to another, making a home and crafting a new identity in

a new space, valourization of labour and the difficult processes of cultural assimilation/ integration are central to the work of these poets.

The problem, however, arises right at the moment of defining the community. In his Sahitya Akademi acceptance speech Tanti said, "… I disagree with the current naming of our community as 'Tea-Tribe / Ex-Tea Garden Labour Community.' Is there any community in this world named after a commodity?" (Shekhar)

Tea, the tea garden and tea garden labour do appear in Tanti's first volume *Marangburu Amar Pita*. However, the images associated with them are stark, violent and bloody- distanced from the idyllic and romanticised space of the tea garden in popular imagination. The following are three couplets from his poem 'Those Seven', translated by Dibyajyoti Sarma:

> The pine trees weep/ the moon is lonely tonight
>
> Dry trunks of the tea plants/ are silent tonight
>
> Scarlet blood sparkles/ on green tea leaves tonight (Tanti, Our Ancestor Marangburu)

In *Post-Colonial Poems* the tea plant and tea garden are almost completely absent. After all, the two identities 'tea garden worker' and 'adivasi' are separate and it was colonial intervention that conflated the two in Assam. There is an attempt in Tanti's poems to move out of the former category into the later. This is also an attempt to fall into the main course of Indian adivasi history and destiny, rather than to be located in isolation. In a 2017 article he writes:

> What I believe is that we have a duality regarding the nature of identity. I understand that we are an integral part of the greater Adivasi nationality of India and at the same time, we are also actively involved in the formation of the greater Assamese identity. People who are progressive, liberal in thought, democratic in attitude and have put a firm stand against communalism, have recognised the Tea Tribes or the Adivasis as one of the most significant communities contributing to the formation of the greater Assamese society. It is equally true that the Tea Tribes or the Adivasis of Assam are a branch of the greater Adivasi society of the country.("Why The Mainstream Should Respect Adivasis In Assam")

The paper tries to explore this sentiment in the context of identity formations in Assam. Boddhisatva Kar in 'Can the Postcolonial Begin? Deprovincializing Assam' notes that North Eastern India was the least administered but the most capitalised zone of the British Empire. The administration opened up what they termed 'wastelands' for cultivation of tea and rice and promoted the movement of labour from neighbouring regions into these spaces. The tea gardens and riverine areas, 'wastelands' opened up for tea and rice cultivation respectively, are the two areas in Assam where identities are still being contested. Unlike some other identity formation processes in the North-East, these identities are based on claim for acceptance rather than separation; on difference while maintaining the umbrella of 'the greater Assamese society'.

In the context of the November 24, 2007 incident of an Adivasi girl being stripped and harassed on the street in Dispur during a protest by Adivasis demanding scheduled tribe status for themselves, Udayon Misra (Tanti, Post-Colonial Poems) writes that though the terrible incident can by no means be seen as a regular occurrence, it "brought unto surface certain inbuilt prejudices and assumptions of mainstream Assamese society towards the marginalised and peripheral sections" (Misra). Misra makes the point that since the coming of the Adivasi community to the tea gardens of Assam in the 1860s, there has been no incidence of clashes between the community and the 'mainstream Assamese' community and that this particular incident was an aberration. In the same article, however, Misra acknowledges the violent clashes between Adivasis and Bodos which led to numerous deaths and displacement of people. It is of some significance to this paper that Misra's exclusion of Bodos from the category of 'mainstream Assamese' points to the problem of onomastic in Assam. The word 'Assamese' could refer both to residents of Assam and the dominant heterogeneous community for whom this term is used. Many autonomy movements in Assam, which led to the breaking up of the state into new states or to autonomous entities within Assam defined themselves and their aspirations as separate from 'Assamese' or 'mainstream Assamese' as Misra puts it. The Bodos, the largest tribal community in Assam, was one of these autonomy movements.

Another complexity of the use of the term 'mainstream Assamese' is to locate it in time. At the time of Misra's article, 'mainstream Assamese' meant the communities which were considered as such after the 'Balkanisation' of Assam. The constant exclusion of Adivasis from this category is the particular issue Misra tries to highlight. It speaks of their subalternity and their inability to properly represent themselves despite the fact that

> …a substantial section of the adivasi community too consider themselves as part of the Assamese nationality is reflected in writings of adivasi intellectuals who have had their education in Assamese… with the view of Assamese adivasi writer Ganesh Chandra Kurmi that the "tea tribes are today fully assimilated into the Assamese national mainstream" (Misra).

Misra doesn't qualify the term 'Assamese nationality' in his article because the term entered the vocabulary of Assam vis-à-vis the sub-national discourse. Thus, the Assamese nationality is the umbrella term that includes communities that aspire to belong by accepting the Assamese language and culture through a process of assimilation. The pain of assimilation, which demands discarding the language and culture of one's ancestors which belong to a different 'nationality' is expressed in Kamal Kumar Tanti's poem 'The Long Shadow of Memory' in his first collection:

> Where did I leave my roots, / my house, my hearth, my village, my forest?
>
> Medinipur or barakuda, or Kalahandi? / where? Where?
>
> How is our breeze, our sunshine, our rain?/ How are our trees, our birds, our hills? (Tanti, Post-Colonial Poems)

Unlike in his second collection of poems, this particular poem names places, and identifies a hearth, village and forest, the trinity of tribal identity in a specific location. Spatialization of these natural entities highlight the enormity of the loss caused by displacement. The claims for assimilation of migrants into the fold of an Assamese nationality or identity is not by any means a new idea. It was a reaction against the twin waves of migration to Assam- Adivasis to the tea gardens and peasants from Bengal to the riverine and rural areas. The idea was that the Assamese identity could and should be expanded by including migrants with the proviso that they forego their ancestral language, customs

and practices. This takes us back to Misra's comments on the Adivasi intelligentsia adopting Assamese and composing their most important work in the language and their complete and final self-identification with the language and culture.

> The Assam Sanrakshini Sabha, i.e., the Assam Preservation Society founded by the former (Ambikagiri Roychoudhury), apparently had a policy of welcoming as members immigrants who chose to identify with Assamese culture (Baruah 2001: 82). According to the organization's rules, those who came to Assam before 1926 and were permanently settled in Assam, could be members of the organization if they signed a statement saying that they accepted Assamese as their language and declared themselves members of the Assamese nationality (Sengupta).

The aspiration of the Adivasis of Assam to be counted as tribals in Assam which led to the November 2007 protests and the molestation of Laxmi Orang points to the complex manner in which tribals are actually identified and given rights in India. Misra points at this problem in his essay too.

> This territory specific classification seems to defy all logic and is clearly a hangover of colonial ethnography. For instance, the Karbi ceases to be a st outside Karbi Anglong and a Bodo cannot claim scheduled status*in Karbi Anglong. The adivasis are classified as other backward classes (obcs) in the central list which refers to them as "tea garden labourers and tea garden tribes and ex-tea garden labour and ex-tea garden tribes" and they are divided into 96 ethnic groups.(Misra)

The movement by the Adivasi community of Assam for inclusion in the 'scheduled tribe' category has the material development of the community in mind. However, it is also a matter of how the community sees itself. It beings back the images of hearth, forest and village and the poignancy of the lines 'Where did I leave my roots, / my house, my hearth, my village, my forest?' quoted earlier. Xaxa and Puia recognize this problem with competing indigenes as Misra does above but they see it not as intrusion of one community into the realm of rights of the local autochton but rather as an articulation of self-vis-à-vis the state.

> Indeed, there are cases when groups treated as scheduled tribes in one state or states are not treated so in another state or states. No wonder that there has been increasing demand by groups and communities in different parts of the country for their inclusion in the scheduled tribe category. Thus, the category 'scheduled tribe' has become an important mark of identity and identity articulation of tribes (social and cultural sense) in relation to the state (Xaxa and Puia).

In the light of these contexts, the task of translating Kamal Kumar Tanti becomes very interesting. Let's take for example the eight-part eponymous poem which begins the anthology. The characters in the first part are a '*jal-kunwori*' (literally translated as water-princess, but 'mermaid' in my translation), guardians of the *jal-kunwori* and merchants. The poem beings with

> 'When we, the guardians of the mermaid/ emerged from the deep/ and reached the shore
>
> The last merchant ship/ had already torn through the darkness/ with the treasures of the river' (Tanti, Post-Colonial Poems)

The water princess consoles the guardians. She says that though they have borne witness to injustice and suffering, their time in history has come because they have found their own language and voice. The first part ends with

> We, the guardians of the mermaid/ we the watchful guardians of the mermaid's lands/ we now had history on our side (Tanti, Post-Colonial Poems).

Just these three stanzas pose two problems. First, the 'land' here is mythic, folkloric 'land'. It is despatialised. There are no signposts, no landmarks to tie it to any specific geography. It is contiguous land or 'all land'. The river is 'all river' and the merchant is 'all capital'. To make things difficult, the '*jol-kunwori*' is an integral part of Assamese folklore. The second part of this eight-part poem has the '*burha-dangoria*' as its central character, another creature drawn from Assamese folklore. In Tanti's imagination the mythic landscape accommodates both marginalities- the water-princess of Assam and the displaced Adivasi. When the land is occupied and its treasures looted, boundaries don't seem to matter. This brings us back to Kamal

Tanti's aversion to identitarian reduction and his assertion about his community's duality of experience- 'an integral part of the greater Adivasi nationality of India and at the same time, we are also actively involved in the formation of the greater Assamese identity'.

So how does one translate this very special space? The choice I made was to let English do its job. Thus, '*jol-kunwari*' became 'mermaid' and the '*burha-dangoria*', because he is introduced sitting on a tree, became 'the old man of the tree'. Both of us translators decided to use footnotes sparingly, to attempt lexical equivalence as far as possible and to avoid a glossary. We, instead, tried to replicate the short, quick beats of Tanti's poems into English.

This still left us with the difficulty in translating space and more importantly, land. Land is central to adivasi/tribal/ indigenous studies. How to we define the indigene, the authochton, without the relationship to land? The fixedness of home, forest and rivers is a part of indigenous discourse. In contrast, Tanti's images of home, rivers and forests are untethered. When an adivasi community is uprooted and brought to a new space to work on the land, does the relationship between the adivasi and land become transactional? Does, as in the Lockean principle of property, the land gain value solely by the investment of labour? Moreover, as Tanti notes, the insider/outsider dicthotomy means that the word 'adivasi' is not value-free. it is heavily marked by an Indian stamp, in contrast to the tribal identities of local autochtonous communities. While writing about the indigenous understanding of history G N Devy writes:

> For the indigenous, there are two points in time marking their emergence: one that is traced back to a mythological time enshrined in their collective memory and expressed in their community's "story of origin," and the other that is synchronous with a Columbus or a Vasco de Gama setting foot on the land that was once their dominion. (Devy)

What happens when an indigene is seen as a settler? The problem of translating land remains but Tanti allows us the possibility of empathy and co-existence in the fourth part of the poem. Here, the central character is an old Kachari man. The poem goes,

> We asked the old Kachari man,/ what is life: water on arum leaves?
>
> What is history: a story of the land and ancestors?/ A ledger of buying and selling of land and people?/ A deed for the purchase of minds?
>
> We asked the old Kachari man'/who are we?
>
> An arum leaf on the sole of the white man's feet?/ Water muddied by the hooves of war-horses?/ A heart spintered by bullet blooms?
>
> We asked the old Kachari man,/ Who are you?
>
> I am history: the history of two hidden centuries./ I am the history of colonisation./ I am the history of the colonised. (Tanti, Post-Colonial Poems)

Tanti's answer is empathy, an understanding of the equivalence of different experiences of colonialism. It is fitting that the central character in this poem is an old Kachari man, a local autochton of Assam and also a representative of the community with which the Adivasis have had antagonistic experiences in the past but also long a long history of peaceful coexistence. In a mutual sharing of the experience and knowledge of colonialism, the Kachari man can indeed guide the Adivasi persona and show him the colonial experience embedded on his body and consciousness. As seen earlier, the embedding of colonial experience on the body is not just a metaphor for Tanti but an actual, perceivable reality. In the commonality of bodies mutated by the experience, the Adivasi and Kachari become kin, shared images in a mirror.

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Politics of Domination and Cultural Imperialism in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*

Sunayana Pandey

Abstract: The current paper is a dissectional analysis of human psyche responsible for inviting a war and dire need for shift in human perception to avoid it for peaceful co-existence in the universe. For the last two decades, Indian writing in English has been witnessing a spate of fictional works based on *Sanatan* myths; Amish Tripathi is a renowned champion of this field. Amish has beautifully portrayed two cultures of Indus valley civilization of 1900 BC viz; *Suryavanshis* and *Chandravanshis*, who are engaged in a never-ending war for attaining absolute power over each other. As per Amish, Meluhans i.e; *Suryavanshis* lead a masculine way of life- a prosperous life by the code of Truth, Duty and Honour while *Swadweepans* i.e; *Chandravanshis* follow a feminine way of life- an unprosperous life by the code of Passion, Beauty and Freedom. *Chandravanshis* have a sense of aesthetic beauty in their way of life enjoying freedom at all levels and are also comfortable with their system. Daksha- Emperor of Suryavanshi Empire of Meluha is shown to be suffering from a false conviction of superiority complex to *Chandravanshis* for their way of life. He is an ambitious emperor having craving for power who misguides Shiva- male protagonist and succeeds in defeating and colonising *Chandravanshis*. He justifies his greed for expanding his kingdom in the guise of 'civilising mission' by displaying his false intention of imparting their 'superior' way of life to *Chandravanshis*; which reminds of Rudyard Kipling's poem *The White Man's Burden.*

Through this paper, Amish highlights that greed is the womb of all sins and need of the hour is to believe in re-defined

modernity i.e. unity in diversity by accepting Jean Paul Sartre's saying about philosophy of Existentialism that the emotional, physical and psychological needs of each individual is different and to impose one's ideology on others is the main cause of war and a big hurdle in the way of global peace.

Keywords: Colonialism, Cultural Imperialism, Existentialism, Modernism, War

Indian literature in English is witnessing a series of fictional works based on Indian myths. Amish Tripathi is a renowned author in the field of mythology. He has produced *Shiva Trilogy* and *Ram Chandra Series*, where interpretation of rich mythological heritage of India has been done by blending fiction with myths. In *Shiva Trilogy*, Amish has imaginatively re-created the India of 1900 BC, where he has beautifully portrayed the power dynamics and politics of domination. Amish depicts a world in which *Suryavanshis* and *Chandravanshis* have been shown to be engaged in a never-ending war for attaining absolute power over each other.

Suryavanshis i.e., Meluhans lead a masculine way of life which is 'life by laws'; following laws rigidly. They are conscious about performing their duties. In Meluha no one is poor, everyone has food, the society has excellent drainage system and Meluhans are in the pink of health. They lead life by the code of truth, duty and honour and have a rich legacy of cultural markers. Thus, Meluha has been depicted as a perfect society, a Utopian society. Shiva- the chief of the Guna tribe and immigrant from Tibet also gets impressed by prosperous heritage of Meluha and speaks to Nandi- a captain in Meluhan army that if there exists paradise somewhere, it is not very different from Meluha. In this way, Meluha justifies the meaning of its name- the land of pure life. In contrast to this, *Chandravanshis* i.e., *Swadweepans* lead a feminine way of life which is 'life by probabilities'. They have no written laws and if there are any, they too are malleable. The aborigines are poor and lack infrastructural facilities. *Swadeepans* lead life by the code of Passion, Beauty and Freedom. *Chandravanshis* have a sense of aesthetic beauty in their way of life, enjoying freedom at all levels and are also comfortable with their system.

Amish has thus constructed a Utopian Meluhan society.

> Utopian literature brings out the writer's expectation about the society. Few writers have created their ideal society in their works of art, like Plato's *The Republic* is a classic work of utopian literature. But the very word 'Utopian' was directly used by Thomas More. He had created a world called 'Utopia' and set out a vision of an ideal society" (*Lavanya* 527).

Amish Tripathi in *Shiva Trilogy* portrays a clear picture of colonialism through Daksha's craving for ruling over weaker Nation Swadweep by his stronger Nation Meluha with a view to exploit their natural resource in the form of waters of the Saraswati River. Daksha reflects his intention of neo-colonialism with the aim of continuously exploiting this natural resource as he is worried that *Swadeepans* are killing the Saraswati River and Meluhans may be deprived of this main ingredient used in manufacturing *Somras*- the health supplement for anti-ageing. Daksha has been depicted as highly ambitious emperor who wants to expand borders of Meluha in order to project his power. Daksha suffers from superiority complex for Meluhans' 'superior' way of life, governance and culture, he in the guise of imparting *Swadweepans* the better lifestyle for their benefit rather attacks and captures Swadweep; reflecting the trait of cultural imperialism. Amish succeeds in depicting all malafide intentions of Daksha and also the different shades of modernism in the psyche of major characters through conversation among them, like chaos, confusion, meaninglessness of life, note of pessimism, shaken faith in god, etc. after *dharm yudh*- 'holywar' in his discourse.

In *Shiva Trilogy*, the issue of identity has been dealt with dynamics of power.

> While Meluha attempts to discursively construct the identities of the other sections of the society in order to perpetuate its power structure, those oppressed groups assert their respective racial, ethnic or national identities, thereby questioning and contesting this politics of repression and subordination. (Choudhary 285)

In Meluha, each and every character appears to be full of hubris and engaged in flaunting their 'superior' way of life, reflecting as if they have now reached to the apotheosis of perfection and is still following the trajectory of progress and prosperity. Daksha reflects his pride in Meluha's advance science,

when he mentions his age as one hundred and eighty four by speaking, "What makes this possible is the brilliance of our scientists who make a potion called the *Somras*- the drink of the gods" (IM 83).[1]Ayurvati, the chief of medicine at Meluha, has been depicted as a very sincere, hardworking and reserve by nature. She also reflects her racial superiority to Shiva, "Do not worry, we are Meluhans. We are capable of handling any situation" (IM 20). Parvateshwar, the head of Meluhan armed forces, also valorises Meluha's culture, traditions, moral values and ethics during his conversation with Daksha, "My lord forgive me but the rule of law is the very foundation of our civilization. That is what makes us who we are. Not even Lord Ram was above the law" (IM 92). Once, during discussion with Kanakhala,the prime minister of Meluha, Parvateshwar reflects his honour of becoming part of Meluha's civilization by saying, "We are Meluhans! We are the Suryavanshi! We have created the greatest civilization ever known to man" (IM 72). Self-esteem is part and parcel of Meluha's civilization which is reflected on one occasion, when Parvateshwar speaks to Daksha, "We are the followers of Lord Ram. There are civilities that we maintain even with our enemies" (IM 167). During conversation with Shiva, Parvateshwar mentions that present caste system was developed by Lord Rama on merit basis, rather than on birth; he depicts glow of confidence in his eyes by saying, "That system is what has made Meluha what it is- the greatest nation in history" (IM 98). Similarly, Nandi, a captain in Meluhan army, during an informal conversation with Shiva depicts their way of life very superior by saying, "Lord Rama was the emperor who established our way of life. He lived around one thousand two hundred years ago. He created our systems, our rules, our ideologies, everything" (IM 35). He further narrates that the reign of Rama is known as *Ram Rajya* which is considered as the gold standard for administration of empire and they are proud of being part of that system. Nandi also tells Shiva about one important cultural marker of Meluhans for keeping their words in all situations.

Daksha lets Shiva know that they use the waters of the Saraswati River in preparation of *Somras*, so *Chandravanshis* out of jealousy harm the Saraswati River. He says, "The *Chandravanshis* are aware of this and that is why they are trying to kill her" (IM

112). Shiva insists to solve the issue through dialectical process by sending a diplomatic mission to Swadweep but Daksha refuses by saying, "You do not know them Lord. They are untrustworthy people. No follower of the Suryavanshi way of life will sully his soul by even speaking to a Chandravanshi willingly" (IM 113). Here, haughtiness, stubbornness and non-seriousness in avoiding the war are clearly reflected in the behaviour of Daksha. He also tells Shiva that they have a no-man's land with *Chandravanshis*, where they are observe the agreement. He misguides Shiva to colonise Swadweep by saying, "It appears that they have not honoured their end of the bargain" (IM 111). Shiva suggests Daksha to check the area for factual report but he does not pay heed to Shiva's advice. Daksha appears in a hurry for attacking on *Chandravanshis* to colonise them but Shiva reflects his mental cool by saying, "Listen to me Parvateshwar, said Shiva politely. If I have learnt one thing from the pointless battles of my land, it is that war should be the last resort" (IM 112). Shiva, here appears to be refraining from war but Daksha shows inclination towards war and colonisation to fulfil his greed and subconscious urge to dominate others.

Daksha emphatically puts his idea to attack on Swadweep with a plea that he wants to save *Swadweepans* from their evil philosophy of life. When Shiva reflects his surprise on the statement 'Save the Swadweepans', Daksha speaks, "Yes, my Lord. Save them from their sorry, meaningless existence. And we can do this by giving them the benefits of the superior Suryavanshi way of life" (IM 116). Daksha, thus justifies attack on Swadweep on the ground that it is not for personal or national benefit, rather it is a civilising mission for the gain of populace of Swadweep i.e. *Chandravanshis* which reminds of Rudyard Kipling's poem 'The White Man's Burden'. Daksha's intention of colonial domination in the guise of civilising mission can be understood in the context of the decolonisation of the developing world where the phrase 'White Man's Burden' is used to illustrate the falsity of good intensions of western neo-colonialism towards the non-white people of the world. Daksha, here clearly depicts his disbelief in the doctrine of dualism which means that the universe is under the dominion of two opposing principles, one of which is considered good and the other evil. Daksha wants to

metamorphose 'bad' *Chandravanshis* way of life into their 'good' *Suryavanshi* way of life. He forgets that the concept of good and bad has always been enigma and will remain forever. Daksha verifies the maxim of an English Catholic historian Lord Acton that, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Shiva applies all his ingenuity in checking the war but finally Daksha succeeds in misguiding Shiva and prepares him for an attack on Swadweep. Under the leadership of Shiva, *Suryavanshis* defeat *Chandravanshis* in war and colonise them. Shiva lives in confusion, whether his deed was right or wrong. Amish portrays his confusion very well during his long discussion with Pandit of Ramjanmabhoomi temple. Shiva himself visits Ayodhya, the capital of Swadweep, and when he happens to converse with beggar, he comes to conclusion that, "These people are not evil. They are just different. Being different is not evil" (IM 392). Shiva says, "What he had done was wrong. He had a terrible mistake. These people were not evil." (IM 390)

Absolutism in reference to philosophy is the metaphysical view that there is an absolute reality, i.e. a reality that exists independently of human knowledge. Daksha and all Meluhans have been depicted in *Shiva Trilogy* suffering from absolutism. During conversation between Paravateshwar and Shiva, Parvateshwar speaks that their way of life, governance and society is perfect- a Utopian society, but Shiva shows his dissent by saying that they are near to a perfect society as there are always chances of improvement. Absolutism is really a crime to cerebral evolution and to impose absolutism is bare cruelty on others. One must be open and flexible to the plethora of changes in life; to remain unchanged is foolish stubbornness. Perception of everyone changes with the mental maturity and experience. Nothing in nature is definite as there is fluidity of perceptions, which is a positive human trait. Regard for the views of others and belief in the principle of diversity of perception can develop conducive environment for peaceful co-existence in the world. Human existence is all about a purposeful survival and a meaningful existence. It is possible only when we shelve our mulish obduracy and resort to flexibility but Daksha forgets that, "Lord Rama had himself said that any philosophy, no matter

how perfect, works only for a finite period. This is the law of the nature and cannot be avoided" (IM 117).

After 'holywar', huge casualties occur from both sides. Amidst this gloomy environment in Ayodhya, Anandmayi, the Ayodhyan princess, daughter of *Chandravanshi* Emperor Dilipa reflects her feelings against war to Meluhan General Parvateshwar by saying, "There is your truth and there is my truth. As for the universal truth, it does not exist" (OV 196).[2]She also says to Parvateshwar, "We are not perfect, I agree. There are many things that our empire could do better, I agree. But at least we give our people freedom. They are not forced to follow some stupid laws mandated by an out of touch elite" (IM 381). She also highlights about self-contented life of *Swadweepans*. Shiva also notices freedom in Ayodhaya; the necessary element for dignity which is something impossible in Meluha's system of governance.

Amish also points out towards frustration and desire of Daksha to prove his worth, responsible for his nature of blaming *Chandravanshis* at all the times. During childhood, in one incident of dogs' attack on Daksha, he gets injured and fails to tackle the situation. Daksha's father, King Brahmanayak scolds Daksha on his cowardice behaviour. This episode always disturbs him and he comes in the grip of inferiority complex at subconscious level and when he finds an opportunity to satisfy his ego, he does not leave any chance to conquer Swadweep. It is commonly observed fact that when one's mind is fogged with prejudice, universal acceptance remains elusive. A prejudiced person always remains blind to realities, facts and figures. One renounces regard to facts in service of one's self-importance as it feeds the ego which dominates the mind and is a free play for prejudices to rise. As long as prejudice rules, wisdom is stifled. In serving the ego, one creates a sense of superiority which divides the 'Superior' self from the 'inferior' other. Daksha appears to be prejudiced with *Chandravanshis* which is evident in conversation between Daksha and Shiva, when he speaks of *Chandravanshis* as unreliable people. All wars are fought in the human mind. Inner turmoil can degenerate the human personality into the abyss of bestiality; the best example is Daksha, who in the quest for colonisation is not hesitant to invite war. Veerini, the wife of Daksha, discusses with him at length to lead a peaceful life but he fails to understand her

philosophy, which leads to abandonment of Daksha by Veerini in her later period of married life. When a human being's perception is distorted, then subtler realties are often warped beyond recognition. In the case of mundane objects, it is impossible to expand without encroaching upon the boundaries of others. This clash over boundaries brings out the worst in human beings- narrow mindedness, greed, casteism, provincialism, and even colonialism. Actually, greed is the greatest ailment and is said to be the womb of all sins. Greed destroys reasons, which in turn blows up modesty. There is no end to greed as it is never quenched. It is rightly said that there is sufficiency in the world for your need, but not for your greed.

The basic tenet of civilised life is human dignity. The existence of cultural differences from one region to another is a common phenomenon; Daksha forgets this very principle of existence. He mistakes uniformity for unity with a presumption that all human beings are same, therefore their needs, aspirations and goals would be similar. Because of misconception, he goes away with diversity and tries to deprive people of the very identities that distinguish them. He believes that their *Suryavanshi* way of life is superior to *Chandravanshi* way of life and thus must be enforced upon them but he forgets that his notion of their superiority is itself antithetical to the concept of equality, which in turn, is essential for unity. *Chandogya Upanishad* speaks about '*tat tvam asi*', which means, 'you are the same spiritual identity'. If one believes that *Brahaman,* the common reality behind everything in the cosmos is same as the essential divinity, namely the '*Atman*' within everyone, then one can easily believe in the concept of unity in diversity and there arises no question of division among people. One must always remember that as human beings we are one, but are different individually. Realising, recognising and acknowledging one another's peculiarities and then existing harmoniously is unity,unity in diversity, which does not aim at the non-realistic homogenisation of the intelligent human race. Nature itself propagates diversity and if one tries to deprive people of their quirks and uniqueness, this endeavour is very opposite to nature. Unity embraces and acknowledges contrasts, dissents, variations, and promotes a prosperous co-existence. Unity is not about supremacy, for it is respectful to all within its

fold. Supremacist tendencies give birth to violence and may break societies and countries; which happened by the act of Daksha leading to '*dharm yudh*'- 'holy war'.

Jean-Paul Sartre, a French literary critic and key figure in the philosophy of Existentialism, in his lecture entitled 'Existentialism is Humanism' says,

> Existentialism advocates the pre-eminence of identity or existence of an individual before anything. The emotional, physical, psychological and philosophical needs of each individual cannot be expected to be the same, and compelling everyone to follow the same rule by expecting all to act equally, is killing individuality. It is dangerous for a society. (Kumari 3)

Alfred Habdank Skarbek Korzybski, a Polish- American independent scholar, propounded time-binding theory during his study on evolutionary nature of human beings, which takes into consideration all the characteristics that make a man, man. According to him, humans can be literally poisoned by false ideas and false teachings and thus he urges for clearing away of the fog of misconceptions to demystify mind to save one's time-binding capacity. Modern time needs thorough re-visiting and re-evaluation of old dogmas for avoiding war and generating peace in the world.

Thus, through *Shiva Trilogy,* Amish conveys a message to break the world of narrow perception by acquiring holistic vision to rise above domination mentality. He highlights the urgent need to improve human consciousness by believing in redefined modernity i.e., unity in diversity as without diversity, life cannot have full play. Belief in the principle of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbackam* i.e., the whole world is one family and policy of live and let live can only grant amicable co-existence in the world.

Notes

1. The book 'The Immortals of Melua' is abbreviated as 'IM'
2. The Book 'The Oath of the Vayuputras' is abbreviated as 'OV'.

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Digital Narrative Spaces: Converging Cultural Divides and Social Fissures

Jaishree Chouhan

Abstract: Narratives are the most basic, structural and foundational units of the systematic order of the world and existence at large; cumulatively take shape of day-to-day discourse, which in process informs, enhances and anchors all human agencies. These narratives are collective and connecting, living conscience of human civilization. Social evolution has given us varied mediums of creation, expression and projection of these narratives in all fields and 21st century saw the advent, expansion and exhaustion of a new medium, a virtual facsimileing of expressions and narratives. The fact that, space and a particular medium serves not only as a stylized context and referent, it also adds to and moderate the layering, aesthetic appeal, reader response and impact quotient; a scholarly inquiry of any narrative space and its mediality, becomes more consequential. The digital technology brought a revolution in social, cultural and scientific fields, a convenience, connectedness, cognitive advancement and a new platform to simply tell our stories. The last decade saw the unprecedented growth of professional and personal tools in this new medium, and many are in the making. This electronic space is now donning the role of 'social-media', presenting itself as a utopian space, a flag bearer of democratic value system, the medium where one can find oneself connected to the entire world on a screen, where one can attain and access absolute autonomy and individuality. This screen has drastically changed public forums, interactive behaviours, cognitive and psycho-social capacities. This paper proposes to discuss at length the arguments, behind this phenomenon of cause-and-effect relation between digital spaces, the narratives created on and around it and

discursiveness of digital spaces, specifically in the context of Indian social paradigms. It also proposes to inquire into the structurality of the digital narrative spaces in the context of the functioning, impacting and changing social-cultural discourses, to study the divides and practices, this medium has created and eradicated, the shift it has brought in Indian cultural dynamics.

Keywords: Digital Narratives, Digital Spaces, Social-Media, Socio-Cultural divides.

When Canadian communication theorist Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase "The medium is the message" (McLuhan 9), he proposes to give primary focus to the study of the medium itself, that 'artifacts as media affect any society by their characteristics or content (9)'. McLuhan was of this opinion that, 'it was the medium itself that shaped and controlled the scale and form of human associations and action' (11). This seems more veracious in the present context than ever before, in the sense that, the scale of interactivity and participation the digital spaces have provided, the accessibility and empowerment it has given to individual and collective voices, is unprecedented. W3 proved pivotal in the enhancement of the worldwide network system that is internet. According to estimates, 5.18 billion people around the world use the internet today that make 64.6% of the world's population, and continues to grow. Worldwide 3.77 billion people are using modern gadgets to access internet, with 81% of the developed country population and 41% of the developing country population. (*Statistics, Internet Usage Worldwide Report*)

It is paramount to understand that due to the contemporaneous and experimental nature of this medium it is difficult and rather ambitious to claim that there can be a definitive framework to theorize this mediality, though it is possible to get a better understanding of its functioning, structure, referencing and impact quotient and after determining the causal factors, it is intended to understand the contemporary social changes precipitated by internet and social media usage. A particular medium, as dynamic, changeable and open ended, which got structured and evolved on a physically not existent materiality, which has the most flexible interactive relation between creation and consumption, which by its foundational characteristics can't proclaim wholeness; for such a medium it can be presumed that,

a theoretical inquest into it would lead to a parallel with postmodernist and post-structuralist discourse and epistemological movements. In this tradition the first and most influential critical and theoretical study of electronic media is done by George Landow. In his seminal work, *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology* (1992), Landow views "that the interpretive agenda of post-structuralist literary theory anticipated the essential characteristics of hypertext" (3). Landow draws on theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Paul de Man, and Michel Foucaultamong others and argues specially, that the textual openness, multilinearity endorsed by post-structuralist theory, the phenomenological qualities of this discourse takes material shape in hypertext and that hypertext opens up knowledge in a non-linear, non-sequential, associative way for people that linear texts do not. Hypertext, the term coined by Ted Nelson, is a text generated and displayed on electronic device, which also has references to several other texts, simultaneously, which are available to be accessed at the same time. ("Etymology")

From simple, non-linear hypertext with multiple referentiality, intertextuality and multiple points of observation, which resonates the ideals of postmodernity; to structurally simpler, more subjective, mass cultural, multimedium, more inclusive, immersive and interactive, with different temporal and spatial buildings, electronic narrations have come a long way. Another disposition in the study of digitally consumed narrations, is its virtuality and the juxtaposition of virtual vs. real. The philosophical treatise of 1981, "Simulacra and Simulation" by the philosopher and cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard, in which Baudrillard explores the dynamics between reality and representation, the relationships between symbols and society, in particular the significations and symbolism of culture and media involved in constructing of that reality. He wrote:

> Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory - precession

> of simulacra - it is the map that engenders the territory and if we were to revive the fable today, it would be the territory whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the deserts which are no longer those of the Empire, but our own. The desert of the real itself. (*Selected Writings* 166-184)

What he meant was, that in postmodern culture we have become so reliant on sheer representation of things that is symbols of things; we are losing the sense of the real signs, merely living in an imitation of existence, even creating virtual realities. From this critical stand point, the debate of real vs. virtual becomes stringent when there is a new medium, an electronic, on-screen medium came into existence but eventually it took a favourable turn at the side of virtual mediums.

One of the most fundamental inquiries, was made by the American postmodern literary critic N. Katherine Hyles, in her, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*(1999), she writes, "Virtuality is the cultural perception that material objects are interpenetrated by information patterns. The definition plays off the duality at the heart of the condition of virtuality—materiality on the one hand, information on the other" (13). Taking a more inclusive position she welcomes this virtuality:

> Virtual reality technologies are fascinating because they make visually immediate the perception that a world of information exists parallel to the "real" world, the former intersecting the latter at many points and in many ways. Hence the definition's strategic quality, strategic because it seeks to connect virtual technologies with the sense, pervasive in the late twentieth century, that all material objects are interpenetrated by flows of information, from DNA code to the global reach of the World Wide Web. (14)

The acceptance of this virtuality was a welcome, to the phase, which Katharine and other theorist called, Post Humanism. In *Prometheus As Performer: Towards A Post-humanist Culture?* Ibab Hassan writes:

> We need first to understand that the human form-including human desire and all its external representations-may be

> changing radically, and thus must be re-visioned. We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call post-humanism. (843)

As earlier discussed, mediums are power tools, which can determine human forms and actions. Initial researches into theoretical structuring of the electronic medium, also lead the inquiry to general socio-cultural dynamics, which rapidly changed, are changing right now, due to the mediating of digital spaces. In later half of the 20th century Michel Foucault taught us to look closely at physical, intellectual, scientific canons from the perspective of the power and knowledge relations, that socially got constructed, continues to and persisted and maintained in all social institutions of human agency, as a subtle controlling power, which has ingrained so, as no longer felt imposed but comes natural to the social cognition. He gave the concept called discourse, which he defines as,

> Ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern." (Weedon 108)

"A form of power that circulates in the social field and can attach to strategies of domination as well as those of resistance" (Diamond and Quinby, 1988). From this discursive position, a need was realized by theorists to take digital media as an agent of contriving a new discourse, for it is imperative that any medium will create its distinctive usability, impact factors, that will generate novel social and political conscience due to its targeted demographic population, stylistic features and media interactivity. This novel conscience give birth to a new discourse that will inform and will be informed by power / knowledge structure social, political and cultural equations of the time. Discourses are manufactured by smaller units of narration in cultures, and narrations take form through our tales of everyday life. Marie Laure Ryan, an independent scholar has researched the phenomenon of narratology across various media in her

*Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media (*2001), she describes at length the degree at which immersive and interactive nature of literary and virtual narratives differ. She writes:

> Interactivity is not merely the ability to navigate the virtual world, it is the power of the user to modify this environment. Moving the sensors and enjoying freedom of movement do not in themselves ensure an interactive relation between a user and an environment: the user could derive her entire satisfaction from the exploration of the surrounding domain. She would be actively involved in the virtual world, but her actions would bear no lasting consequences. In a truly interactive system, the virtual world must respond to the user's actions. (101)

Given the temporal and spatial characteristics of digital platforms, it was understood that its outreach is global, more democratic and heteroglossic (using Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia) which "is the presence in language of a variety of points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values"(291). With contemporary advancement of social media as the most popular medium of expression, the promotional stand points of the private players of this new industry, has been that it is the flag bearer of the democratic values of this world. The most popular social platforms worldwide, such Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc., started as public community forums to be connected and share with your group and community, with helping hand of internet, the community is now the whole world, and it is imperative that the more empowered individuals feel, the more virtual driven identity validation they seek. In the book titled, *How the World Changed Social-Media* (2016), Daniel Miller, Elisabetta Costa, and Nell Haynes, states, "Our study has thus turned out to be as much about how the world changed social media as about how social media changed the world" (5). Clearly this is not entirely a one-way process. Social networking sites (SNS) are distinct among platforms for online writing in the ways in which they support and shape identity construction (Schreiber, 2015) as Boyd and Ellison (2008) define SNS by three features: "they allow users to

construct a profile, maintain a list of connections to other users, and follow the path of those connections to find others within the site. These technologies have changed us. They have given us potential for communication and interaction that we did not previously possess. We need first clearly to establish what those potentials are and then to examine what the world subsequently did with those possibilities" (1). They study these platforms as, "these are the primary units through which we think about and use social media. Yet we should be careful in presuming that there are properties of the platforms that are responsible for, or in some sense cause, the associations that we observe with platforms" (11). Their study concerns more with the stand that, there is no distinction any more between one reality to any virtual one as, "By now it is very evident that there is no such distinction – the online is just as real as the offline. Social media has already become such an integral part of everyday life that it makes no sense to see it as separate (11)" (Miller et al.)

There can be no apprehension about the fact that IT industry, worldwide networks and internet connectivity has exerted immeasurable influence on everyday reality. Not only the existing institutions such as governance, education, services, manufacturing, health; are undergoing expeditious conversion into digitally operational services. The Covid-19 pandemic brought exponential surge in data usage (according to ICUBETM report rural India's monthly user base reached 639 million by 2020 and rural India was the major driving force behind the growth with 45%), as almost everything came online during the period, be it school education, public-private information platforms, college lectures, workshops, skill enhancement programmes, tutorials, entertainment, creativity, aesthetic pleasure, intellectual activities and discussions. Government policies took a leap towards developing infrastructure to promote innovation, multiple medium course curriculum, announcements to boost digital literacy, and novel ideas by private players. There is a general awareness and increased affinity in the masses, of the urban areas as well the rural. The concern under this heading is to ask two major questions, one: what are these socio-cultural gaps that digital media got successful in bridging, the other is how it bridged them. One of the many arguments is that social media or digital

media to use the broader term, has provided the big chunk of the population the agency to speak for what matters to them. This empowerment in due order makes one able to exert an identity of own, to feel the social significance, which got neglected through centuries.

> Digital media has created never foreseen multilingual connecting links across borders, nations and cultures. These highly creative mediums with fluid semiotic and semantic modality pushes for changes in academic conceptions of language and identity cultivation. (Chouhan 2023)

The last decade of 20th century, witnessed the multi-fold growth of, such public and private platforms, where people could find connectivity and sharing, which was limited earlier before. Freedom to express oneself is not just a constitutional right, to be regulated by law, but it is the basic human need to see oneself heard, to seek referral points in order to exist, and meanings are constructed only through signifying (to use Saussure's semiotic concept) with the outer that is there. The social injustices that prevail in every society, discrimination based on gender, caste, ethnicity, skin colour, elitism; can be faced and eradicated when there is a space for resistance in this hegemonic social capitalist structure. These spaces of resistance must be the places where there is less judgment, more autonomy and creative freedom, and this medium is being idealized as such space, where new narratives have the chance to blossom. The marginalized sections of society are taking these spaces to express the agony, fear, concerns, reclaiming identities, sense of freedom and choice. There is an increased sensitivity and awareness in users for earlier frowned upon subjects, such as sexual behaviours, sex education, female hygiene, homosexuality, mental health issues, body shaming, generational gaps, social typecasting, stereotyping; and people don't any more take ignored standpoints on the matters of social relevance. Digital platforms are trying to the mend the educational and resource outreach divides, in difficult demographic settings, creating opportunities of jobs, creative outlets for various forms of performative arts. The vast network of connectivity is bringing places and people close.

The easiest accessibility, social policies and cultural appropriation are few of the factors behind this revolutionary

change. It is true that a platform as open as this, is bringing sense of power to the common man, to make him feel as an agent of a possible change and influence in the bigger scheme of things, on personal level too, the medium provides a sense of significance to the people who haven't have any voice to raise, or any outlet to make their voices heard. The marginalized sections and voices of the society are coming upfront and making the accountable state, hear. The social and cultural inquiry, data, are enough to tell the significant changes, the digital platform is generating. Another facet of this discussion is, that the new space has created few fissures as well. Inequality which prevailed in the main stream educational structure has seeped into the electronic world as well. While digital divide is the on-ground reality, specifically in developing countries such as India, the other social evils not only have outgrown themselves, but also have taken new shapes and complexities.

There is the second aspect of this digital revolution, culminating as new born social divides are facing our society. The issues of criminal offences against individuals, institution and social fabric, are now very much real. Judiciaries all over the world are trying to address and given directives to respective state, that time is there where a structure of law is required to take these offences under jurisdiction. The Chief of NIA (National Investigating Agency), Alok Mittal states in an article on cyber security that "every sixth cyber-crime in India is committed through social media." According to national figures and data by cyber cells there were around 150 cases of cyber-crimes on social media in India in 2016, which increased to around 300 cases in 2017. Fraud cases on social media have also increased by 43% in 2018. Approximate 44,546 cases were registered under the cyber-crime head in 2019 as compared to 27,248 cases in 2018. Therefore, a rise of 63.5% was observed in cyber-crimes by National Crime Reporting Bureau. These and other significant statistics are cause of concerns due to the fact that along with an increase in the number of users, there has also been a spike in the cyber-crime cases.

There are, apartfrom the issues under criminal capacity, there are larger matters of concern. As Ensslin and Roy writes (2023),

> Today's generation of emergent readers are increasingly struggling with the material queerness of the codex. They are flocking towards screen-based, mobile and/or wearable transmedia that integrate the semiotic and sensory modalities and multiliteracies of originally analog modes like writing, speech, print, sound, still and moving image, with the added complexities of algorithmic logic, machine learning and procedural feedback. (147)

The easier accessibility, promoted availability is one of the major reasons why social media networks are the most popularly used as a medium of connectivity, and the more popular a medium is, it is prone to be used for misinformation, rumours, political and religious propaganda and false or one-sided partial narratives, which tend to create social political divides in any society. While it gave the platform to marginalized section, but also opened new spaces for them to be targeted and outcasted. Trolling, hate speech, social media trials to target individuals without knowing the whole of the matter (i., e., The Amber Heard defamation trail, also the unfortunate demise of actor Shushant Singh Rajput and media trail against certain actress). The click bait and shortest narrative styling proved useful for people to write and express but it has also eradicated the need to read in details, to get to know something in detail, before concluding on it. The short spanning of content and attention too, has brought a cognitive change in people who are willing to believe anything that runs on their screen. Learning patterns have greatly impacted during covid-19 pandemic due to the increased screen timing. While it gives wider connectivity but also hampers the capacity and will for physical connectivity that can negatively impact social behavioural patterns. Anxiety to stay relevant and better representation on screen, fear of being left out, fear of not getting enough in life, due to the social pressure felt, when one is constantly consuming 'idealized version of life onscreen', is having the worst impact on young children. Santosh Desai in an article makes a comment, "The pressure of having to present oneself to the world mean that one has to be more interesting and look the part of 70 protagonists that we have all become of our own lives. We have to lead lives of full excitement and visual splendour" (*Living two lives Digital India*).The post-truth world

where there are versions of truth and one can be proven better than other, where anything can be narrativized well and be proven as the only truth. It is true that a medium is a human construct, and it should, in any circumstances remain the same. Therefore, what is needed is a drive to educate and inform people better for the productive usage of the digital power.

As long as humans have the competence and intent to express themselves, mediums one or the other will keep innovating, evolving, and our civilization must evolve with them. Human expressions are vital for our functioning, as they inform our narratives of ourselves. There is no denial that being a part of the construct that is culture, the mediums will be influenced and will influence the traditions, practices, narratives and discourses, which will have social, political repercussions. What becomes more paramount is to understand and learn a way to deal with these repercussions, to learn the skills to use platforms in constructive ways, for production of novelty, innovation and art. Digital spaces sure have their perils but also have brought an unforeseen convenience. Responsibility lies with the state and citizens to make it a better place for sharing, connecting and creating. What needed is to find the fine balance, progressive developments of technology, not disruptions.

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