

February 2020
Vol. VIII, Issue-II

Indexed to Cosmos Foundation

ISSN: 2319-3689



Impact Factor: 5.19

Critical Space[®]

A Peer-reviewed (refereed) International Journal
in English Language and Literature



Editors

Dr. H. B. Patil

Dr. Sudhir Lendave



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Published by

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Registration Number of the Newspaper | MAHENG/2012/55583 |
| 3. भाषा/भाषाएं, जिसमें/जिनमें समाचारपत्र प्रकाशित किया जाता है
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Retail selling price of the newspaper | ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RS.1800/- |
| 6. प्रकाशक का नाम/Publisher's Name
राष्ट्रीयता/Nationality
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657, UDYAM CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY, Y.P. POWAR NAGAR, KOLHAPUR-416012, MAHARASHTRA |
| 10. प्रकाशन का स्थान
Place of publication | SHASTRI NAGAR, WAGHWADI ROAD, ISLAMPUR, TAL WALWA, DIST-SANGLI-415409, MAHARASHTRA |

दिनांक /Date:

12 MAY 2014

Cert Ser No. 44018

Mohan Chandak
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(मोहन चांडक MOHAN CHANDAK)

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NRI Registration No. MAHENG/2012/55583

Critical Space

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Volume VIII, Issue-II

February 2020

ISSN: 2319-3689

EDITORIAL

Greetings to All...! In the period when a pandemic is hitting badly to the world, it is also becomes very difficult to carry on the academic venture like publishing journal, but it is the commitment and determination to the academic goals of the Journal that we make it possible and publishing the issue with inevitable delay of one month. As usual the journal has received number of research papers on variety of topics. Many of the research papers received for the February issue are still with the reviewers and they are delayed only due to the hurdles caused by Covid-19. But I assure you as soon as we receive the reviewer's remarks and appropriate suggested changes, these papers will be considered for the next issue with priority.

In the present issue you will read how the ecological perspective can be adopted to enrich our understanding of the literature which otherwise many times remained uncovered. The Eco-criticism therefore has emerged as one of the most significant research avenues of the contemporary academics. *Critical Space* writing community has also responded with few very seminal eco-critical analyses of the literature that not only gives a perfect demonstration of how to apply theory in praxis, but it also brings out certain new angles to the eco-critical understanding. Besides eco-criticism, there are few more recurrent critical interests that can be seen in the previous issues of *Critical Space*; they are Subaltern Literature, Diaspora Studies, Cultural Studies and Feminist School of thoughts. In the present issue also, we came across the papers that were contributed in this direction.

It is really a great feeling that the *Critical Space* is providing a platform to such issues that are significant in social, cultural and literary

contexts. The publication of these critical issues also makes the journal, one of the most demanded among the worldwide academic community. I hope that present issue will be useful to you to understand the literature and culture from different perspectives. I also hope that all of you are doing well and keeping yourself healthy and joyous.

— Dr H. B. Patil

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An Ecocritical Approach to Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*

Dr Swatti Dhanwni*

Abstract:

Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary concept that studies environment through literature. In the middle of the nineteenth century many American writers like Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson talked about the threats posed by urbanization and industrialization to the environment. Henry David Thoreau the great American writer and environmentalist in his classic work *Walden* (1854) records his impressions as he rejects the city life, goes in the woods and builds a small hut near the Walden pond to live close to nature. Thoreau liberated himself from the trappings of city life to "live deep and suck the marrow out of life". He wanted to live life simply without "modern improvements". *Walden* records the aesthetic experience of nature which is lost when work dominates lives. This paper aims to bring forth Thoreau's critique of contemporary attitude of consumerism and materialistic approach of man towards nature.

Keywords: consumerism, Ecocriticism, environment, urbanization, industrialization, etc.

Nature has been represented in literature from the very beginning. Pastoral form of poetry inaugurated by the Greek Theocritus in the third century B. C depicted ideal rural life, beautiful landscapes, life of simplicity, harmony and peace which were lost in the urban society. The nature writing form with detailed description of environment was initiated in England with Gilbert white's *Natural History and Antiquities of Selbourne* (1789). This tradition was further carried by Romantic writers especially Wordsworth who viewed Nature as a teacher source of inspiration and worshipped nature. By the mid of the nineteenth century, writers like Thoreau called attention to the depletion of natural resources and conserving the environment. Writers like John Muir and

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John Burroughs advocated for preserving American wilderness. It was under this climate of environment crisis ecocriticism was initiated.

Lance Newman in his work *Our Common Dwelling: Henry Thoreau, Transcendentalism and the Class Politics of Nature* refers to Lawrence Buell, American scholar and a pioneer of ecocriticism who defines the term as the “study of the relation between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of environmental praxis” simply said it is the study of relationship between literature and the physical environment. (qtd in Newman 2).

M H Abrahams defines,

Ecocriticism designates the critical writings which explore the relations between literature and the biological and physical environment conducted with an acute awareness of the devastation being wrought on that environment by human activities. (81)

Ecocriticism developed from the traditional approaches about the treatment of nature in literature such as nature writing practiced by American writers like Thoreau. The term ecocriticism was introduced in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” which investigates the critical writings that explore the interrelation between all forms of plant and animal life to humans. Later in 1989 Glen A. Love called for “an ecological literary criticism” in his address to the Western American Literature Association. His inspiring words laid the foundation of Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE). The association represents a movement where ecocritics re-examine not only the European tradition of nature poetry and the nineteenth century American literature but they also re-examine literature written across the globe from environmental perspective. However, some critics also turn to texts that embody green values. Critics like Jonathan Bate refer to English Romantic poetry as containing environmental awareness. The focus area of ecocritics have not only been poetry and non-fiction writing but also epics, stories, dramas and sacred texts

[2]

Serpil Opperman in *New International Voices in Ecocriticism* says, Ecocriticism has become a complex area of study with scholarship across Asia, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Latin America. Ecocriticism has no particular method but it is a distinct field of critical inquiry. Opperman refers to Laurence Coupe who explains that ecocriticism has no central dominant theme rather the boundaries of ecocriticism are being redefined everyday by the literary scholars. The first stage of development of ecocriticism called as first wave ecocriticism focused on the significance of developing ethical relationship with nature through nature writing and conservation-oriented environmentalism. The second wave focussed on redefining environment through increased concern with issue of environmental welfare and the engagement of environment with cultural studies. The third wave concentrates on ecocriticism transcending geographical boundaries to acquire global status (4).

The present paper aims to bring forth Thoreau's critique of contemporary attitude of consumerism and materialistic approach of man towards nature through his work *Walden*

Henry David Thoreau (1817-62) is now regarded as a classic in American literature, an environmentalist and a conserver of nature. He was a resident of Concord which was also the centre for Transcendentalism. His journal *Walden* has received wide critical praise and appreciation. Thoreau was intellectual companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson another great literary figure of American Literature and a transcendentalist. Both went for long walks in forests for Thoreau loved being in woods, fishing and exploring the countryside around Concord. Thoreau's philosophy and his methods inspired Gandhi's Civil Disobedience movement.

Thoreau had no steady source of income but whenever he was in need of money he turned to odd jobs like carpentering, school teaching, gardening, pencil making, lecturing and surveying. E. B. White in "Concerning Henry Thoreau" observes: "Although he had the curiosity of a naturalist and the drive of a reformer, Thoreau believed that the big thing was not to create a better

mousetrap, or a better lead pencil, or even a better book, but a better man.” (Thoreau xv).

In 1840, Thoreau made his mind to live alone in the woods, close to nature. In July 1845, he went to stay in the woods and stayed there until September 1847 and the result was *Walden* which he subtitled as ‘Life in the Woods’. The time he spent in woods near Walden pond was an experiment in living that Thoreau conducted. The time of two years gave him ample opportunity to observe nature and his own soul, to read, write, work on field and live with nature. Later, he condensed the experience of two years to one year for artistic unity.

Thoreau wanted to live simple life close to nature and away from society in which “the mass of men leads lives of quiet desperation.” Thoreau clearly states his purpose of going to live in woods near Walden pond “was not to live cheaply nor to live dearly there, but to transact some private business with the fewest obstacles” (13). Further he adds, “I wanted to live deep and smuck out all the marrow of life” (66).

Walden clearly shows that Thoreau lived in a perfect harmony with nature for two years. In the chapter, Economy which lays the foundation of the work, Thoreau suggests that we should look more closely at the way we manage our time and money, and the way we manage our lives. Thoreau believes that man has reduced himself to a machine and is more engaged in “factitious cares” and “coarse labours” and misses out to enjoy the fine things of life.

Arthur Compton Rickett in *A History of English Literature* notes that the *Walden* episode represented the totality of Thoreau’s life. He writes that Thoreau went to Walden not to escape life but to fit himself for ordinary life. Thoreau had touch of wildness in his nature which made simple life attractive to him and especially critical of modern civilisation. Hence, life in woods came naturally to him. To any man luxuries and comfort mean so much but Thoreau remained indifferent to them. Compton writes that “He saw even more clearly

than Emerson the futility and debilitating effect of extravagance and luxury—especially American Luxury” (640).

Thoreau believes that man is most concerned about three things in his life- i Food ii. Clothing iii. Shelter and iv. fuel. Man works hard to obtain these necessities of life. He gives a list of things needed for survival like knife, axe, lamplight, stationery, books all obtained at a small cost. Man needs fuel only to prepare food. Fuel apart from cooking is then unnecessary. Yet some wise and rich need fuel to keep their body warm during winters. They work hard throughout their lives to finally die in their native land. Thoreau believes that the comforts of life for which man works hard or one may say spends his whole life to acquire are actually not indispensable but hindrance to what Thoreau calls “elevation of mankind”. E. B White believes that in *Walden* Thoreau,

took man’s relation to Nature and man’s dilemma in society and man’s capacity for elevating his spirit and he bet all these matters together, in a wild free interval of self –justification and delight and produced an original omelette from which people can draw nourishment in a hungry day. (Thoreau viii)

Thoreau considers that clothes should not be the criteria for judging a man. He himself never underestimates a man by the patch on his clothes. A man should not be eager to wear fashionable clothes rather it is more important for a man to have sound conscience. Thoreau in fact writes, “I say, beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of clothes. If there is not a new man, how can the new clothes be made to fit?”. He calls clothes only as “outmost circle” and “mortal coil” (16).

Richard J Schneider in *Thoreau’s Sense of Place: Essays in American Environmental Writing* maintains that Thoreau falls in the category of writers who are defenders of nature and pursue people not to observe nature just as a commodity (4). Thoreau writes that we build houses by “robbing the nests and breasts of birds to prepare this shelter within a shelter” (9). We have advanced from the time when man lived in caves to man living under the roofs of palms, of

barks to houses made of stones and tiles but man has forgotten to live in open air. He considers the plight of man who is harassed to death to pay rent for “luxurious box” (20). He considers shelter only as an external garment which only makes a man poorer. He argues that if civilization is advancement then the cost of comfortable dwelling is life. Thoreau calls Nature as our common dwelling believing environment not only for humans but for the nonhuman world too. Lawrence Buell argues that Walden works through Eurocentric, homocentric and androcentric culture to finally arrive at an environmentally responsive vision (qtd in Newman 9).

Thoreau takes the case of farmers of Concord who are so poor that they work their entire life to own the land which they cultivate. Only handful of farmers in Concord have their own land. He believes that the wisest people have lived their lives in “involuntary poverty”

Thoreau writes:

While civilization has been improving our houses, it has not equally improved the men who are to inhabit them. It has created palaces but it was not so easy to create noblemen and kings. (24)

Thoreau is sad to resign the pleasure of building his own house to carpenter and therefore takes the task of building the house. He gives the total expense of building the house which he finds lesser when compared to annual rent of a room paid by a student at Cambridge College on fourth floor. Thoreau calls the inventions only as “improved means to an unimproved end” (37) as they distract our attention from the serious things of life. Thoreau used little furniture in his cell like a bed, a table, a desk, three chairs and few utensils to cook which cost him nothing. From the experience of two years Thoreau believes that a man can survive and remain healthy if he abstains from eating meat. The chapter Higher Laws is a critique of hunting, fishing and meat eating. Thoreau writes:

No humane being past the thoughtless age of boyhood, will wantonly murder any creature, which holds its life by the same

[6]

tenure that he does...I have found repeatedly, of late years, that I cannot fish without falling a little in self-respect... I believe that every man who has ever been earnest to preserve his higher or poetic faculties in the best condition has been particularly inclined to abstain from animal food, and from much food of any kind. (157)

Variety of food is needed only to please the palette and not for health. Thoreau sets an example for others by writing that for more than five years he lived only by his own labour and was able to meet all expenses. He wished to earn only ten or twelve dollars. For this, he planted the two and a half acres of land with potatoes, corn, peas and turnips. He advises every citizen of New England to make his own bread and thus he will not be dependent on markets where fresh and sweet meal is rarely sold. Thus, a man could live easily if he were to live “simply and wisely” (51).

Philip Cafaro in his landmark text *Thoreau's Living Ethics: Walden and the Pursuit of Virtue* asserts that Thoreau's *Walden* inspires environmental virtue ethics and connects human development to awareness and conservation of environment. He calls Thoreau as one of the earliest and strongest critics of anthropocentrism- a belief that human beings can dominate and use nature and nonhuman world as they wish to (68).

In the chapter Bean field, Thoreau talks about his experience of cultivating the bean field: “My enemies are worms, cool days, and most of all woodchucks. The last have nibbled for me a quarter of an acre clean. But what right had I to oust johnswort and the rest, and break up their ancient herb garden?” (113).

Thoreau raises a question “But why should I raise them?” and then immediately answers “Only heaven knows”. Cafaro observes that clearing the land and trapping woodchucks was necessary to protect the bean field. However, Thoreau came to the awareness to live simply and take only what you need. Thoreau begins by being an animal rights activist to being a true

environmental ethicist. He mentions woodchuck to be an enemy but then believes that woodchuck and a man can have equal rights. (75)

While working on the field Thoreau was conscious of the sounds of thrasher, nighthawk, hen-hawks and wild pigeons and believed it to be “inexhaustible entertainment which the country offers” (116). Cafaro strongly believes that such moments of break make one identify the not only the role of nature as a poet, a painter and a scientist and to appreciate the intrinsic value of nature but also create know and experience the richness of nature. (76)

The chapter Ponds gives respectful and loving account of Walden Pond and the other ponds surrounding it. Thoreau believes that any natural object is the most innocent and encouraging to him. Cafaro believes that it is this personal and friendly connection with nature which helped him to sustain through his solitary days at pond. Thoreau went to the pond for self-development and artistic achievement but wrote a work titled *Walden* and not something titled about himself with ‘I’. In this way Thoreau was observing environmental virtue ethics where human and nature merge with each other (82-4)

Cafaro contrasts the farmer Flint with Thoreau and observes that the farmer cannot see the rich green plants and animals inhabiting nearby. He is interested to see the pond and its inhabitants only as a resource. Therefore, he is unable to connect the pond and its history to his own life (85) Thus, Thoreau gives us a choice of how we relate to nature. By only looking at the resourcefulness of nature for consumption we miss out on the beauty and higher uses.

Some readers believe that Thoreau suggest the superiority of nature over humans or to withdraw from society, however, his return to village at the end of his stay at the pond strengthens the fact that it was only an experiment. (Cafaro 87)

Jay Parini notes that ecocriticism-

marks a return to activism and social responsibility; it also signals a dismissal of theory's more solipsistic tendencies. From a literary aspect, it marks a re-engagement with realism, with the actual universe of rocks, trees and rivers that lies behind the wilderness of signs. (qtd. in Newman 9)

Thoreau's environmental ethics too demand for using natural resources wisely and preserving the wild. This is also validated in the conclusion of *Walden* as Thoreau concludes by seeking to preserve wild nature for their own as well as nature's sake. Thoreau sums up his argument in following words:

Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wilderness,- to wade sometimes in marshes where the bitterns and the meadow -hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground...We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander. (232)

Thus, the literary representation of nature has provoked critics to think ecocritically and to critique anthropocentric approaches to nature that is humans were born to dominate over nature which is rooted in the biblical account of creation. Glen Love argues that the major role of literature is to focus on the threatened natural environment. Thus, ecocritics critique anthropocentric attitude, thinking humans to be dominating over nature or nature as passive. Thoreau inaugurated the tradition of American nature writing. Today ecocritics regard Thoreau as one of the first defenders of wilderness. (Newman 8). Hence, Thoreau's critique of anthropocentric attitude is clearly found in *Walden* where he gives an example of living, simply and harmoniously with nature without exploiting the resources.

[9]

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**Parochial Hegemony, Religion and Man-Woman
Relationship in Kunzang Choden's *The Circle of Karma***

Dr Shashikant R. Mhalunkar*

Abstract:

Kunzang Choden's debut novel *The Circle of Karma* depicts the Bhutanese social, familial, marital and religious contours minutely. The novel is based upon the Buddhist philosophy of predestination and karma. It exhibits the lives of gomchens, lamas, Rinpoches, the Buddhist monks and nuns who devote their lives for prayers, chanting and worship. The author sketches the parochial dominance in religion, religious practices and marital relationships. Tsomo, an uneducated protagonist of the narrative undergoes a marathon of experiences in familial, religious, social and marital spaces, unfolds the hegemony of patriarchy in every walk of life. The present paper attempts to examine the parochial dominance in religion and conjugal relationship in Bhutan. Tsomo experiences dominance of man in religion through her father who is a gomchen. She is not allowed to learn reading and writing by him. Similarly, she is made to believe that she is inferior to learn religion as she is a girl. In her marital relationships with Wangchen and further with Lhatu, she is mistreated. In every space she is pushed to peripheries by men. Throughout her life she experiences hardships due to the parochial hegemony. It is in the company of the learned Rinpoche, she gets the opportunity to become a nun, Ani Samphela, and overcome her hurdles and reach sublimity through religion.

Keywords: Religious scriptures, man-woman relations, pregnancy, etc.

Kunzang Choden, a Bhutani writer narrates the life story of Tsomo, an uneducated female protagonist whose life goes through turmoil and hardships in her debut novel, *The Circle of Karma* (2005). The novel portrays the life of common Bhutanese in the wake of industrialization of mid-twentieth century

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through Tsomo who is the first daughter of a family of twelve in Wangleng, a small village in Bhutan. The novel portrays the life and struggle of Tsomo since her birth as a malnourished, wrinkled child till her seventies wherein she reaches sublimity. Her father is a gomchen, a lay monk whose outlook on life is deeply influenced by the Buddhist concept of predestination and karma; who, after the death of his wife in childbirth within a year marries a girl of Tsomo's age. The narrative throws light upon the religiosity of people, their beliefs, superstitions, traditions and man-woman relationship. It also brings out multiple migrations, spaces, places, locations and culture through clothes, food, religion and marital relationships.

Pema Tsomo, known as Tsomo was born as a malnourished baby with wrinkles in a small village of Wangleng. She is the third child and the eldest daughter of her family, as a result, she develops a good bond with her mother. Her father is a gomchen who is always busy in his religious activities and rituals. *The Circle of Karma* depicts masculine supremacy and feminine sufferings and subjugation. Kunzang Choden makes it clear in the early pages of her narrative when Tsomo's mother tells her, "You poor girl, you will not have riches. Your horoscope said material prosperity would elude you but if you practise religion you will be reborn as a man in your next life." (Choden 2) This throws light upon the fact how women are subjugated in Bhutanese culture and men are privileged as they are men. Also, it triggers in Tsomo the urge to learn religion and to read and write like men. Choden develops the novel around the female subjects who are either subjugated or marginalised but the same subjugated female subjects rise beyond their masculine counterparts in the end. Tsomo's mother is referred as Mother that signifies her role of conceiving, delivering and rearing children. She delivers twelve children, and, in delivering the twelfth child, she is so feeble that she fails to deliver the baby and both the Mother and the baby die. Tsomo's Mother is always at home working throughout the day. Her prime duty is to take care of her husband and her children. Her husband is so busy in religious practices that the entire burden of farming is on Mother. "Tsomo never heard Mother complain. She was big strong and brave woman and she did not

complain about anything.” (6) The writer shows how women have to keep working like bonded labours in homes accepting the supremacy of men in the parochial social milieu. Also, Tsomo’s Mother teaches Tsomo the culture of household and responsibilities of women in the family. She trains Tsomo, ‘You are the oldest girl, you have to learn to take the responsibilities of the household.’ (8)

The Circle of Karma articulates the subjugation of women wherein Tsomo is not allowed to learn reading and writing. On the contrary, her father who has come to stay in her mother’s home after marriage, does not teach Tsomo because she is a girl. It is Tsomo’s feminine identity that prohibits her from learning religion. He teaches his male students in his home but never thinks to educate his daughter. The psychopathology of the Bhutanese is evident when they think that being born as a boy has a better birth and the merits of the previous birth. Kunzang brings out Tsomo’s suffocation connecting with the philosophy of predestination and karma:

She longs to be educated, to learn to read and write and chant those beautiful prayers like them...Being born a male already has the advantage of a better birth and now they are being helped to accumulate more merit for their next birth. How would girls ever accumulate more merit if they were not taught religion? Being a girl is equal to being in a bad situation. She wonders what her next birth will be. Perhaps she can have a better chance if she hosts many readings of the scriptures when she grows up and has her own house. She has seen that this is one of the ways of getting some merit as a woman. (20)

Further, the author throws light upon the subjugation of women that begins from childhood at home. It is the culture of parochial dominance that prohibits Tsomo from education. Tsomo watches how the boys practice calligraphy and strongly desires to learn how to read and write and learn religion. But her father who represents social and religious supremacy prohibits

her and restrains her to domestic chores expecting her to learn better servitude for the parochial society:

You are a girl. You are different. You learn other things that will make you a good woman and a good wife. Learn to cook, weave and all those things. A woman does not need to know how to read and write,' Father says quietly but sternly when she asks him to teach her."

Bitter tears of rejection sting her eyes. She hangs her head and lets the tears fall to the floor, unseen by the others. She looks to Mother, hoping that she will support her, just a word or a gesture, but Mother just smiles and says nothing. (21)

At the age of twelve, Tsomo learns how to cook and weave. She desperately wishes to learn how to read and write and learn religion. Her father never appreciates her efforts, on the other hand he nullifies her efforts to learn religion. She remains awake throughout the night during religious rituals, trying to learn them. For instance, Tsomo's emotional upheavals are evident when *chod*, a religious ceremony is being performed in the house. The author narrates the connectivity of Tsomo with religion and also of her mother who are prohibited from the regime of religion and religious rituals as they are women. The writer anticipates the restlessness of the women in the narrative:

Chod is usually performed in the night and it always moved her to tears. The solitary sound of hand drum to the accompaniment of a single bell and the chanting at a very special tone sends a chill down her spine and fill her with an intense longing for something that she cannot name. Perhaps Mother feels the same, for Tsomo often sees her wiping away silent tears from her eyes as she sits in the corner of the altar room listening to the rituals. (Choden 22)

Primarily *The Circle of Karma* deals with the notion of karma in Bhutani culture. Birth, death and every event in the lives of the Bhutanese in the novel are

associated with karma. It is used as an instrument to subjugate women as it is believed that female birth is inferior to male birth. The Bhutanese believe that being born as a female is because the female has not accumulated ample of good deeds in her previous life. "If only she had been born a boy but she had not accumulated enough virtue to be born as a boy." (22).

Conversely to this philosophy, Tsomo's father tells her the story of Machig Lhapdrön who was a miraculous woman, a great Tibetan saint who popularised the practice of *chod*. The ritual is an offering of one's body to feed every conceivable kind of being and to satisfy every kind of desire. This religious ritual is introduced by a woman, but it is being performed by men. In religious stories women make every possible sacrifice. But they are kept away from religion and religious rituals. Tsomo articulates, "And now the men perform this ritual as if they were the only ones allowed to practise it and they said that women should learn to become good women." (22)

Further, Tsomo observes her father as a staunch patriarch who believes that religion is purely a masculine domain. Tsomo is restricted to cooking and weaving and farming. Her desire to learn religion is never understood by her father. It is her feminine identity that prohibits her from learning religion. She has to bury her desire to learn religion. Tsomo's suffocation is evident when Kunzang narrates:

Years go by and she realizes that Father will not relent. That is the way her father is. He says little but whatever he says is final and no one dares to question him. What can she do? All she can do is to bury her dreams of learning religion deeper and deeper, until it becomes a distant unfulfilled dream. If only she had been a boy—but she had not accumulated enough virtue to be born a boy. (22)

Kunzang Choden vocalizes the feminine identity of Tsomo that restricts her from many human rights. Several times Tsomo repeats a common lament, 'I am only a woman.' It is the karma that she accepts consciously and completely that she is born as a woman because she is inferior to men and it is due the

karma of earlier birth. Even the elderly women in the village approve the idea of karma and the subaltern status of women. They say, “Yes, we are women, Tsomo. We are different. We must be less ambitious and more subdued. We are not like the men.” (23) This underlines the collective consciousness of women as inferior to men. Gradually, when Tsomo is fourteen years old she develops friendship with Jurme, one of the boys who visited her house as a student of her father. As the school in her house ceases, these boys start practising as independent professional readers of religious scriptures and rituals. Tsomo’s father has always appreciated Jurme for his talent and understanding. Jurme promises Tsomo to marry her when she will be little older. Tsomo is happy as she feels that her dream of reading, writing and learning religion is coming true through Jurme. Choden narrates:

‘And you will teach me to read and write?’ she had gushed.

‘Of course,’ he had said with an amused smile.

Tsomo could not stop smiling for days.

But he suddenly left and joined the monastery in Trongsa and she never saw him again. He had left without a word. She cried for him. She cried, doubly pained, by his sudden departure and his deceit. (24)

The author portrays the character of Tsomo’s father as a passive but dominant person in the narrative. His masculine supremacy and religious authority tower the family as he carves his special respectful space in family as well as in society. He never takes any responsibility of household work or of farming. The author showcases the masculine supremacy of Tsomo’s father in her family. This is neither demanded by him nor does he struggle for it. On the other hand, it is Mother who instructs her children about his superiority. Thus, parochial culture becomes dominant in Bhutanese familial spaces. Kunzang writes:

Mother was always thoughtful and respectful and fiercely loyal to her husband. 'You must never say anything against your father,' she would say, especially when she detected any signs of rebellion among children.

'All children must respect their father,' was the indisputable norm that she vigilantly upheld. (9)

Similarly, Kunzang chronicles the tradition of marriage in Bhutan. Marriage as a celebration is for the rich and noble people. The commons never celebrate marriage ceremoniously. Especially, in the rural western Bhutan man-woman relationship is based upon courting. This courting begins secretly and develops publicly. It also legitimizes premarital sex. Further, when a girl conceives, the man claims to be the father of the child and finally, through the ritual of *tshangma*, they are declared as husband and wife. Gradually, the writer narrates how a pregnant girl undergoes humiliation when her boyfriend does not come forward to claim the child. The Bhutanese blame the girl for her unpurified pregnancy. They blame such pregnant girls for any natural calamities that befall on the village. The Bhutanese hold responsible such pregnant girls for the disturbance in nature. Tsomo observes:

But when a woman became pregnant, she was obliged to announce it and have a purification ceremony called *tshangma*, for a pregnancy was seen as unclean unless purified. That was really a bad time for the girl unless she had a willing father for the child. If a woman did not perform *tshangma*, she would be held responsible for any natural catastrophes that befell the village that year.

Unpurified pregnancies disturbed the birth gods and the locality gods. Until the woman had performed the ceremony, she was accountable for all severe weather conditions, illnesses and deaths among humans and even cattle.

Whenever there was an unusual hailstorm, people immediately suspected a pregnant girl. Tsomo often heard the condemnation, 'A pregnant girl must have gone to the mountains and polluted the sacred place.' (36-37)

The Circle of Karma throws light upon how women are chained by their biological features of their body and the social rigidities. The customs in Bhutan set free the man whereas the woman is blamed in sexual relations. Kunzang showcases how unpurified pregnant women are humiliated in society when the father of the unborn child does not step forward to claim it. In other words, the sexual relationship between a man and a woman results into a successful marriage when the man claims the baby in the womb of the woman. But, if he does not claim it, the woman has to suffer and the entire village mocks the girl whereas the man responsible for her pregnancy is never blamed or punished. The author explains how Chimme undergoes the humiliation under the garb of culture:

She has the traditional white scarf, *khoda*, around her neck. Next to her, on another mat, is a figure of a man made out of dough. Chimme is four months pregnant and the father of her unborn child is unwilling to marry her.

Chimme's mother and friends begged her to hire a person to sit beside her for the purification ceremony, but she refused. 'Look, if the real father is so untrustworthy to deny his own flesh and blood, why should I humiliate myself further by taking the trouble of hiring a person to represent him?...

'But it is better to have a person than a dough effigy and you can surely get one of the boys from the village to do it for a small fee. It is our custom. Why don't you follow it?' asked her mother, hoping that Chimme would change her mind.

'A dough effigy is good enough. This is also our custom. Isn't that what you did when you were pregnant with me, mother?' (38-39)

Subsequently, *The Circle of Karma* highlights the parochial hegemony through Tsomo's father as after the death of Tsomo's mother, her father remarries and brings home a new wife within a year. This shows his patriarchal approach to life, that, how within a year he needs a female companion. Further, he states that he is a person of higher social and religious status who cannot stay without a wife. He advocates, "A person of my position cannot do without a wife. There must be a woman to welcome, entertain and see off guests and see the daily affairs of the house. The house should not feel like a cold cave." (64) He marries Tashi Lhamo, a girl from Trongsa, is of Tsomo's age. Tsomo's father is such a patriarch that he never acknowledges the work done by Tsomo and Kesang. He never appreciates the household work done by his daughters. They also suffer like Mother who used to toil day in and day out. After the death of Mother, Tsomo's father never utters her name. The writer narrates, "Tsomo's father has never uttered Mother's name since she died. He refers to her as 'the one who is finished.' Yes, indeed she is finished. Finished and gone." (68) She is finished by the parochial hegemony, the masculine desires, expectations and customs bullied upon her by the parochial and religious representative.

On her way to Trongsa, Tsomo develops love and sexual relations with Wangchen, who is a married man and with a daughter. When Tsomo gets pregnant, and she is worried about Wangchen to return to her, he comes to her and Tsomo's life settles with the purification ceremony. Soon, she delivers a still baby and her hardships begin. Consequently, Wangchen starts neglecting her when Tsomo needs him the most. On the other hand, he is attracted to Kesang, the beautiful younger sister of Tsomo. Tsomo 'felt a loneliness that chilled her to the marrow of her bones.' It is through Wangchen, the writer showcases the promiscuity of men under the guise of masculine hegemony. This also underlines the Bhutani culture of polygamy wherein Wangchen betrays women one after the other. The cycle of karma turns to Tsomo when Tsomo's husband betrays her and goes to the bed of Kesang. Here, Tsomo realises that she had betrayed a woman by snatching away Wangchen from her; now it is her turn wherein Kesang is taking away her husband.

The author projects the rural Bhutanese culture of suitors who haunt the house of the young and beautiful girls. These suitors are aggressive who dare to climb the windows and sometimes the roofs of the houses. It is evident when Kesang, the younger sister of Tsomo, turns seventeen and looks more beautiful than before. Tsomo had to threaten the suitors, "Every time the sly acrobats scaled the walls and came in through the windows or the blatant ones banged on the doors, she shouted 'I have hot ash in the hearth and I will not hesitate to throw it on you.'" (85)

The culture of parochial dominance is evident when Tsomo accepts her ill body, ill fate and a non-loving husband. "Tsomo endured his beatings in silence, after all he was a man and she was only a woman. Now she understood why so many women said, 'Being born a woman is to suffer.' '...Don't hit Tsomo so much. Do you want to see what a corpse looks like? She has just lost her baby and all this black and blue on her face. It's coward who hits his helpless wife.'" (92) Wangchen dominates her and treats her like a slave. He wants to get divorce from Tsomo through her signature on the agreement made by her father during their marriage, so that he can marry Kesang. Even Kesang does not help her. Wangchen has lost all his interest in Tsomo. He says, "Look at you, who would want you?" with this he got up and kicked her in the ribs. Stars flashed. She reeled and fell back into her blankets from the sitting position she had been in and blacked out. She doesn't know whether she imagines it or if it's real, but she still feels some pain in her ribs." (93)

Gradually, Choden introduces another woman, Dechen Choki, a twenty-two-year-old beautiful girl who joins Tsomo as a shelterless companion in her hut when Tsomo works as a stone breaker on road on the workers' camp. Dechen Choki has ran away from her home as she is molested by her stepfather. He molested her secretly and insulted her publicly. She decides to die of hardships and hunger rather than returning home that has turned into hell for her. Both Tsomo and Dechen Choki suffer due to men. Dechen Choki says, "Our stories are so similar and yet so different. Everything happened because we are women. You loved a man and suffered. I hated the man and suffered." (109)

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Further, as the workers camp moves ahead, Tsomo along with Dechen Choki moves ahead like a nomad. But the ill luck follows them in the face of the lajab, a supervisor on workers who molests Dechen Choki every now and then. Dechen Choki has fled from her home only to avoid molestation by a man, and now, she is molested by another man. "She had been forced, she had been raped." (120) Tsomo tries to console her saying, "It's not your fault. Your only problem is being a woman. We cannot change that but we have to stay strong." (Choden 121) Dechen Choki is raped repeatedly by the lajab. Even Tsomo knows it but both the women are helpless. Further, the lajab's wife follows him of the work camp and finds the lajab teasing Dechen Choki, but instead of accusing him, she accuses Dechen Choki as a whore and a husband stealer.

The author portrays woman-woman relationship as the best option in this narrative as they progress on their path of individualism and spiritual attainment. "One of the strengths of the book is its portrayal of the series of exuberant and warm friendships Tsomo makes throughout her life with other women. Many of these relationships, such as her bond with Dechen Choki – a young woman Tsomo saves from being raped repeatedly by their supervisor when they are working as manual labourers – are founded on the women's shared experience of adversity." (Morgan)

Gradually, After Dechen Choki gets married and moves away with Tesing, Tsomo starts living all alone in her hut. Tsomo meets Ap Thinlay, an elderly gomchen whom she had met in Trongsa, who suggests her that she should get a husband. Further, he tells her that his friend Lhatu, a gomchen, much younger than Tsomo is interested to marry her. Initially, Tsomo declines the proposal and prefers her independence. After Ap Thinlay's departure, Lhatu comes and stays with Tsomo in her hut and the relationship between them as husband wife begins. Tsomo does not show the courage to terminate Lhatu from her hut. The relationship between them is very mechanical and abrupt. 'Their conversations were always strained and they spoke little but they were both getting used to having each other around.' (Choden 202) He has turned her world upside down as she never finds him chanting any prayers. He is a gomchen but he never talks

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of religion, chanting or prayers. Further, it is Tsomo who runs the home as Lhatu does not contribute a single rupee towards food. He always addresses her as 'woman' which signifies that he never loves her but treats her as a stranger.

In the Massoorie hospital, when she is admitted for her surgery, Tsomo is alone and Lhatu is always missing. He meets her as a visitor. In the hospital, they rarely talk and his visits always leave her feeling demoralized and distracted. Even after the surgery, Lhatu never supports her when she requires him and his support the most. One the day of her discharge from the hospital, Lhatu does not wait for her at the room in the hospital premise, on the contrary, he is absconding as usual. Tsomo never feels strange about it. Choden narrates the estranged relationship between Tsomo and Lhatu, "Their room was locked and her husband was nowhere in sight. She felt neither surprised nor angry, just a calm sense of resignation. She had somehow expected him to do this. He knew the date and time she would be discharged from the hospital. She had told him several times." (226) Further, Lhatu is so careless about Tsomo that he never inquiries about her health. He even does not bother to ask her about how she managed to enter the room. Lhatu is a lazy man who spends his time in doing nothing but wandering all the day out aimlessly. But when he finds that Tsomo talks affectionately with Samphel, the Tibetan cook, he becomes possessive about his wife. He expresses his machoism, "I do not tolerate any nonsense. I am warning you. I'll break every bone in that body of yours, if you humiliate me with your good friends." (234)

Tsomo weaves Bhutanese bags that become popular soon in Dehradun. Further, the Rinpoche advises them to go to Delhi where both Tsomo and Lhatu will get engaged in some work. Delhi, being the capital of India, Lhatu will get the job in printing the Buddhist scripts whereas, Tsomo will weave the Bhutanese bags and sell them in Delhi. This triggers the migration of Tsomo and Lhatu. But in this new place too, Tsomo earns for her family whereas Lhatu does nothing. On the other hand, he is involved in gambling. But when she inquires about his whereabouts, he is always curt and dismissive. The sense of loneliness in Tsomo develops more prominently in Delhi. "But with each passing day Tsomo grew

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lonelier and her thoughts turned to her friends and relatives back home.” (247) Tsomo lives on a false hope of Lhatu’s affection, which she finds nowhere. As time passes, she finds the deceptive nature of her husband. Now, she feels to leave him and go back to Bhutan. But Bhutan seems far away from Delhi. She is hopelessly trapped in a strange humid place with a strange and obscure man. The relationship between Tsomo and Lhatu goes for a toss as she knows that he is a gambler and a deceitful man. Choden narrates:

Lhatu and she maintained a cool, detached, and dispassionate relationship. Their disagreements and arguments were a thing of past now. He had his friends who, Tsomo soon discovered, included mostly Bhutanese young females. The two of them now lived separate lives, which merged once in a while only because they are husband and wife. (254)

Gradually, Tsomo knows that Lhatu has developed another relationship with a Bhutani woman. Also, he has hired a room for her in Phuentsoling; and as a result, he goes often times to Phuentsoling. Tsomo realizes that her existence in the life of Lhatu was like an old shirt that is thrown away as soon as he gets a new mistress. Tsomo thinks, “It was not so much the anger and the loneliness but the question of being so valueless that hurt her. How could she be cast aside so easily after all these years? She was not like an old shirt that could be easily discarded and forgotten” (262). Tsomo comes to know that once again she lost her husband to another woman. It is second time in her life that Tsomo confronts her second husband with another woman with his baby in her womb. She generalizes the statement about women and their lives, “Women internalized their problems and grief and believed that they were all at fault. Women were the thieves, stealing husbands from each other. Living in suspicion and hate.” (270)

Coming back to Kalimpong she lives on the charity of the food items given to the poor by the Christians. Also, she plasters the hut and plasters her past by removing the holes made by Lhatu. Once again, she is alone in her hut.

Gradually, she understands the loneliness of Pema Buti and the Rinpoche when she greets him with aura. The Rinpoche tells her that they were a mismatch. While advising her, he tell her his past-the marital discord in his life. "I was a lay man once and married to the most beautiful woman. But I was twenty-one and she was eighteen. That was a long time ago...more than fifty, nearly sixty years ago. She left me and I found my way to religion. I am grateful to her." (285) While listening to the sufferings of the Rinpoche, she forgets her suffering. Also, she realises that suffering is common with every human being. Further, the Rinpoche advises her to remember the moments of harmony and move forward in life. Before his death he converts her into a nun and gives her a new name, 'Ani Samphela'. Tsomo removes her silver earrings from her ears and the bracelets from her hands to offer them to the Guru Rinpoche. But she finds that these belongings are the markers of her identity and at the same time they are the tiny symbols of her vanity and ego. Also, she goes into a barber's saloon and gets shaved off her head; and emerges as a new human being without her past identity.

Now, Tsomo is ready with her shaven head to view the world through an unconventional way with her changed identity. She dreams of the Rinpoche and decides to see him. Soon she begins her journey to Phuentsoling from Kalimpong. But, after reaching Phuentsoling, she comes to know that the Rinpoche has passed away a month ago, and his body is taken away for the last rites at Thimphu. Tsomo stands alone on the bus-stand among the discarded plastic and paper wrappings of eatables, lost and alone. She spends a sleepless night on the bus stand in front of the ticket window. In Thimphu she pays her homage to the dead body of the Rinpoche. Here, she meets Lhatu who has turned into a businessman. Also, she meets her first husband Wangchen and Kesang and the grandchild of Kesang. This meeting makes her happy. But Tsomo is not interested in any human relations. She is connected with her mobility, migration, different places, and religion. Soon, she leaves for Phuentsoling from Thimphu. She does not stay at Phuentsoling, but moves ahead to Kalimpong.

In the end of the narrative, Choden showcases how Tsomo traverses from outside to inside—from the outer world to the inner peace of mind. She explores the outer world and then enters the inner one. The writer pens down, “The noises around her seemed to get more distinct and louder the more she tried to bring home silence to herself. Eventually she only heard own breath, in out, in out, and she concentrated on that. She saw nothing. She only felt the peace within.” (300)

Kunzang Choden states that as per the Bhutanese traditions, death costs more, especially, the rituals and rites after the death. Therefore, Tsomo sells her precious *zi*, the cultural and traditional marker of her family and makes money and deposits it in the bank, so that the expenses after her death should not be burdensome for anybody. Tsomo has learnt independence and detachment from relatives. Here, the writer projects Tsomo as a powerful human being than a meek woman. Her entry in religion as a nun, is her entry in the hegemonic domain wherein her character evolves above men.

The Epilogue shows how Tsomo conquers time and space. Lham Yeshe finds her everywhere in the Chorten. Tsomo leaves for Siliguri to see, His Holiness, the Dalai Lama who is the true Buddha of Compassion. She does not want to stay at Siliguri also. Further, she wants to go to Bodhgaya for the Great Prayer festival. For three years she wants to attend the festival and after coming back from Bodhgaya, she wants to spend her life in Bhutan visiting all the holy places. This highlights Tsomo’s personality as an independent person who is free from all restrictions and compulsions of gender roles, social cryptograph, and spatial fixities. Lham Yeshe thinks that Tsomo must have been visiting all the holy places in India. “She must be at some holy place for pilgrims. Why should she hurry back? She has all the time she needs. She makes her own time...Time is meaningless for her.” (315)

Choden exhibits Tsomo as a sublime character that conquers time and space. Lham Yeshe finds Tsomo as an enlightened figure like Buddha, everywhere in and around the chorten. This omniscient cannon of Tsomo’s

character is evident in the end of the novel wherein Tsomo's character grows beyond the restrictions of patriarchy, society, marital relationships, space, gender, time, and identity. Choden writes:

As she gazes at this oddly harmonious group, she sees her friend among them. Lham Yeshe sees her sitting between the two men, then her face, round, flat and open, glows between the man with the goitre and the white-headed woman. She sees her sitting with the dark faced woman next to the man in the mathra gho. Her head is covered with short white stubble. The creases on her face dance in her glowing smile. She wears a golden yellow coat, a shimmering background for her glowing face. Lham Yeshe turns to look among the devotees circumambulating the chorten, and she is there too, limping along. She is everywhere. She is there as if she is meant to be there. (316)

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Mahasweta Devi's *After Kurukshetra*: Subaltern Perspective

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Abstract:

Mahasweta Devi's *After Kurukshetra*, translated by Anjum Katyal, published in 2005, is a significant short story collection. Mahasweta Devi is a widely acclaimed writer, who has won her recognition in the form of the Sahitya Akadami and Jnanpeeth Awards amongst several other literary honours. The present paper is a modest attempt to analyse the representation of the unheard 'women subaltern' exploited within the patriarchal value structure reflected in Mahasweta Devi's *After Kurukshetra*. The novel contains three stories about the victims of Great War held at Kurukshetra. Initially, the paper presents the theoretical framework of subaltern theory focusing some subaltern concepts explained by major theorist useful for the analysis of the selected stories. Further it analyses three stories from subaltern perspective that uncovers a totally different angles to the interpretations of mythologies. Reading of these three stories from the subalternist's point of view and contemporary socio-cultural space in which they were created will throw light on the genesis of the concept 'Subaltern'.

Keywords: Subaltern, Lokvritta, Rajavritta, Widowhood, Injustice

The present paper is a modest attempt to analyse Mahasweta Devi's *After Kurukshetra* from subaltern perspective. Mahasweta Devi is a widely acclaimed writer who has won her recognition in the form of the Sahitya Akadami and Jnanpeeth Awards amongst several other literary honours. She is a prolific writer with innovative author's desire to voice out different socio-cultural and political issues and subjects with a passionate enthusiasm. The paper attempts to provide glimpses into the representation of unheard 'women subaltern' within the patriarchal value system. It further attempts to revisit and reflect upon the images of the female subaltern as represented in *After Kurukshetra*.

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This paper is designed within the theoretical framework of Subaltern Studies useful for the analysis of the selected stories with the brief discussion of the emergence of Subaltern concept as elaborated by Gramsci, Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak and others. Thus, it makes an attempt to place Mahasweta Devi's writings in the tradition of Subaltern studies.

Subaltern Studies is one of the significant academic theories in postcolonial Studies. It is one of the most discussed concepts in the post-colonial period. Along with – Minority-Majority, Centre-Periphery, Native-Migrant, Colonizer-Colonized, Savarna-Dalit, Class-Caste discord, Adivasi Movements, Feminist studies, third-world theorization – there are several other offshoots that can be encompassed under the umbrella rubric of Subaltern Studies. It can be traced back into the mystical literature of ancient civilizations like 100 Kauravas vs 5 Pandavas in *Mahabharat* to the Mob lynching of contemporary period. Therefore, the subaltern is not just a categorization of literature that encompasses a kind of oppression, suppression and exploitation in the name of different national, social, cultural, ethnic and gender identities, but on the contrary it is a critical perspective that appears as a significant tool to re-evaluate the corpus of literature for the most amazing facts that are otherwise may remain unexplored. Therefore, it becomes very difficult to claim to encompass all the major and minor offshoots of this perspective as it also dynamically moves with the history of human civilization. The subaltern thought becomes very vast as it significantly accommodates different national spaces that bring up new dimensions to the existing theory. The present paper attempts to explore the subaltern voices from Mahasweta Devi's *After Kurukshetra*.

Subaltern studies as an offshoot of postcolonial studies in the 1980's marked the emergence of new ways of studying different cultural and historical discourses across the world. Postcolonial discourse focused on the perception of non-western cultures by diagnosing and dismantling different forms of hegemony of the west over the rest of the world, whereas subaltern studies explained a different mode of writing histories from the minority perspective. Subaltern Studies emerged as an alternative to the dominant forms of historical

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analysis and nationalist historiography thus helping to raise national consciousness.

Subaltern is originally a term referred for subordinates in military hierarchies, and then elaborated in the works of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci to refer to groups who are outside the established structures of political representation. He affirmed that the subaltern was the term subjected to the people of underclass in a society on whom the dominant power puts forth its hegemonic power and impact. In general, subaltern classes include peasants, workers and other groups who have been denied access to hegemonic power. The subaltern studies in India began with Ranajit Guha's publication of collection of essays around 1980s by the group of eminent Indian scholars under the leadership of Ranajit Guha. The group attempted to restudy the Indian History and society; and in that way rewriting Indian historiography. The major thinkers associated with this group are Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak and Dipesh Chakravarti. The central objective of this study group was to retake history for the underclasses whose voices had been silenced. This group also comprises South Asian historians, social critics and scholars like Shahid Amin, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman, Sumit Sarkar et al.

According to Ranajit Guha, subaltern studies is a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way. While Gayatri Spivak in her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' challenges the idea of colonial (The Western) 'subject' and explains the limits of western discourse and even postcolonial discourse to interrelate with incongruent cultures. Spivak's essay marked a paradigmatic shift in subaltern studies. In it Spivak suggests that the subaltern is denied access to both mimetic and political forms of representation.

Another important figure in the subaltern studies is Deepesh Chakravarti, a Historian discusses the historical time and the story of mobilisation. Dipesh Chakravarti is remained the subalternist most concerned with Marxism. Thus, subaltern studies become a unique place for a new kind of

history from below, a people's history free from national constrictions. It also becomes entangled with efforts to re-imagine history itself.

According to Historian Coronil, we cannot ascend to a position of dominance over the voice, subjugating its words to the meanings we desire to attribute them. This can also be another form of discrimination. The power to narrate somebody's story is a heavy task. It is Spivak's question to the academic's engagement with the non-western others. Thus, according to Spivak in order to communicate truly with the subaltern native, the academics would have to remove him or herself as 'the expert' at the centre of the 'us' and 'them' binary social relation.

Thus, the concept of Subaltern in literary representation gained more prominence with Gayatri Spivak's essay 'Can the Subaltern speak? (1985).' In her essay she writes subaltern has no history and the women as gendered subaltern, is even more deeply in shadow (287). In other words, women are subjected to oppression more than subaltern men. The study of literary representation of women shows how patriarchal powers have been controlling women and the stereotypical roles are perpetuated. Women are represented as 'the Other', 'the Subaltern' on the basis of gender and social class. Mahasweta Devi voices such subalterns struggling with discriminatory practices in order to survive with dignity and self-assertion.

Spivak repeatedly alludes to the Shadow as the location of female subaltern and the role of Mahasweta Devi as a writer in the production of voice or voice lessness in her works with reference to the subordinated or othered in the society needs to be explored.

The present paper thus discusses Mahasweta Devi's *After Kurukshetra* by applying categorisation of gendered and class subaltern. Mahasweta Devi's *After Kurukshetra* contains three stories about the victims of Great War held at Kurukshetra. The first story 'The Five Women' revolves around the life of Uttara, a sister of the Prince of Matsya Kingdom Uttar and widowed wife of Abhimanyu. The story points out the difference between life of widow from a

royal family and widows of underclass people. The second story 'Kunti and Nishadin' reveals how Kunti accepts her injustice to Karna but at the same time forgets her bigger injustice which ended the lives of six tribal innocents in *Mahabharat's* Lakshagriha incident. The third story, 'Souvali' deals with the feelings of Yuyutstu, the illegal son of Dhrutrashtra and the otherness. Analysis of these three stories from the subalternist point of view and contemporary socio-cultural space in which they were created will throw light on the genesis of the concept 'Subaltern'.

Mahasweta Devi's fictional narratives have been widely read and recognized as the voices of the muted and the silenced representatives of the gender margins. Her contribution to what is called by Gayatri Spivak the gendered subaltern is remarkable. The stories in *After Kurukshetra* are presented from subalternist's point of view i. e. from the women's language marked by their feelings and thoughts. Though the different women who appeared to have their stories told – Uttara and Subhadra in the first tale, Pandava's mother Kunti and Nishadin in the second tale, and Souvali the dasi wife of Dhrutrashtra are all victims of patriarchy but they are not subsumed into single master identity but remain very individual whose reactions to their own victim hood is likewise very different.

In the first story the Five women Mahasweta Devi juxtaposes two worlds Royal World i.e. Rjavritta to which Uttara belongs and the other is Lokvritta to which five women Godhumi, Vitastha, Vipasha, Yamuna and Gomati belong. The five women speak as one against Uttara the voice of upper class. They have lost their husbands but no funeral rites were held for their souls. Their husbands were fighting in the same Dharmyudha but no chariots came down from Divyalok. Rajavritta widow must follow example set by Aarya Kunti. In their world of Indraloka widows have no right to happiness. But women from lokvritta are shown as robust women confronting different calamities. "When we are widowed, we marry our brothers-in-laws. That is the custom in our Janavritta community" (22). According to Lokavritta women after a terrible calamity, the sun always rises. Even after this dreadful war, nature has not stood

still' (22). So, these women are thinking to join their routine activities for their survival.

When these five women speaks to Uttara 'Where would we have gone?' Uttara replies stay with me. But the answer of Godhumi in a melancholic tone – "These are the chambers of silences – place with white clad widows floating like shadowy ghost" (17). Silences at royal court are highlighted here. "It is not Dharmayudha where brother kills brother, uncle kills nephew, shishya kills guru. The women's perception is very clear regarding war. They say it may be Your idea of Dharma and it's not Ours" (23). This shows Devi's attempt to dismantle the established notions from the subaltern perspective.

The second story 'Kunti and Nishadin' throws new light on the incident of the House of Lac episode of the *Mahabharat*. The Kourava's mistaking the charred bodies of the Nishads for the dead bodies of Kunti and Pandava's. In the story Kunti is overburdened with the guilt for Karna as well as unscrupulously goading the innocent Nishad's to death in the House of Lac. Kunti remembers the tribal's who were sacrificed to ensure safety to Pandava's. Here Kunti though from Royal status is depicted as peripheral character, who becomes the victim of the trap lead by the Kourava's for the Pandava's. In the story we can observe that Nishadin calls Kunti by her name in subversion of prescribed codes of conduct of hierarchical stratification of the society. The Royal Kunti is shown absolutely helpless and tongue tie among the Nishadins. In this story the Nishadin not only catches Kunti off her guard but also asserts their superiority over the Royalty. Kunti is subject to being guilty of the unpardonable sin of ending the innocent lives of forest dwellers.

The third story Souvali, centred on Souvali, a dasi in the Royal household impregnated by Dhritarashtra but never allowed in his domestic premises. Thus, the son born to them was never given the status of prince owing to their social inferiority. Epics and Myths have been vehicles of political, social or ethical messages in the contemporary discourses. The trend of transmuting, adopting and appropriating the ancient narratives are furthered with the emergence of

postmodern theories. Narratives like *Mahabharat* and *Ramayan* were considered as grand narratives presumed to silence the discourses of subalterns. The recuperation of marginalised and suppressed voices from universally grand narratives is reflected in Mahasweta Devi's fiction. She specifically aims at the recovery of subaltern voices from the official, homogenous, documented history of the nation state. Mahasweta Devi belongs to the group of writers and social activist who have chronicled the oppression to which the Adivasi population and other untouchable caste have been subjected. While the elitist imaginings tend to erase the underprivileged from the recorded narratives but Devi is relentless in her project of making these absences, resurface and in this endeavour of recovering the subaltern voices the exploration of the great epic *Mahabharat* becomes imperative in framing the national consciousness.

In the three stories from *After Kurukshetra* she presents the certain events of the epic through the eyes of women both royal and an underprivileged providing the alternative narratives as against the dominant discourse of the *Mahabharat*. In that way she empowers the subaltern subjects who are excluded from the elitist Brahminic narrative. With the ancient epic *Mahabharat* as her source, and the battle of Kurukshetra as a central motif, Mahasweta Devi weaves three stories in which we visit unexpected alleys and by lanes of the traditional epic saga and look at events from the eyes of marginalised women. Their eyes condemn the wanton waste and inhumanity of war. For these five women wars for right is not important or they fail to understand the politics of power in war and greed. This Kurukshetra is not a legendary Dharmayudha of the popular imagination for them but rather a power game ending human lives. Analysis of these stories helps to understand how do the women's quarters of the palace, a colourless place of shadowy widowhood appears to five peasant women whose lives are shattered by the Kurukshetra war. But they are used to dealing with trauma in a most robust manner and their outlook on life and survival influence the young pregnant princess Uttara, who is abruptly plunged into the half-life of upper caste widowhood. This further explains how a lower-caste serving woman who was brought in to service of King Dhritrashtra when his queen was with

child, view her half royal offspring and his decision to perform the last rites for a father who never acknowledged him as a son? How does an aging Kunti living out her last years in the forest, come to terms with her guilt over her unacknowledged son, Karna? And having finally voiced her shame aloud, how then does she face up to a crime she has not even remembered: the murder of a family of Nishad forest dwellers? These stories constructed in the imagination of the writers like Mahasweta Devi makes us look at the *Mahabharat* with a new perspective insisting as they do on the inclusion; within the master narrative, of the fates and viewpoints of those previously unrepresented therein: woman and the underclass. Thus, Mahasweta Devi's writings are lending space and voice to the unacknowledged presences of the society. Here she retrieves the silences from the grand narratives of history. These stories can be seen as a re-visioning of *Mahabharat* the grand narrative by bringing to the fore the perspectives of a marginalised section of the society. Through the stories she attempts a counter historical depiction of the epic through the eyes of women who are also under-classed thereby debunking the patriarchal Brahminic discourse of the *Mahabharat*. She has employed the strategies to articulate the voices of silenced peripheries.

Thus, the exploration of Mahasweta Devi's stories from the subaltern perspective helps us to understand a different and distinct angle to look at the mainstream history that destabilize the established notion of truth and puts forth the space for the multiple interpretations.

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COSMOS Impact Factor: 5.19

NRI No. MAHENG/2012/5558

ISSN: 2319-3689

Critical Space

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Volume VIII, Issue-II

February 2020

ISSN: 2319-3689

Raja Rao's *Comrade Kirrilov*: A Luscious Blend of the East and the West

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Abstract:

Raja Rao was the first major Indian writer who wheedled and sweetly enticed English language to invent a distinctive cadence and an excellent native idiom for conveying in a way chaste and peerless. *Comrade Kirrilov* like *The Cat and Shakespeare* is Raja Rao's short fiction that is a novelette or novella. In all honesty, *Comrade Kirrilov* is a fictional portrait of a South Indian Brahmin, Padmanabhan Iyer, whom the narrator amiably calls Kirrilov and further tells that he first met communism in Kirrilov. Perhaps, its original allusion is to Dostoevsky's radical communism personified by Kirrilov and Shatov. However, somewhat unlike his Russian counterpart, Raja Rao's Kirrilov is torn and tormented in-between the pulls of Marxist dialectics of the west and the non-dual philosophy of the east. The Indian tradition of Vedanta - the very part of Padmanabha Iyer's being and an alien newly found ideology of his becoming forms the real dichotomy of character. The entire novel centres around these two contradictory yet complementary ideologies and the dilemma to posit reconciliation between these two. This paper aims to explore the fictional tale told mellifluously by Raja Rao's genius to offer a luscious blend of the east and the west.

Keywords: Anonymous, Archetype, Character, Comrade, Communism, Composite, Convert, Concoction, Dichotomy, Dilemma, Ideology, Narrator, etc.

Raja Rao, who won Sahitya Akademi Award in 1964, Padma Bhushan in 1969, *Neustadt International Prize for Literature* in 1988 and Padma Vibhushan in 2007, is a novelist par excellence. A close look at his novels, display the whole gamut of his literary output, related in one way or the other, to different autobiographical phases of his life and times. More so because the composite

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(Bihari 1-4) and encyclopaedic streams of his mystically compact character are so overflowing that to blockade the ideological surge seems next to impossible. What Raja Rao was actually? “He knew himself” by “Self Discovery” will be the truthful answer. But the level attached to his being, of having an ambivalent character, is the main premise on which the novel is grounded. Although Raja Rao was essentially syncretic and logically synthetic, yet his novel *Comrade Kirrilov* presents altogether a different yet purposeful critique of/on communism. The protagonist being another Marxist version (Alter Ego) of the novelist behaves in a manner that well behoves his intent and drive. The epigraphs at places directly point out to the thematic derivatives from Dostoevsky’s original archetypes—Kirrilov and Shatov. However, unlike Dostoevsky’s *The Possessed*, Raja Rao’s *Comrade Kirrilov* is a satirical and ironic portrayal of pre-independence and early periods of post-independence political scenario of India against the backdrop of international milieu.

The narrative technique Raja Rao employs to please his readers, himself as well as to tell the teasing/pleasing tale is fashioned in an entirely new mode having two witness narrators. There are two narrators indeed—one is slightly given hint of being (R), perhaps, Raja Rao himself. We can also see this witness narrator mentioned as Count R, as early as *The Serpent and The Rope* (Rao *The Serpent* 22). Another is his Czech wife Irene. These two witness narrators are complimentary to each other and help the readers to comprehend the meaning of Kirrilov’s life: his biological and ideological persuasions. Mystic parallels are there but only to highlight, modify and expound the salient traits of protagonist’s individuality. Myths and symbols to understand various characters in various respective situations appear not sans significance.

In this gripping work of fiction, as hinted earlier, Raja Rao has been enthused, a good deal, by the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821—1881). While Dostoevsky’s character Kirrilov is an unabashed atheist, Raja Rao’s coincide with God, as “a fiction of the lazy” (40). However, both show common interest in Karl Heinrich Marx, Friedrich Engels and Communism—the offshoot of their theories respectively. Rao’s Kirrilov and his love for the motherland is

similar to Dostoevsky's Shatov. Padmanabha Iyer, the protagonist, is often seen reciting Sanskrit verses. His nostalgic love for India is highly esteemed. Additionally, Comrade Kirrilov is a novel of character that relies more on the adumbration of ideas rather than of action. The individuality of protagonist's character, therefore, rests in atypical sort of sophisticated complexity caused by lack of belonging. Belonging wholly neither to intellectual commitment of occidental ideology nor emotional sway of the inborn oriental tradition. Hence the dilemma of divided consciousness. Once Rao himself confessed to M. K. Naik that his fictional creation Kirrilov is a prisoner of ideology and a vacillating character. Notably, there is a significant difference between the radical Russian communism and that of Raja Rao's Indian, in spite of many parallels and affiliations. Theosophical society alongside Gandhian wisdom via which Kirrilov had an access to communism, as depicted in the novel, identifies the protagonist somewhat in an ideological muddle and puzzle. At the theosophical phase of his intellectual evolution Mrs. Annie Besant was to him, "The great Indian patriot, whose peregrinations across the thundering world would cause India to emerge out of the mess of Anglo-Saxon devilry & create a double movement of freedom and of prophetic dominion" (Rao 9-10). Taken as a whole, the novelist's exhilarating artistic technique of presenting a single personality split into two forms the main thrust of the novel. As far as Rao's own communist leanings are concerned, these may be traced to France, to the Socialist movement in Paris, particularly with French trade union leaders and Trotskyites. What's more, Rao never turned a Marxist, just as Kirrilov does not convert, instead, visits to Raman Maharshi's Ashram at Trivannamala in India. Regardless of having different logics their sentiments often converge on points of identity revealed in their innate love for Sanskrit. Kirrilov is a strange mixture of contradictory elements while 'R', the narrator—a cousin of Kirrilov, is a staunch Brahmin, whose "childlike hopeless dependence upon the abstract" (118-19) binds him in values and ideals based on an orthodox Hindu tradition.

Irrespective of Kirrilov's ideological commitments, strongly marked by uncompromising self-awareness, the novel remains an honest parody of India's

strong challenges of/against communism. What actually saves the novel from being a mere catalogue of strength and weaknesses of communism and the protagonist from degrading into caricature, is Raja Rao's large-scale use of irony in narrative technique (Srivastava 93). How apt is the Narrator in questioning—Would Indian-hood of Kirrilov put an end to his faith in communism? Then humorously replies—Perhaps, not completely. That's how, the narrator does ridicule, without much fiasco, often times, Kirrilov's Brahminic habits and Catholic compassion. So much so that the sum total of Rao's character turns out to be an ambivalent persona—an irresolute/vacillating individual. The novel recounts how an Indian well brought out and well educated, befalls a victim of identity crisis. Both, the narrator 'R' and Irene focus on this ambivalent trait of Kirrilov's character. 'R's' description of Kirrilov's personal complexion— "His face ancient and enigmatic. . . his coat flapping a little too fatherly on his small, rounded muscles of seating. . . his necktie had such a prate plus parenthetical curve, as though much concrete philosophy had gone into its making" (25). Intellectually an ardent Marxist and emotionally an inverted Brahmin who always meticulously takes care of his holy thread. Not only he is too reluctant and too indisposed to acknowledge this sacred secret, but also dislikes to speak about it. Though he leaves for Moscow and then for Peking, he sends his son Kamal Bathoska to India to know India's rich cultural and spiritual heritage. The dichotomy of Kirrilov's character, thus, directly corresponds to an irreconcilable state where the instantaneous immiscibility of political ideology and spiritual predilection seems out of joint. The persistent note of cynicism is further conveyed by violent alignment of heterogeneous ideas some mundane others spiritual. Is not it a true juxtaposition of the real and the apparent? Perhaps, it's so.

As a matter of fact, Kirrilov is a person trapped in ideological nuances, subtleties and complexities of modern world and enmeshed between intellectual pursuits and emotional overtones. He admires what is Indian and rejects unhesitatingly all that is obsolete and otiose. He rejects even Gandhi "An ungrown adult" (35), fit for being "born in middle ages" (37) and his non-

violence as imaginary as a biological lie— “Your Gandhi is a kleptomaniac—ask your Gandhi to read Freud—he would be the wiser for it” (35-36). But he loved Gandhi inwardly as much as he loved India. Irene’s diary of April-17, 1947, convincingly confirms the emotional undercurrents of Kirrilov’s love and reverence for Gandhi— “. . . You old hypocrite, . . . I say to P. At heart Gandhi is your God. You tremble when you speak of him sometimes, I once saw even a tear, one long tear, it was there when you spoke of Gandhi to S.” (101-102). In tandem, Irene’s Diary makes the novel a powerful character study, imparts a new structural device to it, adds a psychological perspective and a desirable complexity. As mentioned severally, it is a powerful contrivance that forms thematic design, elicits two divergent aspects of Kirrilov’s character, and ultimately moves ahead into sharper relief and respite. Being Kirrilov’s wife Irene knows him better, has an honest record of every ebb and flow of her husband’s life-line. Likewise, Kirrilov’s study of Mantra-Sastra, as evinced by his earlier stay in Europe, introduces the groundwork of Hindu orthodoxy. He shares this aspect of life solitarily with Irene: “I have studied the Mantra-Sastra a bit in my own way. Do you know what Mantra-Sastra is? It is the science of the holy word. . . .of the creative syllable” (95). Several such episodes shed light on Indian sensitivity and sentimentality brought into being by Kirrilov. Irene often wonders, if her husband’s European counterpart would ever have had the thought of such an unsullied Indian masculine gift. Irene had also a woman’s sensibility and sixth sense which she uses to recognize her husband. She had known and seen him for many past years swinging in-between oriental and occidental poles. Accordingly, Kirrilov’s occidental veneer is only skin deep, once one goes scratching further oriental blood starts gushing out from his veins. Irene writes in her diary on 24 January, 1947: “P. left for India. . . He had tears in his eyes. . . when he said goodbye. What a joy in life to have met this dear, this deeply sensitive, this magnanimous soul. . .he hates Europe, does P. And yet he speaks of internationalism. A strange mixture” (113).

Likewise, the disregard and neglect of the study of Indian classics worries Kirrilov. To ward off this unwanted anxiety he escapes to enjoy reading

Uttar Rama Charita and Kalidas with the sonority of aesthetics and Sanskrit linguistics. Besides, he had learnt many Sanskrit verses by heart and recites them eloquently. So much so that many a time his ecstasy into aesthetics and profundity of Sanskrit epics maddens even saddens Irene. One more occasion, and we see Irene intoning – “Kirrilov who looked grave and Brahminic” (70) starts “Speaking Hindustani either out of pride or for patriotism” (71), when visited by the narrator. Language consciousness, thus, is another major aspect of protagonist’s mental make-up and subsequent dilemma. Immediately after getting initiation into the world of Communism, Kirrilov learnt, we are told, German to read Marx and French to read Fourier and Saint Simon. Bit by bit, he was pushed into holy Russian tongue. But at this crucial juncture of life, we see Kirrilov growing into a Sadhu of communism, with a heart heavy, with every rhythm deeply soused in India.— “And how like a Sadhu Kirrilov was too clean in his habits, almost ascetic in his spare ways, gentle, reliable, learned, his face glowing in beauty with age and communist progress. . . .one wondered how so much beauty might be allied with such violence, diplomacy and cynicism?”(72). The dilemma of divided consciousness eventually becomes apparent in Kirrilov’s sickness. The real period of recuperation or convalescence gives an opportunity to Irene to know Kirrilov better, “Kirrilov had peculiar reactions which no dialectic could clarify....but if Irene spoke of India, he simply remarked “What do you know, Irene ?”and she was silenced by his ecclesiastical look”(58). What seems to dog the restless mind of Kirrilov is the real streak of strain perspicaciously maintained till the end. O. P. Mathur, in his first full-length critique on Comrade Kirrilov, professes that this deep strain in his character is nothing more than a psychological dilemma caused by intense self-awareness (27). It is a cleavage between Kirrilov of the day and Kirrilov of the night—a cleavage between a convinced communist and a melancholic existential creature. As a matter of fact, the predictability of events in the dialectical calendar looks far more superior to the accuracy of Indian astrological totting ups. The deft astrological hands could play humbug, but the figure of statistics never does. The novel covers the period of 1930 to1940 exactly a decade of communist history. Appropriately the protagonist is shown to write a paper in

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which Russian alliance with the British and the imperialist war is paradoxically termed as “a revolutionary fight against the bourgeoisie” (Rao 64). In India too “Comrade and the Collector had now become friends, like the dog and the jackal” (63). Penultimately, Kirrilov is seen to leave for Moscow to announce British defeat and Stalin’s victory in the same ironic tenor “One wonders. . . Stalin’s confidence did not sustain and reassure Roosevelt. The Churchillian resources are on the verbal side-Stalin creates the world of his willing. Roosevelt must, at moments, have almost envied, and perhaps worshipped his communist colleague. Churchill, the fighting cock could blow the loudest Marlborough trumpet” (89).

Incontrovertibly, Marxism is the only philosophy that can guide us correctly in our quest for truth. It accepts truth on the anvil of experiment, objective reality, history, scientific logic and reasoning, therefore ultimate realization to be reached is through technical experiment. What matters most is the meeting ground between the East and the West (Mukherjee 71). We see Raja Rao delineating, in an amusing way, varied aspects and impacts of contact, between the ruling western elite and an enslaved eastern race. In Comrade Kirrilov the conflict between the east and the west grows on an altogether different plain. As the hero is torn between two pulls—ideological and intellectual and the double commitment—rational against emotional, subsequently but inevitably forms the dilemma of divided consciousness. He, an Indian Brahmin—a spokesman of what is best in Hinduism, wedded to an alien ideology ,perhaps ,has a weakness for placing material ends of life over the spiritual .The conflict that grows in him, the real basis of dichotomy, is honesty of mind devoted to intellectual loyalty versus emotional pulls aligned to honesty of Existential being .

The novel is sub-titled ‘A New Novel’. It is new mainly because it uses a new structural device. Another is the use of irony, as mentioned earlier, to add force, vigour and fullness to the narrative. Irony is used peculiarly to reveal the traits-the salient features of hero’s personality. The conversation that takes place between the narrator and the protagonist not only sharpens the irony but

also goes forward to explain the possibilities and limitations of communism. Occasionally irony attains the vehemence of satire and sensibly intends to expose the anomalies and incongruities of communistic order. How pertinent is the criticism of Indian philosophical outlook— “Kalidas and all that is perfect. But Kalidas does not produce lentils, nor Bharthrihari milk” (83). Raja Rao’s irony cuts-it has double even triple-edged aim of attacking on communism, decadent Hinduism and imperialist British – “Indeed, the most reactionary force in world politics today-far more poisonous than Chiang Kai Shek –is your Hindu. He and his metaphysical myths, his Karma, and his caste, his I –will-not—eat - this and I- will- not –touch- that, his superior feelings and his impotence-his decadence is the foulest our earth has to bear” (83).

To sum up the character of Kirrilov, three standpoints are needed, to operate respectively: One is the view-point of ‘R’-the narrator who is also the creator of Kirrilov “. . . the rank reactionary going back to the Vedas” (116). Second is the view-point of his Czech wife Irene and last of the readers who offer multiple but often controversial views. As the novelist is well known for portraying the riveting image of India for his avid western readers, similar is the lashing temptation of the western world- the Maya. Kirrilov who is tied to the alluring wisdom of communism ultimately proves it to be a myth or illusion. The myth that can lure his mind but not his heart therefore only a transitory gain of the ground. There is no permanent joy, no everlasting bliss in it. That is why, he calls communism a deceiving devil—a veritable Mara who offers him the songs of Marshal Stalin for his slumber and Lenin institute of Agronomy for his rice fields. Rejecting Mara’s offer out-and-out he quips: “Go, go, Mara. Kirrilov would say, I know of your doings. I know the dialectic of Feurbach, and the state and the Revolution of Lenin. Marx has been suppressed by hagiography, and Lenin is in his tomb. Go, you many-mouthed, many armed, you multiple monsters, Mara.” (92).

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COSMOS Impact Factor: 5.19

NRI No. MAHENG/2012/5558

ISSN: 2319-3689

Critical Space

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Volume VIII, Issue-II

February 2020

ISSN: 2319-3689

The Man with Enormous Wings: Demolishing Gandhian Principles

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Abstract:

Esther David is a promising voice of Indian English fiction. She has written extensively about her Bene Israel Jewish community in her fiction. With the present novella *The Man with Enormous Wings* she tries to handle non-Jewish theme for the first time. The novella is an account of carnage of 2002 riots of Gujarat. She has explored the suffering of masses during the trials and tribulations. She laments that people ignores the preaching of Mahatma Gandhi and engage into unending battle of revenge. Her first-hand experiences of the riots give another dimension to her writing and it becomes more realistic. She is deeply moved by the bloodshed and violence of that time. In this time of dying humanity she searches for an epitome of humanity to give meaning to the life.

Keywords: suffering, riot, carnage, violence, Gandhian principles, meaninglessness etc.

I

Mahatma Gandhi, the most influential socio-political figure in India, has become an inevitable influence on Indian English Literature. His life is governed by certain principles. Truth and non-violence are basic doctrines of his philosophy. He himself is a prolific writer at the same time inspires many writers from various disciplines like history, sociology, politics, philosophy and literature. Many of these works have his ideology as a core essence. In the scenario of Indian English Literature his ideology is sometimes adored, glorified while at some places it is demolished or crushed as per the requirement of the storyline. Authors like Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand advocates his principles in their works. M. K Naik has rightly called his influence as 'Gandhian whirlwind' in Indian English Literature. The literature produced after 1947 is

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widely known for its depiction of violence. Many writers illustrate the bloodshed of partition and its aftermath. They have portrayed the harsh reality of riots precisely. Some works like *Train to Pakistan*, *Tamas*, *Pinjar*, *Ice-Candy Man*, *Midnight's Children*, *A Fine Balance*, *The Man with Enormous Wings* revolve around the themes of violence and disorder. Such writing reveals how Gandhian principles are demolished in India. The rioters prove that their urge to take revenge overcomes the preaching of Father of the Nation. He is assassinated ideologically many times even after his physical death. The present paper tries to illustrate how Mahatma Gandhi's principles are destructed in the novella *The Man with Enormous Wings* by Esther David who has first-hand experience of 2002 Gujrat riots. She has focused on the riots from a minority perspective revealing anxiety and fear of riot-stricken people. In this novel she appeals to her readers to follow the path of brotherhood as guided by our Father of Nation.

II

Esther David, a Bene Israel Jewish author, has occupied a prestigious place in the realm of Indian fiction with her enclosed world of Jewish community. Her creative writing is indebted to her community as well as her birth place, Ahmedabad. She is obsessed with this city of walls and uses it as a setting for her fictional world. The novella *The Man with Enormous Wings* is also set in Ahmedabad more precisely it is set in Ahmedabad at the time of Godhra massacre. It is interesting to know how she conceives the idea of writing this novella. She dozed off while reading a short story 'A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings' by Gabriel Garcia Marquez on a curfew laden afternoon and in a vision, she saw an old man flying over a devastated city- Ahmedabad. She is deeply moved by seeing the violence around her. Being a sensitive writer, she feels shattered when people come out with armed weapons and blood thirsty eyes. Stories of murders, gang rapes, curfews make her depressed and she decides to pen down her experiences in this novella. When asked in an interview about how her writing differs from others on the same matter she replies, "True, a lot has been said about this subject. But to live on an off-and-on curfew for six months is something you have to experience. Through this book, I created a

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Gandhi for my own catharsis and found myself in an Alice in Wonderland-like situation.” She is in need of someone who would guide her in this difficult time. This is a time of dying humanity and everyone is in need of a saviour. This saviour comes in the form of Mahatma Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi the national father of India followed certain principles throughout his life ‘non-violence’ is towering among them. He preached the values like non-violence and truth to his followers. His principles have universal and eternal appeal. He condemns violence on moral grounds, in this regard Norman Finkelstein writes in his book, *What Gandhi Says*, “Gandhi censured resort to violence on both personal and political, and both moral and pragmatic grounds. It corrupted the individual, who was degraded to the level of a beast.” (29) Sociologists and philosophers agree on the eternity of his principles and they think that these principles are relevant in contemporary time too. Vishwanath Varma underlines the importance of Gandhian principles in current times and his conflict resolutions as,

At such an hour, the message of Gandhi is immensely important. As a man of peace and of endless fortitude, Gandhi would have sanctioned the use of diplomatic and informal negotiations, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and argumentation for conflict-resolution. He would not be opposed to honest enquiry commissions and judicial remedies. But direct armed confrontations, cold-blooded murders of opponents and the liquidation of rivals have no place in the Gandhian system. (19)

These are the ideas proposed by Gandhi to solve any conflict peacefully. But people employ brutal ways to resolve their tensions. The author laments the fact that though his principles are highly praised everywhere in the world but in his own city these values are overlooked and crushed ruthlessly. The riots of 2002 demonstrate that his people have forgotten the teaching of Gandhi. They blindly follow the politicians who made use of them to attain political stability.

Esther satirizes the politicians and their illegal motives which ruined numerous lives of innocent people.

The novella opens with the description of the Ahmedabad in ancient times. Gradually she portrays the growth of the city and describes the harmonious cultural atmosphere during 1950s. It was the time when people live in close proximity without condemning others food habits. They respect other's culture and follow the value of tolerance which made their life happier. But as the time passes everything changed. Now they cannot tolerate other cultures. So, people are grouped according their food habits. In 2002 when the Sabarmati Express arrives from Godhra with burnt bogies the old man, the protagonist of this novella, was sure that something terrible was going to happen there. This reminds him of the trains after the partition in 1947, "splattered with blood, full of corpses" (73), and the fact that he was held responsible for the communal riots erupted then. Esther has presented the emotional state of the old man after seeing the Sabarmati Express as:

The old man with the enormous wings flew over the unused railway yard in Godhra and saw the Sabarmati Express standing there, a monument to death. He meditatively soared over the yard in ever decreasing circles till he finally touched down on the roof of the charred bogie. Of course, it had long since cooled down, but the old man could still feel the heat rising from it; he could see the black smoke billowing out from the charred windows. It still resounded with the panicked screams of the passengers as they tried to claw their way out. The old man's head bowed in shame. (72)

This shows how the protagonist suffers due to the disobedience of his followers. He feels ashamed and guilt-ridden for his failure in teaching the values of humanity to his men. He cannot understand what make them blood thirsty, why they are avenging each other? He is utterly depressed by seeing the massacre of innocent people during riots and their psychological torments

afterwards. People run across the road carrying tridents, swords, hockey sticks, rods and machetes. They have become furious and set out to take revenge. They kill innocent people for no fault of theirs. Many people were killed, some injured and others have become homeless. But one thing is common that the riots left an inevitable permanent scar on the minds of its victims. The cruelty reached to its highest peak when a mob marched towards a chawl. The old man stands Christ-like at the entrance of the chawl and prevents them to enter. But they push him aside and attack a pregnant woman who is going to deliver in a day. They tore her clothes and raped her. The old man tries to save her with weaving his stick menacingly but could not. He saw everything from his broken glasses helplessly. Then they pierce her stomach with trident to remove the foetus and throw it into the fire. Such a brutality he has to witness where gives lessons of non-violence. He steps backwards, whispering, "Is this my India? Am I the father of this nation?" (83). He doubts whether it is another land of man without any conscience. The India he dreams about is different from this. It is a kind of utopian world where everyone has equal right to live. But in this land, one robs other off his life for some political gain. These antisocial people wage war against humanity that results in carnage.

Throughout the novella the old man tries to save the victims of the riots. He tries to console them and help them to heal their wounds with his compassionate nature. He is grief stricken by seeing their suffering. At one place the author compares him with Christ who suffers for all humanity as "the old man stood at the entrance, his hands spread out, as though he was nailed to a cross." (82). Like Christ he also suffers for his people and tries to save them in all possible manners. He helps Bilkis, another rape victim who also lost all her family members at the hand of frenzied mob, by covering her with his shawl and leaving her in front of the house of a woman, the district collector of that town. He wants to cry so loudly to "let the world know how distressed he was about revenge killings. But he kept his silence as carcass after carcass was unearthed from the womb of mother earth...." (93).

Life after riots is not same again those who are victims are supposed to face interrogation. They have to withstand numerous inquiries. They are tortured by the media to the extent that some of them threaten to commit suicide. This psychological pressure is unbearable for them. They prefer to die instead. In this situation the old man with enormous wings lifts them and flies towards safety. He becomes their saviour, their guide. Some of them are forced to live in relief camps in an unhygienic condition with shortage of food and water. Esther has realistically depicted the life in these relief camps.

In the story of Parzan Esther David highlights degradation of Gandhian values. Parzan, a Parsi boy, is reportedly missing after the riots. A filmmaker was attracted by this story and produces a film named 'Parzania'. But this film was banned in Gujarat to avoid further destruction. The politicians are reluctant to show the harsh reality of the riots. In the film, Parzan's father is shown searching for his missing son in a pile of corpses. He seeks the help of the police force but soon realizes that the policemen are unwilling to help them. They receive unequal treatment from the policemen, politicians as well as from the members of the majority group. After the partial treatment of the Government officers, he hopefully turns to religion to get justice. This film also shows the changing opinions of an American scholar, Allen. Influenced by the Gandhian philosophy he comes to India to find peace. Here he is deeply hurt to see the massacre of the innocent people. He realizes that Gandhian values are no more respected in the land where he was born and brought up and sacrificed his life.

Towards the end of the novella Esther David offers a ray of hope through the character of Deputy whose encounter with a small insect like creature made him speak the truth about the riots. This creature was none other than the man with enormous wings or Mahatma Gandhi. He gives him strength and courage to speak truth and his statement was recorded as an affidavit in front of the inquiry commission. At the end author dramatically shows what happens when the man with enormous wings fell between the two groups who were fighting blindly. They feel as if he is disturbing them and so decides to imprison him, "so instead of killing each other, they wasted precious hours in making a stretcher with

spears. They lay the man on the stretcher, put him on a trolley and accomplished the task of locking him up. Relieved, they continued with the killing. The old man watched from behind the bars and wept." (121)

The novella is replete with the stories of riot victims. One by one we come to know about Parzan, Kausar, Bilkis, the Butcher, Nilambar, Munna, Jafrisaab, Sudhaben and many more who lost their lives for no fault. These stories made us question our conscience. Are we Humans or mere creatures without any moral value? The author probes into the issues of morality and insist that we should follow Gandhian principles to lead a peaceful life.

III

Thus, Esther David has succeeded in presenting the gloomy picture of a riot-stricken city and its citizens who had forgotten the meaning of compassion. What distinguishes her from others is her bonding with her native place, her flow of narration and her commitment to the Gandhian Principles. The author highlights the fact that in recent times there is brutal violence everywhere. People became blood thirsty for trivial reasons. They are easily carried away by political influences. They have forgotten the values of tolerance, forgiveness and empathy. If this continues, we will lose every hope. Life will be bizarre and meaningless. She pleads us to follow the ways of Gandhi to avoid further destruction and give meaning to our life.

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COSMOS Impact Factor: 5.19

NRI No. MAHENG/2012/5558

ISSN: 2319-3689

Critical Space

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Volume VIII, Issue-II

February 2020

ISSN: 2319-3689

**Symbolic Representation of Spices in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's
*The Mistress of Spices***

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Abstract:

The present research paper attempts to explore the symbolic representation of spices in Chitra Divakaruni's novel *The Mistress of Spices* published in 1997. Divakaruni addresses the dilemmas and cultural conflicts of immigrant women who endeavour to assimilate into the adopted host land as they are victims of socio-cultural issues such as alienation, dislocation, identity crisis, discrimination and so on. In *The Mistress of Spices*, Divakaruni depicts the Indian culture through the symbols of many lifeless spices which she portrays as living characters. It is a modern fable about the metaphorical journey of an immigrant woman from the native land of ancient culture to the adopted land of America.

The present paper is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the substantial theoretical framework of cultural studies, the second section focuses on the analysis of the symbols of different spices which are used for curing the diseases and the different problems of the characters in the novel and the third section concludes the paper with research findings.

Keywords: Symbolic representation, spices, cultural studies, glorification and preservation of Indian culture.

The present research paper attempts to explore the symbolic representation of spices in Chitra Divakaruni's novel *The Mistress of Spices* published in 1997. In literature symbols are often used by the writers to enhance the meanings of the text at deeper levels. They are most commonly used when the one thing is meant to represent another thing. M. H. Abrams defines symbol as, "A symbol, in the broadest sense of the term, is anything which signifies something else; in this sense all words are symbols" (168). Thus,

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the use of symbols is a significant literary device which not only conveys the subtle and covert meanings of an object but also interprets the materialistic realities of life through the mysteries of human existence. The present paper tries to interpret the symbols used by Divakaruni in her novel *The Mistress of Spices*. She uses different Indian spices such as Turmeric, Cinnamon, and Fenugreek etc. to highlight Indian culture through its medicinal properties. Indian culture is one of the ancient civilizations in the world and the use of spices in the Indian food for their nutritional as well as medicinal benefits is outstanding and the novelist has appropriately used her wisdom of spices in order to sustain and preserve Indian culture and knowledge system. In the postcolonial literary scenario, the novelists are trying to focus the nationhood and national culture as a significant aspect of their writings. Divakaruni also employs knowledge of her native culture to construct the nation in a postcolonial era. Thus, the paper further discusses what a culture is for the diasporic writers like her.

Many critics of human sciences argue that 'Culture' refers to the creation and use of symbols that convey a shared idea by human beings to construct their own culture. G. Hofstede in *Culture and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (1994) defines it as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (5). In such a scenario, a symbol may have multiple meanings. For example, a symbol of flag may stand for a country or patriotism. While studying culture of any nation, it is essential to understand the meanings of its symbols, beliefs, history, customs, values, language, architecture, food, style of dress, code of manners, norms of conduct and so on. K. Avruch in *Culture and Conflict Resolution* (1998) asserts, "Culture consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images and their interpretations or meanings transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves" (17). The knowledge of Indians of spices and their traditional applications transmitted over the periods from generations to generations is the thrust area of the novel. The next section

of the paper elaborates the novelist's use of symbols as literary device to bring out the cultural issues.

Divakaruni depicts the Indian culture through the symbols of many lifeless spices which she portrays as living characters. It is a modern fable about the metaphorical journey of an immigrant woman, Tilottama, from the Indian village to the pirates, then to the Spices Island and eventually becomes a mistress of spices in Oakland, a city by the bay area of America. The novel consists fifteen chapters and some of them have been named after the spices. The novel delineates the dilemma of the protagonist, Tilottama, who is alienated in the host land and meditates over her cultural identity. She acts like a bridge between two different cultures.

Tilottama, who is named after the name of Sesame i.e. *Til*, the symbol of nurturer, runs an Indian grocery store and voluntarily helps her customers with the spices to overcome their problems. She applies her mysterious wisdom of spices in using the different Indian spices such as Turmeric, Cinnamon, Fenugreek, Asafoetida, Fennel, Ginger, Peppercorn, *Kalo jire*, Neem, Red Chilli, Makaradwaj, Lotus Root and Sesame for her customers, particularly South Asians, to purify the evil, to lessen the pain of rejection, to restore the sight, to deliver warnings of their impending troubles and also to alleviate the sufferings of the contemporary issues like domestic violence, racial discrimination, cultural assimilation, identity crisis, abusive marriages, alienation, homesickness etc. As she says, "I who can make it happen, green cards and promotions and girls with lotus eyes. I Tilo an architect of the immigrant dream" (Divakaruni 28). In fact, not only the Asian immigrants but many indigenous citizens also visit her shop to get remedies for their troubles.

The spices in the novel have been conferred with its special day and they have a mystical effect in the cure of illness or in its use during various festivities. They mingle with the emotions of various customers that are cured by Tilottama. They are shown talking and revealing their secrets to their mistresses as Tilottama asserts, "I know their origins, and what their colours signify, and

their smells...From *amchur* to *zafran*, they bow to my command. At a whisper they yield up to me their hidden properties, their magic powers” (1). Tilottama’s life prominently resolves around and is controlled by her spice shop. She talks about the spices as “holding magic, even the everyday American spices, you toss into your cooking pot...But the spices of true power are from my birth land, land of ardent poetry, aquamarine feathers. Sunset skies brilliant as blood. They are the ones I work with” (3). It demonstrates ethnic pride she has in the medicinal and curative properties of the spices of India which is her homeland. She believes in the magical powers of her spices which can alleviate the miseries and misfortunes of her fellow immigrants. Divakaruni, here, attributes her magical dimensions to the realistic depiction of Indian immigrant’s experiences in America.

Tilottama strives for the welfare and happiness of her regular customers who actually never share the details of their problems with her. She uses her supernatural power as a mistress of spices to recognize the exact sufferings of her customers and provides them remedy in the form of appropriate spices as per the nature of their problems. Initially, her customers have disbelief in her, but she is convinced that, “But they will come back later. After darkness. They will knock on the shut door of the store that smells of their desires and ask” (7). She preserves her purest spices in an inner room where she takes her customer and prepares the mixture of appropriate spices to cure them: “I will chant. I will administer. I will pray to remove sadness and suffering as the Old One taught. I will deliver warning” (7).

Divakaruni states in her interview, “The spices are very important in this book. As characters, they have personality of their own. Different sections are named after them. They play an important role in the novel. They develop a relationship with Tilottama and talk to her in their own voices” (Menier 2008). The spices play an integral part in Indian cuisine. They not just add natural flavours to the food and elevate an ordinary dish into a sublime feast but also are used for their medicinal, curative and therapeutic functions in many ayurvedic

herbal formulations. Moreover, some of the spices like turmeric are used in the traditional and religious rituals in India.

The spices manifest the Indian culture as their medicinal uses have been described in an ancient India. Tilottama describes the turmeric also named *Halud*, a spice of Sunday, “It will erase blemishes and wrinkles, suck away age and fat. . . Turmeric the preserver, keeping the foods safe in a land of heat and hunger. Turmeric the auspicious spice, placed on the heads of new-borns for luck, sprinkled over coconuts at *pujas*, rubbed into the borders of wedding saris” (Divakaruni 13). Turmeric is, thus, symbolized as a shield for heart’s sorrow, an ointment for death and hope for rebirth. It also symbolizes purity, sacredness and divinity in many Indian festivals and rituals. Tilottama wraps a handful of turmeric in newspaper by whispering healing words for Lalita, who is suffering from the mental abuse and domestic violence of her dominating husband, Ahuja; because she feels that it may comfort Lalita’s loneliness.

Tilottama uses the magic of Cinnamon for Jagjit who confronts the humiliations at his school by American boys saying, “Talk English son of a bitch. Speak up nigger wetback asshole” (39). She selects a Cinnamon *Dalchini*, a symbol of friend maker and a destroyer of enemies, for him to triumph over his depression, to boost his confidence and to get good friends as she says, “to give you strength, strength which grows in your legs and arms mostly mouth till one day you shout *no* loud enough to make them, shocked, stop” (40).

Fenugreek, a Tuesday’s spice, was first sown by Shabari, the oldest woman in the world. Divakaruni describes the Fenugreek as, “I am fresh as river wind to the tongue, planting desire in a plot turned barren...I fenugreek who renders the body sweet again, ready for loving” (47). Tilottama seeks the help of Fenugreek for Ratna to heal the burning poison in her womb and to make her rejected life desirable. Divakaruni has represented ancient Indian history by retelling the Indian myths about the spices. She writes, “Fennel which the sage Vashistha ate after he swallowed the demon Illwal so he would not come back to life again” (104). Tilottama uses it to cure Lalita whose life became wretched

after her marriage as she says, “Fennel is a wondrous spice. Take a pinch of it, raw and whole, after every meal to freshen the breath and aid digestion and give you mental strength for what must be done” (104).

Divakaruni makes use of symbols of many other different spices to represent the contextual meaning and significance in the text as Red-chilli, the child of Fire God, symbolizes the imminent danger and cleanser of evil; *Kalo jire* - the protector of an evil eye; Lotus root- a long lasting love; Makaradwaj, a king of spices-conqueror of time; Ginger-steadfastness and courage; Peppercorn-a tale-teller or talebearer; and *Neem*-the best healer.

The novel further traces the conflict of individual desires as Tilottama unconsciously falls in love with an American man, Raven. As she is exhausted by the monotonous job at spice store, she wants to enjoy the life of ordinary woman. She gets attracted towards Raven and wishes to use the magic of spices for her own longings though it was not allowed for the mistresses who deal with the magic of spices. When Raven visits Tilottama’s shop, she determines to use the special spice for him as she wants to fulfill her own desire of love. She tries to find the appropriate spice for him but gets disappointed as she realizes that the suitable spice for Raven is Asafoetida *hing*, a symbol of the antidote to love. She rejects the spice as it will reinstate the balance of her life and will send him out of her life forever.

She manipulates her thoughts by revealing womanhood seeking her own desires and decides to free herself from the clutches of magical spices. As she violates the rules of spices, they turn against Tilottama by removing their magical powers from her beneficial customers. The novel ends with her shop getting destroyed by an earthquake but she reassures the spices and the First Mother and is saved and afterwards named as Maya by Raven. *Maya*; “In the old language it can mean many things. Illusion, spell, enchantment, the power that keeps imperfect world going day after day” (317). Thus, her changed name also has spell and enchanting power. Divakaruni throughout the novel repeats the magic of spices and gives voice to the lifeless things. Her attempt to give voice to

the voiceless spices and rendering them as a static character establishes her as a flourished woman writer.

In conclusion, it can be stated that Divakaruni has employed the symbols of spices as a literary device to represent the Indian culture. The symbolic spices have real perceptible relationship with the life of protagonist, Tilotamma. The spices used in the novel serve in both being and non-being sense and assert the value of spices. By using the symbols of spices, the novelist is able to make the text more meaningful. It presents the importance of spices from the socio-cultural perspectives and in a life of Tilotamma from the psychological perspective.

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COSMOS Impact Factor: 5.19

NRI No. MAHENG/2012/5558

ISSN: 2319-3689

Critical Space

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Volume VIII, Issue-II

February 2020

ISSN: 2319-3689

Rajasthani Folktales and Socio-Cultural Constructs

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Abstract:

There exists a rich repository of literature in India from different regional groups and dialects. Rajasthan too has a vibrant literary tradition and folk culture rooted in local experience. They emerge as important markers of regional identity of the state and have made relevant contributions to the constitution of the idea of Rajasthan. Oral tradition empowers the folktales to incorporate changes and variations through the procedure of adaption and adoption, in response to the altered socio- cultural demands. Does the literary tradition represent and give voice to cultural specifics and social norms of every strata of region avoiding marginalization of less empowered groups? The paper explores how folktales by Detha and Chundawat successfully depict the socio-cultural ethos of Rajasthan and the concept of Justice, ethics and morality embedded in them. The tales re-establish the value systems based on lived experiences of the people.

Keywords: Folktales, Oral tradition, Carnivalesque, Festivals, etc.

Regional folk culture and tradition transmitted through folktales emerge as a counterpoint and an alternative to the established socio-cultural frames and systems of knowledge. Oral tradition empowers the folktales to incorporate changes and variations through the procedure of adaption and adoption, in response to the altered socio-cultural demands. Each new rendition of a folktale is open to reworking of content and theme, giving rise to variants ensuring relevance even in a novel spatio-temporal context. Folk literature across the Indian sub-continent was adversely impacted by colonization. The diminution of regional languages resulted in the marginalization of social-cultural ethos and indigenous knowledge systems enshrined in the folklores of the land. Local

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mores with ethno-geographical moorings were challenged by the coercive forces of civilization, consecutive modernization, and globalization. Shifts in socio-cultural frames and politico-economic structures arising from the historical process have led to corresponding shifts in regional systems of subsistence as well as creative expression. Folk tradition in India has survived despite the swift and largely enforced exposure to alien ways of life, languages and cultures. The vibrant folk culture of Rajasthan fascinates both academics and connoisseurs of art forms alike. Initially on retreat, a resurgence of folktales has been initiated by folklorists of Rajasthan which emerge as a rich storehouse of reflecting the social value systems and specific cultural concerns.

Rajasthan has a deep-rooted tradition of folklores. The harsh terrain and the struggle to survive are countered by a rich folk culture: folktales, songs, dance, drama, music, puppet shows and festivities add colour and excitement to the dun coloured landscape. There are about two hundred different ethnic groups in Rajasthan. Each group has its own characteristic, distinguishing social conventions, customs and practices. Rajasthani folktales provide clues to social hierarchy, governance processes and their organizations. In Rajasthan information about different villages and people, their habits, norms, beliefs, traditions are still largely orally transmitted. The folktales help to instil a sense of belonging, loyalty, and aid to construction of identity. The settings and plots are designed to increase awareness of the diversity of the culture and geography.

Rajasthani folktales for its presentation of festivals can be examined through the lens of the Carnavalesque theory. Folk art forms function as an expression of folk-cultural forms within an oppressive authoritarian matrix. The work of the Russian philosopher M. M. Bakhtin *Rabelais and his World*, discusses carnivalesque, which is present across a variety of cultural sites itself. Bakhtin's theory resonates to the concerns of folklorists seeking to underscore the emergent and shared achievement of traditional performances. His oeuvre revolves around his notion of the dialogism. A carnival is a type of performance, but this performance is communal, with no boundary between performers and

audience. It creates a state in which diverse voices are heard and interact, breaking down conventions and enabling genuine dialogue. It forms the chance for a new perspective and a new order of things. For Bakhtin, carnival and carnivalesque create an alternative social space, characterized by freedom, equality and abundance. During carnival, rank is abolished and everyone is equal. Life manifests itself not as isolated individuals but as a collective body. Time and space are rearranged in ways which show their contingency and indissolubility. All of this is done in a mood of celebration and laughter. In carnival, everything is rendered ever-changing, playful and undefined.

The carnivalesque elements make their appearance in folktales too. In the tales by Detha and Chundawat, there is frequent celebration of *Teej* festival. It is revealed that fairs and festivals in Rajasthan are a major source of entertainment and enjoyment. They reflected the life of people of the state in all its exuberance and variety. The origin of the festivals and fairs is religious, but many such occasions are better known because of various other factors, social as well as cultural. A popular saying in Rajasthan, *Teej tyohara Baori, le Doobi Gangaur*, means that the cycle of festival begins with *Teej* in the month of *Shravan* and the year commencing from this festival is rounded up with *Gangaur*. The celebrations bear the proof of the shared cultural roots and bonding by a certain community. It is a constant reminder of the self being a part of a larger culturally group, giving rise to a sense of belonging, attachment and shared responsibility towards it. Festivals, in the words of Kristin Kuutma, can be interpreted as a performative communication which ensures to preserve ethnicity.

Teej, the folk festival of Rajasthan aims to reassert this identity within the context of its joyous celebration. It is virtually the festival of the rains during which, if monsoon is good and widespread, people joyously participate in the celebration. India being an agrarian society with roots in pantheism, the festivals and celebrations can be traced back to the cycle of nature. Detha in the tale "The Thakur's Ghost" narrates, "Once on Akhateej, the Chaudhari lifted his hoe onto his shoulder and headed out to clear his fields, as any good farmer ought to on this

holiday.” (52) At the time of *Gangaur* and *Teej* festival, nature too seems to celebrate the relationship between the festival and farming. In the folktales and the lives of the ‘folk’ nature, faith and their work are inextricably intertwined. In the story “The Dilemma” the groom absorbed in the accounts says to his newly wedded bride, “The wedding is over and done with. But the accounts are still outstanding. I have to submit all the accounts from the wedding before I can leave to do business this *Teej* festival. Such an auspicious astrological moment won’t come again for another seven years.” (151) Women sing devotional songs invoking the blessings of the goddess. These festivals are devoted to *Gauri*, the eternal consort of lord Shiva. The goddess is symbolic of conjugal love and is held in high esteem. Pastoral songs eulogize the idyllic and picturesque rural scenes, and the beauty of the flora and fauna. They also allude to the dark clouds, the peacock-calls, the heavy showers and the general atmosphere of love all around.

The festival not only celebrates the union of Shiva and his consort, it is also a celebration in hopes of a better future harvest in the ensuing year. Festivals involve a participatory ethos which makes the celebration public event, in the sense of the engagement and its accessibility to all. According to Stoeltje, festivals are, “complex in structure, and multiple in voice, scene and purpose.” (262) He elaborates on this stating that such festivals not only uphold the cultural heritage of the community but its participatory aspect allows the people to explore new relationships, new equations not only among themselves but also with nature. The festivals are held in its carnivalesque fashion, conforming to Mikhail Bakhtin’s three essentials of a carnival: the grotesque, the laughter and the public space. The site of the festival tends to subvert serious discipline, law and order. The space slowly and willingly slips into an alternate world of unrestricted laughter and revelry. The proceedings are conducted in an open public space usually market place, to facilitate the untrammelled participation of the folks from near and far. In this context, to quote Bakhtin, folk festival becomes “the decentralization of a culture which has undermined the authority of social establishments” (*Rabelias*: 37).

The tale “The World Resounds with the Refrain: This is Jagmal’s Sword”

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by Chundawat too showcases the carnivalesque atmosphere of both festivals *Teej* and *Gangaur*. The women of Mahuva dressed in colourful garments, are celebrating the festival *Teej* singing and dancing are presented. The celebration of *Gangaur* festival is described too. Mehmud Beg of Ahmedaba rides in procession publicity to celebrate the *Gangaur* festival in which, his daughter Gindoli participate along with other women. For the villagers the event becomes a site for mirth, social interaction and entertainment. Besides presenting the general atmosphere of joy, Chundawat in this story also points at the communal interaction untarnished by different faith followed. The act of cooking and eating together is indicative of sharing, transcending barriers of religion, caste, and class. These festivals, fairs and congregations, an essential part of social fabric and cultural life, are the meeting ground of many ethnic groups and cultures. Along with religious and cultural connotations, they serve economic purpose too. They are also the markets of their livestock and agricultural commodities, their tools, and appliances, and forums for exchange of ideas regarding their crafts and motifs, skill and workmanship, their vanishing practices of the past, their adaptability to new techniques, local variations, and trends of their future.

The folk performance of Bhand and Nat too find a place in the stories of Detha and Chundawat are artistically portrayed. A small community called *Nat* traditionally associated with acrobatics periodically sets out for touring the countryside to entertain through their performances. Acrobatics and rope walking are the favoured performances by the Nat and his wife, the Natni. Women too participate in the performance. The story "The Imposter's Head" by Chundawat has an act by Nat and Natni where seemingly both dies, but finally emerge alive to the great wonder of the viewers. The purpose of the act was to entertain through the device of evocation of a sense of wonder. The performance of the Nat and Natni is indicative of their skill as performers and also can be seen as an expression of critique of the supernatural and magical that the Nat discovers as a mere 'feat'.

Bhand community like other communities-Dholi, Sargara, Kanjar and Kalbelia, is traditionally associated with music, dance and entertainment. The

Bhands are noted for their skilful use of satire, ridicule and sarcasm in exposing and attacking vices and follies of people. Masters of repartee, they have the ability to retort with immediate wit and humour in their conversation. Appreciating a Bhand's potentials in the tale "A True Calling" Detha writes, "This particular bhand was so adapt at disguising himself that next to him the real thing looked fake. He knew a hundred different languages. He could mimic the calls of all came from a human throat." (108)

He can take multiple disguises as a 'merchant, a tribal, a hunter, an ascetic, a cow-herd, or a mullah, a beggar, or lord Hanuman' himself. In the tale he disguised as a holy man, he spends four months at a Seth's house. The Seth offers some valuable things the holy man. Disguise as a holy man, he did not accept all this saying, "...I am a sadhu. If I were to hold out my hands to grab the priceless treasures you are dumping like so much gravel, it would be an insult to my vow" (109). When the period of his disguise is over, he reveals his true self to the Seth. It is a riveting story about 'Bhand'- a professional imposter who in the guise of a *dayan* kills the king's drunken brother-in-law, in keeping with his warning that the guise of *dayan* would entail a murder. The king, in order to punish him, finally asks the imposter to take the guise of *sati*- and like a true professional, the Bhand immolates himself.

On one hand, the writer establishes the impersonation skill of the community at physical level, and on the other hand he posits at the almost spiritual immersion in the act that is necessitated if the impersonation has to be true to like. The integrity of the Bhand is displayed in his identification with the spirit of the character he takes on to the extent of not being swayed by greed, murdering the dissolute brother of the king and finally ever killing himself. The justice meted out by the king too is indicative of the folk justice where he finds a way of punishing the Bhand for murder committed during an act by countering it with another act that ensures the death of the Bhand. The title "A True Calling" is applicable both to the Bhand as well as the King. Both are true to their calling: the former by the authenticity of his act, and latter through his dispensation of justice.

Even the animal tales are not disassociated with our society—they showcase the social relations between man and man, between man and animal and between man and God or Nature. Animals are used as tools to convey messages and animal imagery makes it possible to easily understand the relevance of the story being told due to the symbolic and allegoric aspect of the presentation. The tale “The Mango with a Difference” by Chundawat venerates truth and animal relationship with man. The story is about a pet parrot named ‘Atmaram’ and a King. The King always keeps him in a gilded cage and feeds it dry fruits. The bird is happy with the King who takes it out and talks to him for hours.

Once Atmaram is saddened on hearing other parrots’ comment and the King asks him the reason for his sadness. He says to the king, “If you permit, I may also accompany them to the ‘kajli’ forest and come back when I should have enjoyed the flight with them” (45). The King grants him permission to go for two years. Atmaram joins the swarm of parrots and begins to share their joy. It starts a family and has a wife and children. Enjoying life with his family, he is always on a look out for a special gift for king. He finds a mango tree with youth giving mangoes. He flies back to the king with a seed and present the gift to the king who is overjoyed to have his parrot back and the gift. While the tale eulogizes freedom over life of comfort, it also reiterates commitment and the value of word given.

Honouring one’s promise and truth has been glorified through this tale signifying the inherent values upheld by Rajasthani society. Examples of such tales, myths, ballads, songs and proverbs are available in great numbers amongst the societies where social context is primary object and the life of the people with its realities depicted through verbal and performing arts, language of the heart and expression embodied in material objects. These folktales, in the context of society at large and its cultural frames, function as sources of an amusement as well as a powerful indicator of the value system related to justice, morality and ethics.

Psychologists and educators like Jean Piaget and Alicia Rodriguez have emphasized the role stories play in child development. Folktales provoke their imaginations and provide them with content from which children create their understanding of the lived life and the world unconsciously imbibing abstract concepts and values. These stories stimulate their imagination about the world, allow them to visualize the world outside their homes, help them understand concepts like right and wrong, good and evil. Through folktales, children learn about the values like family bond, friendship, hard work, honesty, faith, love, respect, even about negative aspects of life like betrayal and laziness. Through folktales, which often have happy endings as the good, the honest, the hard-working, the intelligent and brave win respect and love while the bad, lazy, and dishonest are punished, children develop their own understanding and appreciation for good, positive values and characteristics. Children can enjoy great works of folklore and discover their own role, identity and responsibility towards life and fellow beings through folktales.

These stories portray contexts through which new culture can be introduced and offer insights into varied cultures, situations and scenarios in which people from their homeland or from a different country live and behave towards one another, settle conflicts and solve problems. The social contexts described in folktales also present knowledge about how people from many countries thought and believed in earlier times, describing local social settings and the social expectations, thinking and reasoning which may be unique to a specific historical time and people there of folk tales with lively and interesting content provide a source of wisdom and knowledge. Comprising of and contributing to supra conscious, folk stories can be used to facilitate cross-cultural understandings based on human approach. A number of stories have differing versions popular across culture. The convergences and divergences between versions carry culturally specific about the country in which each is told.

The writers reinvent the form of folktales to highlight thematic concerns that have contemporary relevance. There is a strident critique of the caste system and patriarchy in tales inspired by folktales that survive as socio-

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cultural artifacts. The tales of Detha and Chundawat depict the socio-cultural ethos of Rajasthan and the concept of justice, ethics and morality embedded in them. The tales re-establish the value systems based on lived experiences of the people that shape their sensitivities and sensibility. The tales interrogate the concept of justice at times to establish certain values, at others to question and subvert the accepted norms. The fluidity and adaptability of folktales depending on the circumstances is strengthened by the subversive tenor inherent in folktales. The value judgement of formal concept of justice finds an alternative in the situational justice that both the writers establish through the folktales.

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COSMOS Impact Factor: 5.19

NRI No. MAHENG/2012/5558

ISSN: 2319-3689

Critical Space

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Volume VIII, Issue-II

February 2020

ISSN: 2319-3689

Staging Rebel: Mythical Women in Contemporary Feminist Dramaturgy

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Abstract:

Indian Feminist playwrights have left no life's section untouched to resist against patriarchal dominance in the sphere of drama and theatre world. At their earliest phases of writing plays, they honestly and sincerely imitated the patriarchal tradition of drama and theatre. Gradually, with their collective conscious feelings and strong resistance they attempted to shackle patriarchal theatre tradition and created their own theatre tradition and dramaturge to expose misrepresentation of women's issues on the stage. For bringing their issues on the centre stage, they explored Indian mythical stories from the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat* to raise question why mythical women were misrepresented and unnoticed by male historians and epic writers. The paper makes a determined attempt to bring them together who splintered from every states of India and tries to represent them together under the umbrella term of 'feminist dramaturgy'. Also, the paper is a sincere attempt that would be recognized as a bird's eye view of the women dramatists and their plays brought them on centre stage which are portrayed in women's lens.

Key words: Myth, Mythical, *Ramayan*, *Mahabharat*, Goddess, feminist, feminism, theatre, etc.

It is well known fact that the supreme creation process of literature relies on the three basic aspects i.e. fact (the real world outside) and fictitious, myth and mythology, and the writer's individual genius and creative impulse. There is another branch of writing works, basis on rational and impartial in thinking to find-out explorative facts, which opposes to marvellous tales and supernatural elements such as ghost, witches, and other genres of fantastic representation that is called 'Science fictional and dramatic world'. These four basic elements of

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literary spectrum may be called the four pillars of constructive literary works in different genres i.e. poetry, fiction and drama. Writer may choose any one of these aspects to construct the timeless works which impact over the readers mind forever. The choice of any one aspect out of these depends on writer's area of interest, imagining power, his individual creativity and conceivable ability. And writers construct the literary master-pieces with their ablest inner voice. Most of the writers owe much to the mythology and stories of myth. Mythology has been an influential and a perennial source of inspiration for sensitive and staunch believer in nation's past history and mythical heroes and heroines, who remain iconic perseverance and great reverence. Because of their timeless and influential impact on creative writers have paved way to construct perpetual literary works of stage performances. Mythologies have provided many unprecedented, but the most revered imagined stories told in narrative form to rebuild mythical characters to bring on stage. The western nations too have inherited the base from the classical mythology. Greek and Roman utilization also had owed myths and legends which have been perennial source for literary creation in their native languages. Homer's 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' are the great treasure of Greece. 'The myth of Sisyphus', 'The myth of Tantalus which is considered real works of Greek mythology. In addition to that mythical stories the myth of 'Aphrodite', 'Adonis', 'Pygmalion' and 'Odysseus' are critical among alternate mythologies.

For India, ancient mythology has proved as the rich heritage and inspirational influence for many stakeholders like writers, playwrights, anthropologists, scholars and researches and so on. Even foreign scholars also have been influenced by Indian myths from the years long preserved treasure-trove and it has been remained a perennial source of inspiration to pen down the monumental works. The ancient voluminous Indian epics – the *Mahabharat*, *Ramayan*, *Vedas* and *Upanishads* religious scriptures, legends which are proved to be the stock-house of Indian values, customs, rituals and belief for the next generation. These bygone aged treasures of Indian philosophical, ethical and moral legends are still quite relevant to contemporary resonances and idiom.

Many of foreign scholars have been fell in love with these Indian years long unfaded treasure. Suchi Smita Sharma writes how foreign scholars attracted towards Indian mythologies and what works they produced: "The foreign scholars like Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American author of the 1800, composed 'Brahma', a lyric praising the inventor of the God. In the same period, the western world got to be acquainted with the legends of Savitri and Satyavan through Edwin Arnold's sonnets 'Savitri or Love and Death'. Bertram Shapleigh an American director composed 'Vedica Hymn' additionally in view of content from the Rigveda" (9). No region of India has been remained untouched by the writers those who are not exploited these perennial mythical stories. Mythologies have made great impact over the Indian writers specially the male and female playwrights.

The words 'myths' and 'mythology' are used sometime as synonymous words for its contents and structures. Originated Greek 'mythos' myth has passed through various stages of explanation and interpretation. The word 'myth' interrogates whether it is epical or historical relevance Romila Thapar in a Wednesday interview of *The Hindu* makes clear difference between myth and history. She explains, History and mythology both try to explain the past but while history relies on evidence, myths rely on fantasy and must be examined differently" (9). Rabindranath Tagore observes that myths are epics as well as history. He says, "It would not be enough to call the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharat* as great epics. They are history as well" (qtd in Kulkarni 3). Even though the myths are treasure true record of the past which basis on fictitious, it is quite relevant to present scenario. Nand Kumar observes, "Myths need not be blatant tale of some fictitious past however it can be a memory of the past, told in a fictitious way" (2). In this regard, Joseph Campbell asserts about mythical characters blend in human conditions, "Myths are stories of our search through the age for truth, for meaning for significance. The story of human suffering, striving, living – and youth coming to knowledge of itself what it has to go through." (qtd in Mitra Saoli 10). It makes clear that myths related to the past. Simultaneously it amalgamates the present necessities. Monica Dhillon writes,

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“Since myths are open ended and unlike history, they have no pretensions of objective reality, they can be reinterpreted in a number of ways. . . . upon the present necessities” (2).

Myths are appeared in worlds mythology in the form of historical revelation or sometime its basis on the fictitious construction. It sometime appears in both forms as historical facts and mythical fantasy. The epics the *Mahabharat* and the *Ramayan* have been remained the treasure trove of arts. These epics depicts about Indian legendary or historical heroes (not women prominently) written in grand style. Rustom Bharucha captures attention in regard, with the *Mahabharat's* manifold representation. He writes, “The *Mahabharat* is not merely a great narrative poem, it is our ‘itihās’, the fundamental source of knowledge of our literature, dance, painting, sculpture, theology, stage craft, sociology, economy – in short, our history in all its detail and destiny.” It has all seasonal aroma blending with ‘Amrita’ or ‘divine nectar’ which spreaded through nation’s culture. Soila Mitra quotes,”

The words of *Mahabharat* are
ineffable like amrita
In every age, there unfold,
New meanings from the old. (6)

These highly ineffable mythical stories are constructed on the basis of patriarchal mindset and one could find it as ‘a no woman’s land’. The great epics *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* mainly constructed legendary heroes and not given possibility places to women for their hopes. These powerful epic heroes are reconstructed at the utmost care by many popular writers like Raja Rao, Devdatta Patnaik, Amish Tripathy in their respective novels whereas Girish Karnad, T.P. Kailasum, Vijay Tendulkar. Asif Currimbhoy and other playwrights brought some of the towering mythical heroes on the stage. The mythical women like Sita, Draupadi, Gandhari and Kunti are portrayed as five models of perfection and ‘pativrata’. Their stereotypical images of an all. Sacrificing, devoted wife: Husband was for women a divine incarnation a god gained

through the ritual of marriage. These mythical women are brought on the Indian stage by keeping them into the traditional images and stereotypical presentation by male playwrights for the centuries. The conscious feminist Playwrights attempted to raise objection over the representation of these mythical women in traditional images of goddesses and archetypes which always kept them in circle of glorification as mother, daughter, wife and daughter-in-law.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, women playwrights began to voice against the patriarchal representations of women on the stage being in secondary and subordinate position. Their plays initiate is not confined to the domestic sphere nor are love and romance their interest only, - these being the usual charges laid at their door by the dismissive patriarchal attitude. Few talented women playwrights challenged to the male dominancy in theatre presentation of mythical women and they constructed their own theatre space to raise their voice against patriarchal constructions. There is hardly domain of lie that is left untouched in their writing. They deliberately foregrounded their space a new dramaturgy – a womanist theory of drama that rejects as the aim of drama both the notion of Aristotelian ‘Catharsis and Bharata’s ‘Stayibhava’ as the feeling aroused in the audience. Through their constructive efforts in writing plays on women’s issues, laid its foundation of feminist theatre that would celebrate, women’s concerns on the stage and would break the cage of male domination to ensure the manifestation of women’s image and the unacknowledged creative impulse of women. They totally reject the male dominance in drama and theatre space, and set up their own feminist dramaturgy—their entire theatre ideology basis on women’s concerns. There are same dominant feminist playwrights who wrote on contemporary issues. Some are exploited their plots and characters from myths, legends and ancient classics and put forth the characters in contemporary idiom. They borrowed the ideas from distant bygone ages to present women’s images into the present scenario.

Ancient myths have been remained great advantages to the patriarchal ruling class to subjugate women and keeping them within specified circle and

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kept women as inferior or subordination in patriarchal world. The radical feminists raise objection and expressed their strong protestation of words through ground breaking writings. Simon de Beauvoir, Kate Millet and other revolutionary thinkers or feminists have expressed their displeasure on the women's subjugation, oppression and suppression. They feel mythic version also is the main cause of women's inferior representation in plays. Simon de Beauvoir in the second sex asserts: "Few myths have been more advantages to the rule class than the myth of women – it justifies all privileges and even authorizes their abuse" (qtd. In Singh Anita 164). Kate Millet, a revolutionary thinker and authoritarian speaker on women's subjugation, holds mythology responsible for women's subordinations, even having all sorts of potentialities and capacity in expressions. Kate Millet expresses", mythology is the root cause of the human suffering, assigned inferior status to women: Patriarchy has God on its side." (qtd. in Sandhu 1). Roland Barthes calls myths are an ideological abuse.

There is a galaxy and cluster of women playwrights in Indian theatre who exposed the patriarchal mis-representation of women's issues in lower position and their prejudiced mind set regarding women's concerns. Even they exploited the mythical characters and stories to subvert the dominant ideology's hidden male bias. Several women writers have revised the old myths in contemporary relevance and brought on the centre stage. They determined to abolish the ideology—laden representation and presentation of mythical subjugated marginalized and exploited, women through their women perspectives. Earlier these submissive women in epics are portrayed in the 'man-made mythic gaze' views woman as fragile entity to be taken care of and protected by man. They made use of myth not as a legitimization of subjugation but as a major tool of expression over the women's suppression in mythical world. They fought courageously and emphatically to establish their own theatre conventions of women's problems once it was ignored and within short span of their writing, they put forth the cultural history of India, through women characters. This tradition of writings began to be known as feminist dramaturgy

and theatre. Tutun Mukharjee assets: "Their dramatic world, once ignored, trivialized as hidden from history gain in significance as profoundly affecting the landscape of social inequalities. The women playwrights of India have contributed substantially towards this endeavour of rewriting our cultural history." (1 to 11). Feminist theatre has come up as a far reaching impact in the process of re-storing high deals of human suffering as well as become a major weapon to resist their protest against the mail biased representation of mythical women on the stage who were over looked and over showed in the midst of great warrior-husband and brothers in epics like the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat* and legendry characters.

Several women writers from India and other foreign land have revised the old myths include Anne Saxton, Anne Rich, Barbara Walkex, Marina Warner, Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood in the west, while in India notable writers include Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Gita Hariharan, Kavita Kane and Devdatta Patnaik and Prasanna who wrote extensively on epical characters. The Women playwrights like Snehalata Reddy, Malik Sarabhai, Poile Sengupta, Umarmeshwaran, C. S. Lakshmi, Gouri Ramnarayan, Varsha Adalja are the prominent in writing plays. They borrowed epical characters to highlight their subordination depiction in the grandeur epics of *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*. They all projected epical women in rebellious and resistance stance.

The epical characters—Sita, Draupadi, Kunti and Gandhari, Savitri are mostly celebrated and preserved as Goddesses in Indian Society, but at some level these women in epics are Side-lined and kept outside as soon as their work is ended. Then what about the other epical characters like Mandodari, Shoorpankha, Manthara, Urmila, Tara, Shanta, Uruvi – Karna's wife. Those were totally neglected, ignored and marginalized in the vast panorama of the great epics which were written in Patriarchal perspectives. These all women portrayed as weak grief-stricken, and dependent characters. The women playwrights have made proper and significant space for these characters and represented them on the centre stage as mutinous, system changer, resilient, a metaphor for prakriti and revellers of their deprivation and negations. They

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become central to the story of plays in contextualized position. Feminist playwrights foreground the suppressed female voices in epics constructed to present them in contemporaneity.

Sita, the iconic and the most idealized of Indian woman hood comprises of tolerance, silent sufferer, stoic, ideals preserver and worshipping woman through all ages. These are the manifold qualities of Sita portrayed in the epic Ramayan. When her chastity was measured in the trial of fire-ordeal episode, this event was struck to the conscious playwrights and Sita is brought in her new avatar on the stage by some major playwrights. Snehalata Reddy, C. S. Lakshmi and Gouri Ramnaryan constructed Sita character in new form of her rebellious and fighting for her self-respect nature. Snehalata Reddy is a social activist, theatre practitioner and the founder of Amateur theatre group of Madras. Reddy's Sita is entirely different woman, a woman of not silent sufferer, subjugated or oppressed, but self-respected human being, endowed with exceptional sensibility. She rejects the illusionary idealism of martial sanctity; she rejects Ram and also his all ideologies. She feels more comfortable and freer in Ravan's world than the Marayada Purushotam Rama's illusionary Palace. She sees Ramrajya is a hallow façade of the ideal husband-wife relationship. The fire-ordeal episode reveals of Rama's weakness of mind, even though Rama defends of the fire trial as it was a wish of subjects of Ayodhya. He calls himself a *marayada Purushotam*, he is weak in mind and he cheats and betrays Sita. He is cruel tyrant and murderer of her hopes and dreams. Sita finds egotism in Rama's behaviour and she feels Ravan's actions and treatment to her is more justifiable than those of Rama. Reddy's Sita is transformed from mere sufferer into rebellious, independent one. She rejects the authority of Rama- "It's I who reject you! I reject you as husband, as a lover, and above all as the father of my unborn children, and I go to my doom gladly, with glory in my heart! but not for you. But for Ravan" (qtd in Enact 8). The playwrights raise questions over the depiction of woman in the epics and history, and it never given full scope and space in power-mongered Royal family men. Snehalata Reddy comments, "History has

never recorded the whole truth—It has always projected those in power – never the downtrodden— always the powerful” (qtd. In Enact magazine 8).

Uma Parmeshwaran is an Indian diaspora playwright who has settled down Canada, but she has the great attraction of mythical women characters specially ‘Sita’. Her ‘*Sitas Promise*’ dance drama is of eleven scenes of elevated Sita and Shows her different dimensions of her character. Parmeshwaran depicts Sita in feminist point of view although the major focus of the play is on the character of Rama. Rama in the play is shown more moderate and considerate towards Sita’s innocence and the majesty of Goddess Shakti. Sita reminds Rama of his duty and Love. Like Snehalata Reddy’s Sita, she is not an aggressive and turbulent in her tone, but she keeps Rama in her hand with love and affection. She has been portrayed as mother earth comprises of peacocks, crows and copies. In ‘Sita’s Promise’ play there is an ample description of nature and its beauty associated with Sita’s psyche.

Malika Sarabhai is another revered name in the feminist theatre. She conceived the plot based on myths and religious scripture. She has constructed a one-woman – dance drama to interpreted and evaluate the women from myths. She wrote and presented mythical women characters on the stage in women’s-lens. Sarabhai reconstructs Draupadi Savitri and Sita of the medieval into a modern feministic slant. Her ‘Sita’s Daughters’ is one of the popular plays wherein Sita as a strong woman caught in a predicament because of her husband. Sita describes Rama as, “the delicate prince who needed my support in coping with life in the forest, the weak man who had gather an army to fight his bottle, a chauvinist who needed proof of his wife’s virtue, a king who fails in his duty as a husband”(qtd. In Sita’s Daughter). This modern Sita is vocal and raises objections and made Rama being a weak prince. She is banished by Rama and proclaims, “I am glad today to be free of you. Now I shall bring up my children alone. I shall bring them to up to be free and honest.” (Cited 3). She decides to write story of Ramayan differently in her next birth. This epical character transforms in modern Sita as the model and rebellious representative woman in modern time. The title ‘Sita’s Daughter symbolizes of modern women who

suffers for many causes. Anita Singh in her article expresses that modern women are related to the epical Sita: "All women are Sita's daughters carrying her agony and deprivation. The play documents the voice of the modern Sitas who say 'no' to the oppression meted out by the tyrannical Patriarchal system which considers her as the other and hence equal" (Singh 02). Sarabhai's Sita is more vibrant either vocally or in action to protest against patriarchal representation of hers.

C. S. Lakshmi, popularly known as Ambai is made new changes in Tamil theatre brining mythical women who were silent and invisible in Indian Epics. Her play "*Crossing the River*" that was originally written in Tamil under the title *Aatraik Kadaththal* exposes the pathetic cry of Sita. Through the image of flow of river. Ambai presents invisible conflict and female subjugation and emancipation. By adopting theatre innovative techniques, she lay bared open of inner consciousness of feminine sensibility through modern Sita. The hollowness of Sita in modern time is expressed: "I am Sita the pawn, I am Sita the cheated I am Sita who has nothing" (Mukharjee 434). Sita is the only epical women who is much admired and put on the pedestal of honour but at the same time she is subjugated and remained the mouth piece of all wives and mothers suffering from inner voice. In her play '*Mahabharat*', Malika Sarabhai, constructed mother epical woman character Draupadi. In medieval *Mahabharat* Draupadi was projected as the image of power and sacrifice. She is publicly humiliated and assaulted with disrobe, she is shown as stoic women, who put on the trial of insecure and physical thrash by power-mongered patriarchal hegemony does injustice towards woman as a human being. But Sarabhai's Draupadi is not like the conventional. Her Draupadi is endowed with the will to make affirmation of her unexpressed resistance. She rejects the arranged marriage concept which process or the will of parents and asserts her own choice. She makes declarations: "Not mine the decision, whom to marry, my heart was pledged to bow and arrow. My life is an offering to the shooter of the fish" (Sarabhai, Kartikeya). "In search of Goddess" is another play of Sarabhai wherein, she constructs the myth of Draupadi and Savitri. She reconsiders

Savitri in the notion of rejection of burning widows at their husband's funeral pure.

Mythical women Sita and Savitri are fully covered up in their majestic position and put on the pedestal honour and fortitude, and result of it, many of women in the epics are remained unearthed ignored and side-stepped when their roles are come to an end. The conscious women playwrights deconstruct and revisit epics to expose their insignificant representations and made determined efforts to shed limelight on these neglected women of two Indian epics. "Mandodari" is one of the dominant Queen of Lanka in the Ramayan who blends high human values – a committed queen, the most beautiful queen and revered position in the kingdom of Lanka. But Mandodari is overshadowed in the monumental power, arrogance and lust of Ravan. Catching this insignificant representation of Mandodari in epics, Varsha Adalja, a Gujrati playwright brought this character in centre stage through her play 'Mandodari'. Adalja's Mandodari is presented a protagonist as a woman of extra ordinary knowledge and intelligence. She is a notion of truth and morality. She is portrayed as a part of her wisdom and philosophical insight into the nature of things. Adalja draws a fresh perspective from Mandodari. This modern Mandodari discards her mythic submissive counterpart behind and takes a step ahead towards liberation from puppet hood. These mythical women in modern contexts, have made to change from the old notion of womanhood. They cross the marginalized and victimized, conceptualized notion and retain their autonomy. Adalja celebrated the devine dignity of feminine grace.

Gouri Ramnarayan, perhaps the first woman playwright one, who digout many women ignored characters from Ramayan and brought on centre stage. The Ramayan have a lot of wonderful stories which are represented through women characters such as hunchback Manthara, Shoorpankha, Urmila, Mandodari, Tara and Shanta. These are lesser known women who have become muses to playwright Gowri Ramnarayan for her play 'What she said'. Gouri Ramanarayan has made strenuous efforts to shed light on these unsung heroines. These six unheard women are presented in Six scenes wherein these

women reveal their inner anger, anguish and resentment. The play focuses flood light on these overlooked, and whose stories went unheard, distraught women. Urmila, Sita's sister expresses her insignificant place: "Sita was in the sun while I in the shadow". The play '*what she said*' represents the modern women's isolation, alienation, but their struggles remain unique. Each of the monologues reveals of their sufferings, struggle in contemporary reality. These Six side lined women are presented on centre stage through feminist perspectives.

Polie Sengupta, the foremost playwright who also foregrounded the mythical character; Shoorpanakha in her play, "*Thus spoke Shoorpanakha, So said Shakuni*," Two characters. Shoorpanakha and Shakuni are neglected and marginalized whenever their function is ended in epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. They were presented in villainous stance. But, in her play, Poile Sengupta represent Shoorpanakha as a rebellion, staunch believer in modern milieu. In her modern and stylish attire, she encounters on the airport with Shakuni. Both are shown as maligned characters who humiliated, and assaulted. They are filled with anger and their revenge motif leads them towards thinking of the destruction of airport with bomb-blasting. They had resentment of their humiliation, ill-treatment in the epical world. So, they think to destroy the whole world. In the End, they compromised with the present situation and gave up their idea of destruction.

This is attempt of analytical survey of Indian mythical Women who are brought on the centre stage in the form of feminist theatre and put-forth them for critical endeavour and space.

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COSMOS Impact Factor: 5.19

NRI No. MAHENG/2012/5558

ISSN: 2319-3689

Critical Space

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Volume VIII, Issue-II

February 2020

ISSN: 2319-3689

Patriarchy Reflected in Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife*

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Abstract:

Asian culture is wide and varied in itself. It is totally different from European or western culture. It has specific tradition and rituals as well as living conditions also. A man who is born in this culture presents himself differently than European. The same is applicable to the family institution enriched in Asian culture. Man and woman, after their marriage, form a family, which include their siblings and in-laws, and the custom of bride's living with bridegroom and in his home forever promotes patriarchy and male domination in the Asian society. Though Amy Tan is well-known Chinese American novelist, she elaborates specific Asian culture in her *The Kitchen God's Wife*. It is bestselling novel that represents male domination and humiliation of Chinese woman, the weaker section of the society. This paper will explore contemporary Chinese society and social status of women.

Key words: Humiliation, harassment, patriarchy, male domination, Asian culture, feminism etc.

Human species have rich and glorifying heritage which have been consistently evolved in new dimensions of the life and made it enriched in almost every walks of life. Contribution of various aspects played prominent role in this journey of development of human species. Human being, with the help of nature and inborn intellect, searched new ways of progress from hunting to agriculture and to industrial and technological development. Since its origin, every species has been struggling for their survival. Man is not exceptional to this struggle. There is clear cut bifurcation in human being, male and female i.e. Man and Woman. Man, who has more muscular strength in comparison to the woman while woman is little weaker physically that leads her towards more

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emotional than practical. Woman plays an important role in the process of reproduction and in birth cycle. Physical strength of woman becomes weaker physically and more emotionally or psychologically after giving a birth to a child. This process of regeneration more positively effects on woman's psyche. For the need of survival and better man woman relations, man evolved marriage system where family is the major concept of living in a group. In this system, indoor work or house hold duties and outdoor works were clearly divided. Members of the family who are physically strong and stout, especially men, used to go for hunting and those who are weaker i.e. women used to remain at the home for house hold duties. As per the law of nature, the one who is strong and powerful physically rules over others, so, naturally man became head and authority of the family. According to Dr. Lerner patriarchy developed during 3100 BC to 600 BC in the near East due to intertribal exchanges of women for the marriages which was essential to function the tribes.

Firestone writes that, "Patriarchal ideologies support the oppression of women and gives an example the joy of giving birth which she labels a patriarchal myth". For the discussion on the statement we have to discuss about the marriage system in general. It is general marriage tradition that bride has to leave her maternal house after her marriage and has to live with her bridegroom in his house forever. It is not so easy to leave her own house after the marriage immediately where she was born, grown up and played with her father and mother and brothers and sisters. That vary sense of leaving things and breaking relations to her own relatives provide her a kind of discomfort. At the same time, she becomes alone. This sense of loneliness leads her towards disconnection of natural parental support and she becomes alone in new atmosphere about which she is completely ignorant. Almost all the married women have the same experience. Suppression and humiliation are easier with such mentally and physically weak women. One more thing to be noted here that man always think he is superior to woman. So, he is always in the state of mind to order somebody especially woman rather than to listen or obey to woman. This mentality makes him little arrogant. Such person, who is physically strong, earns something and

has an authority to do each and everything, naturally becomes head of the family institution. So, it is but natural that parent of such person supports him in suppression of the bride who is an outsider and who lacks majority, support and physical strength also. Natural physical difference makes woman separate and weaker than man. She is not as strong and stout physically as man. Due to biological inequality, she cannot stand against him and against such situation. Her physical inability unwillingly supports patriarchy.

It is generally considered that woman is more emotional than man and it is true also. Male child grows up differently in different atmosphere than female child in the society. Male child is allowed to go outside, play on the grounds, allow to spend his maximum time with friends, do physical exercise etc., but female child is not given such freedom like boy. There are many restrictions on girl's behaviour and on almost everything related to her. The restrictions suppressed on her, in one way, by her own parent, makes her more introvert which leads in changing her emotional or psychological world. She becomes more and more introvert and self-centred and grows up with many restrictions and bondages like mixing up with society, remaining outside of the house late night, talking with other boys etc. She is taught to listen without any complaint though she is not ready to do so willingly. Her psychological mind-set is so deliberately prepared in such a way that she cannot rebel against her suppression though she wants to do so. On the other hand, the treatment given to a boy in a family is rather different, and that's why, a boy becomes more and more extrovert and prepares himself mentally strong with the help of social experiences which leads him less emotional and more practical. The level of self-confidence and ego naturally develop in the male child while lack of self-confidence emerges as part and parcel of woman's nature. So, psychological mind-set plays important role in the development of human personality. There were some bad rituals and customs in pre-independence India like 'Sati' which was the important evidence of how deeply patriarchy was rooted in India. The particular custom allows men to burn widow lively after the death of her husband in a ceremonial way. It was so shameful, hideous and so dreadful

custom present in India which was banned by Lord Bentinck after mass agitation and successful negotiation of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a well-known social reformer of West Bengal.

There are many views on patriarchy. Feministic approach of patriarchy is rather different than usual. It defines as patriarchy refers to a society which dominated by male where state society and economy are characterized by systematics institutionalized and pervasive gender oppression. In other words, patriarchy is a rule by male over female.

Mary Wollstonecraft was very clear in her 'A Vindication of the Rights of the Women (1792)', that there was such thing on 'Tyranny of Men' but it takes more sixty years to adopt patriarchy as a term for the same.

In other words, patriarchy is a social system in which men hold power, decision making authority, leadership in almost each and everything including moral, social, domestic authority and property rights also. Usually women or female children had no claim on their property rights and had no power to decide the things in ancient time.

Patriarchy is deeply rooted in Asian society. One can observe male domination in ancient Asian culture also. Almost all the rulers, ruled entire Asia, were male. It can be hardly seen that any female ruled over particular territory of Asia.

To elaborate the topic, the novel *The Kitchen God's Wife*, written by Chinese American author Amy Tan, is considered. The author Amy Tan was born in 1952. Her parents were first generation Chinese Americans. An-Mai was the Chinese name given to her at her birth by her parents. The meaning of An-Mai is blessing of America. Her father, John, had come to America in 1947, and was an electrical engineer and a volunteer Baptist minister also. Her mother, Daisy, who left China in 1949 due to her unhappy arranged marriage, was a medical technician. She had three daughters to whom she had left behind. Her elder brother, Peter, expired in 1967 due to brain tumour and after one year her father also died of the same disease. Immediately after the untimely death of her

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husband and as per the suggestions of a fortune teller she left that evil house and China with her two children, Amy and John, and went to Europe.

Amy Tan completed her high school education in Switzerland. With the feelings of an outsider she was still grieving and was angry over the losses in her family. The constant feeling of helplessness in her father and brother's death made her rebellious and wild in her outlook as well as in her behaviour. She used to remain in the company of her friends who were drug dealers. She eloped to Australia with her friend who was a mental patient and called himself a German Army Deserter. She moved to California to be closer to her boyfriend, Lou DiMattei. She graduated in 1973 from San Jose State University. The next year, she married DiMattei, and also received her Master's degree in English and Linguistics and later turned to freelance writing. She became successful in her writing. In 1987 Amy came to China with her mother to connect herself with the Chinese heritage that she had lost in her childhood. She realized that her writing could be flourished only through her Chinese American perspective. Later, her short stories and short fictions were published.

Amy Tan's novel *The Kitchen God's Wife* was published in 1991. She wrote this novel about her mother, Daisy. Winnie, the protagonist of the story is the representation of Amy Tan's mother. The novel reveals the hidden life of the protagonist which is full of sparkling secrets. Winnie and Helen are lifelong friends. They have kept each other's secrets for more than fifty years. When Helen decides to reveal the truth, Winnie wishes that she must first tell her daughter Pearl about her past that includes something terrible that even Helen does not know. Thus, begins the story of Winnie's journey from a small island outside Shanghai in the 1920s, to the United States. *The Kitchen God's Wife* celebrates the bond between mother Winnie and daughter Pearl. This novel was widely appreciated and praised by both, critics and readers.

The novel gave the writer a reputation as a serious writer. The novel not only attracted the readers but the critics also. The novel is the evidence of her unique perspective and storytelling ability that compels the readers to move

from the past into the present. The novel centres round the mother-daughter relationships and intergenerational conflicts. Though her novel was based on family relationships, she was rather unwilling to be known as an ethnic writer and wanted to write on universal themes and her work to be assessed on its merit rather than as sub-genre writing.

Patriarchy and male domination are a part of Chinese society and culture also. Restrictions and bondages can be observed in contemporary China. It is quite natural that Chinese immigrants' behaviour in America is based on their Chinese cultural and traditional background. Threatening the children was the custom in old families of China. No doubt it was for noble purpose. Like children, women were restricted and had religious and social bondages in the contemporary China. Winnie remembers and says: "When she was tortured by her husband Wen Fu, she did not angry. She did not even know she was supposed to be angry. This was China and Chinese culture. A woman had no right to be angry" (170). Women were treated as a thing to suppress. In American social context it is the matter of humiliation or harassment of women but these things were common in China at that time.

In China, Winnie's life with Wen Fu was a humiliating experience for her. Wen Fu is the representative of male dominated and masculine community, who always considers woman as a thing, inferior to man and made to be suppressed. Discrimination between men and women is an age-old issue which is focused impressively in the novel. It has its setting in mid twentieth century China. At that time, China was poor, religious and traditional country. Giving education to women was beyond the imagination at that time. In such situation some educated families tried to educate their daughters by sending them to schools. Education of Winnie's mother is an evidence of it. She was modern, however, there is no specific reference of Winnie and her mother's exact educational qualification. Though she and Peanut went to school at Tsingming Island, how much they learnt is not clearly mentioned in the novel. As already considered that her father was very rich person, he could afford the expense of their education. But during that period such education was of no use that could not

provide them courage and strength. Winnie had such courage and strength to fight against and to get rid of her husband Wen Fu which is the outcome of her being educated. Since from her childhood, she had faced humiliation, especially when she was sent Tsingming Island by her father, who never saw her for fourteen years. After her mother's elopement from the house, she was lonely in her room for three days and nobody came to care her. This is not only disgusting but harassing also. Her uncle and aunts' behaviour with her were also the matter of torture that reflects their biased mind. Some humiliating experiences about her husband Winnie shares with her daughter. She tells her:

Every day, I had to listen to him beg me to unite him, climb into bed with him, to take off my clothes. And when I would not do any of these things, he cursed me at the top of his voice. He accused me of sleeping with other pilots. He said this land enough for everyone in the hallway to hear. (249)

Wen Fu used to hit her occasionally for simple cause and had pressurized her to beg him for forgiveness again and again with touching her head to floor. It was not only physical humiliation but also an individual degradation losing self-esteem. Once she hired a girl for household duties. She was pregnant but Wen Fu tortured her, raped her against her protest. The girl was young and innocent and poor also. Wen Fu had no morals and used to behave with many girls in the same manner. His behaviour is reflected appropriately further:

He used to bring girl in the very bed which was used by Winnie and him and forced Winnie to see his dirty business very next to her. His cruel behaviour was not limited to the girls and his wife Winnie only but he used to hit his own girl Yiku who was crying before him who rolled up into a little ball and Winnie used to beg before him for forgiveness. (262)

Wen Fu disliked Winnie's dance with Jimmy in American club. Wen Fu became very angry and started to beat her, called her whore. He pointed his gun on her head to write on the piece of paper for divorce, and then forced her to beg

for not to divorce by waving his gun in the air. Her mind was obsessed with such incidents. He forced her to say sorry. She reminds the incident and says:

That night, with a gun to my head, he raped me, telling me I had lost the privileges of a wife and now had only the duties of a whore. He made me do one terrible thing after another. He made me murmur thanks to him. He made me beg for more of his punishment. I did all these things until I was senseless, laughing and crying, and feeling in my body gone. (309)

Such kind of humiliation Winnie had faced, by her male counterpart who is male and has dominating nature, for more than seven years which is beyond the imagination of common people. But when she applied a trick with the help of Wan Betty to get his signs on divorce papers, he searched her house, waited until her loneliness and attacked her with gun and deserted her house. She begged him not to tear her visa and tickets. Finally, she was succeeded in getting his gun which he left on the table and went to bathroom. She ordered him to come out, pointed the gun on him, fired in the air, ordered him to remove the pants and escaped herself with visa and tickets. She threatened him to go away. That was her great victory not only over Wen Fu but on her own coward nature also. No doubt, this novel is a description of constant chain of humiliation and painful experiences by her husband in Winnie's life which she wants to forget. Though all these experiences of the protagonist are humiliating and discriminating, that is not related to immigrant's issues of discrimination and humiliation in American society. Although, the novel does not focus on American social discrimination and the immigrants' humiliation from Native Americans, the protagonist, who is not only part and parcel of modern liberal American society but also the citizen of America, is deeply and closely related to these issues, may be that are her personal past experiences but these issues are related to Winnie and Pearl who are now living in America. Presently American society is free from such male domination and patriarchy where she enjoys freedom with her daughter.

Regarding Winnie's humiliation in China by her husband and due to male dominated society and her escape from this vulgar situation, Judith Caesar, in his article entitled *Patriarchy, Imperialism, and Knowledge*, points out:

Jiang Weili, the narrator of the central three-fourths of the novel, endures the most horrifying abuse from her brutal husband, Wen Fu, while traditional Chinese society not only fails to intervene but colludes in her victimization. The only twist seems to be that instead of winning her husband's love, Weili is rescued by a handsome prince, in this case, Jimmy Louie, a Chinese-American soldier who marries her and takes her back to the United States. In fact, one can see the novel as a rather smug indictment of the misery of women in traditional Chinese society in contrast to American society's enlightened feminism. Moreover, the story that frames the story, that of Jiang Weili's daughter Pearl and her relationship with her mother, seems like yet another story about returning to one's roots to discover some less complicated identity. In short, there seems little here to challenge conventional American thinking. (48)

Judith Caesar in his critical appreciation blames Chinese male dominated society and patriarchal social formation. He also criticises social psychological mind-set which fails to rescue the protagonist. The novel represents woman's status in a so-called male dominated or patriarchal society.

Though the novel *The Kitchen God's Wife* by Amy Tan reflects harassment and humiliation by male counterpart in contemporary Chinese society, the things have changed in the modern world. In the course of time women become literate. Education enlightened them with awareness of fundamental rights and their inferior position in the society. This awareness made them bolder and more assertive. Feminism basically started with this internal and integral urge of women. According to feminism all the literature is created or written in male point of view. Even decoration of female character in any type of literature is

also elaborated through male point of view. So, some feministic authors have an opinion that whole literature should be either revised (especially related to women) or recreated through woman's point of view. Women have fundamental and constitutional rights which make them aware about their appropriate status in the society and which lead them towards self-consciousness, self-confidence and equal status equivalent to male in the society. Society becomes stronger due to their contribution and shares in almost each and every sector. This is possible only because of world-wide spread feministic movements run by various eminent authors like Kamala Das, Suzie Tharou, Mery Wollstonecraft and others. Now-a-days, women have equal property rights, right of expression, voting rights etc. They have equal reservation and opportunities also. Though there are still male domination and patriarchy in some remote part of Asian society, it is negligible and modern technology and explosion of information through web and internet women in such remote places are also aware about their fundamental rights.

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Transnational Space or De-terrorization in Chetan Bhagat's *One Night @ The Call Centre*

Dr. Vidya Sadashiv Lendave*

Abstract:

In the period of globalization, due to the mass media and ultra-fast transportation the seven continents are shrunk into a single common territory that problematized the cultural, national and many times even religious identities. The contemporary literature also responded to this de-terrorization by using the multinational space and delineating the characters with the hybrid national and cultural origins. The traditional categorization as a national literature had emerged as one of the major trends in postcolonial studies, is now challenged and demanded with a new categorization with accordance to the new understanding of the world.

It can be seen that the people who are unaware of such changes try to review the contemporary literature with the traditional perspective. Therefore, it is necessary to attend the said research lacuna and pinpoint a new valid methodology of interpretation. The present paper is a small attempt in this direction as it undertakes an analysis of Chetan Bhagat's *One Night @ The Call Centre* in the light of transnational space used in it.

Keywords: Transnational Space, De-terrorization National Literature and Globalization, etc.

The phenomenon of globalization stings many socio-cultural problems in the contemporary period. The political term like 'nation', sociological term like 'nationality', anthropological term like 'ethnic identity' and cultural terminologies which specifies a distinguished group have been shattered in the hybrid, multicultural and techno-savvy space of the contemporary world. The

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liberalization in the world tread, third generation communication technology, advanced modes of transport and travel, and the development of *lingua-franca* have issued a visa of a 'global village' to the contemporary society. Advancement in the science and technology bridged the gap between different continents and formed a geographical local and facilitates various cultural groups to communicate with each other. This transnational condition promotes cultural crises which in the positive attitude generate a new cultural identity and in the negative perspective it discards a specific cultural identity. The studies carried out in the discipline of Cultural Studies have been constantly evaluating and redefining the contemporary dynamic social scene. In the present paper Chetan Bhagat's *One Night @ The Call Centre* is analysed in the light of the transnational and multicultural space to explore the cultural crises and problems of cultural identity.

Chetan Bhagat's *One Night @ The Call Centre* is another fine example of transnational space or de-terrorization of the world. The story of the novel reveals the lives of six call centre employees working in Connexions call centre in Gurgaon, Haryana. The transnational space created in the present novel is totally different from the previously analysed novels, as Bhagat uses 'immobile mobility' of call centres to connect the world. The emergence of call centres as important market policies cannot be excluded in the discussion of globalization in India as it has an immense influence on the common man of India. The contemporary Indian English literature has many references of the life at call centres. Dale Hudson in his article 'Undesirable Bodies and Desirable Labour: Documenting the Globalization and Digitization of Transnational American Dream in Indian Call Centres' writes how the call centres bring the drastic change in the lives of the people and how they connect the remote part of the world with the centre. It has bridged the traditional gap of periphery and the centre in the fields like economics, business, culture and society.

Along with Bollywood films and Indian restaurants, call centres are an audible, if not visible, marker of "the new India" in the United States. Call centres mask locations and synchronize

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temporalities to render their operation within digital networks and interfaces of globalization experientially seamless. Indian customer service operators (CSOs) and others working in India's business processing outsourcing (BPO) and information technologies enabled services (ITES) sectors, "neutralize" their accents into "global English," work night shifts that correspond with business days elsewhere, perform affective labor of customer service, including business etiquette and chitchat about everyday issues on the other side of the world, and adopt alias names after intensive business and cultural training. (82)

Thus, the abstract makes one aware with the social, cultural and economic changes that have happened due to the globalization. As the market starts siding down the boundaries of nation and reaching at the end point of the world it requires a special kind of assistance to help their customers and support their products. Shashi Tharoor in his review on Chetan Bhagat's *One Night @ The Call Centre* published in the journal *Foreign Policy*, wrote –

If you're an American living in New York and your computer crashes, your dishwasher malfunctions, or you're overdue on your credit card payments, chances are good that your call for help will be answered by a bright, young twenty something Indian graduate in New Delhi with a headset, a flickering monitor, and a fake American accent. To many, the call centre has become the symbol of India's rapidly globalizing economy. While traditional India sleeps, a dynamic population of highly skilled, articulate professional works through the night, functioning on U. S. time under made-up American aliases. (78)

Thus, call centre becomes a most important utility in the trade as the business depends on the actual support you provide to your customers. This rapidly growing phenomenon also brings certain changes in the social behavioural

patterns that can be identified in fractions with different cultures across the world.

The thematic concern of the novel is to reveal how the process of globalization affects the lives of modern man and how they require a consultancy to cope with the day-today tensions. Shyam Mehra is the narrator of the novel who tells the incidence happened at the call centre in one night. It is not just the sequence of events that happened in the lives of six characters but the narrative has a capacity to suggest the entire life of the character that can foreground the present problems they are facing. Shyam is upset as he comes to know that his co-worker Priyanka is engaged to Ganesh Gupta, an NRI software engineer at Microsoft, USA. The relations between Shyam and Priyanka have a complex structure as they both love each other and at the same time hate for another reason. Shyam is also engaged with another co-worker Shefali. He has prepared a website with Vroom to register the calls from the customers and thinks that he will get promotion for this job as a team leader and will re-propose Priyanka. But soon he comes to know that Bakshi, his boss has submitted the website manual and has taken all the credit. The lack of confidence to face the competitive world around, reservations in utilizing the skills he has, and most importantly lack of design making are some of the problems faced by the youth of the contemporary world. The personality is the product of the social situation where one has to work hard to survive in the cutthroat competition in which he feels insecure and act defending.

Priyanka is a modern girl, who is ready to date his co-workers and even ready to enjoy sex. She is not ready to get marry soon, but her mother and would-be-husband Ganesh press her on the proposal of marriage in the very next month. But finally, after their meeting with God she comes to know that Ganesh is fraud a he has sent her a photo which is an edited picture. He deceives her by keeping her in dark about his baldness. She finally decides to leave Ganesh and readjust with Shyam. Her life is also a representational life of millions of Indian girls who face the anarchy of patriarchal social system which is though, on its last phase, dictate the role of woman in society. Priyanka's

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decision is odd in the cultural frame of India where women's negation is not considered seriously but the event also suggests that Indian society is also on the verge of tremendous changes in the moral codes and cultural conducts. It is happening due to the exposure of foreign culture through the electronic media and the job she has. In the conservative India, women are doing night shifts, dating boyfriends and has adopted the free sex culture are the effects of globalization. This should be interpreted as a transnational situation where the cultures are homogenising in a single entity.

Esha's story is also a frequently repeated social situation in the rapidly progressing sectors like multinational corporations, film industries and modelling world in India. It is also reflected in the several films and becomes a popular thematic concern of majority of the modern novels. The sexual abuse in the name of opportunity has also a product of economic developments and a modern morality. Esha, a young girl from rural area comes to a metropolitan city with a dream of becoming a model but she was deceived by a forty-year-old designer. She compromises with designer that she will sleep with him and he will find a modelling contract for her. But finally, tells her that she is too short to be a ramp model. The worst thing in the affair is that the man sends money as compensation. She narrates this incident to Shyam and shows her frustration and depression which are the unavoidable part of the modern life. She Says, "I hate myself, Shyam. I just hate myself. And I hate my face, and the stupid mirror that shows me this face. I hate myself for believing people who told me I could be a model. Can I get my face altered? I did not know of any plastic surgeons who specialized in turning pretty girls ugly, so I kept quiet" (143). Afterwards in her confession to the God, she admits that she is not willing to pursue a career in Modelling where a talent is denied for the centimetres of height.

Vroom is also a computer geek, who loves designing webs. He is smarter than other characters as he himself takes initiative in the planning of saving the call centre and giving lesson to Bakshi. His planning and self-confidence, especially after God's visit saves call centre. His love for junk food, his passion for night clubs, and his attitude towards girlfriends make him a modern man of

intelligence and pleasure. He proposes Esha very skilfully, but when she asks about his three other girlfriends, he answers: "The other girls were just for fun. They meant nothing, they're like pizza or movies or something. They are channel surfing; you are more serious" (120). Thus, it is difficult to identify him as Indian youth. He is by blood Indian by attitude transnational. Thus, the character of Vroom also helps to constitute the transnational atmosphere of the novel.

Another character, Rathika is different from all other call centre employees. She is a housewife with dozens of responsibilities that should be carried out along with the night shifts at call centre. The character is an important instance that suggests what exactly happened to the Indian tradition and also becomes an answer to the question that is it possible to sustain great Indian tradition in the present age. She is honest to her husband Anuj, making adjustments with mother-in-law in the house and a blood sucking boss Bakshi at the office. She is doing all these things for the love of Anuj but in a trick of call centre boys, she comes to know that he is engaged with another girl Payal. This brutal reality makes her frustrating and depressed. This disillusionment brings a depression to Radhika and she decides to divorce Anuj and live life without any illusion.

The character of Military Uncle brings a problem of cultural acculturation and the generation gap to the novel. A senior fellow in all these young chaps makes him an odd man out. This problem is also created due to the rapidly spreading globalization. The speed in the changes is so tremendous that elder generation cannot cope with it. He wants his daughter-in-law to be an ideal house wife who will keep the house and brought up the children but his daughter-in-law is modern, career oriented, free individual. This generation gap makes him unhappy and lonely at his old age. It is also the problem of his ego, as he demands something that is impossible in the present period.

Thus, though the novel is confined to the lives of six call centre employees and revealed its story in an immobile mobility of the space of telecommunication. The novel has many references of international trade that

helps to constitute the transnational space of the novel. Therefore, the story is not limited to India or few individuals but on the contrary, it represents the youth of the contemporary world and compiles all the important issues of universals concern.

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COSMOS Impact Factor: 5.19

NRI No. MAHENG/2012/5558

ISSN: 2319-3689

Critical Space

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Volume VIII, Issue-II

February 2020

ISSN: 2319-3689

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