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Jai Narain Vyas University., Jodhpur

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*In desperate hope I go and search for
her in all the corners of my room; I
find her not.*

*My house is small
and what once has gone from it can never be regained.*

*But infinite is thy mansion, my lord, and
seeking her I have to come to thy door.*

*I stand under the golden canopy of thine evening sky
and I lift my eager eyes to thy face.*

*I have come to the brink of eternity from which nothing can vanish —
-no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears.*

*Oh, dip my emptied life into that ocean,
plunge it into the deepest fullness.
Let me for once feel that lost sweet
touch in the allness of the universe.*

Brink of Eternity

-Rabindranath Tagore

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Editorial

A journal is a pivotal medium that reflects the Department's robust academic foundation, often hailed as the central hub of its intellectual vibrancy. It can be deemed the pulsating centre that drives the Department's involvement in a multitude of scholarly discussions. The journal represents a noteworthy platform where both burgeoning and established scholars embark on their academic journeys, sharing their research findings, insights, and viewpoints with a global readership.

Jodhpur Studies in English was established by innovative, progressive academicians from the esteemed Department of English, whose unwavering commitment and exceptional passion for academia were instrumental in its growth and transformation into a highly respected and prestigious publication within the academic sphere. Their visionary leadership and dedication have propelled the journal to attain a prominent position as one of the top-ranking critical journals in the country.

The tireless efforts of the teaching fraternity of the department, fuelled by their zeal for advancing critical discourse and promoting scholarly research within the field of English studies, have solidified the journal's reputation for excellence and innovation. Their collective expertise and intellectual acumen have not only elevated the journal to new heights of scholarly achievement but have also inspired a generation of academics and researchers to engage with and contribute to the rich tapestry of critical thought and analysis that the journal embodies.

Within the pages of the journal, profound concepts are exchanged, ground-breaking research is circulated, and intellectual conversations are cultivated. It not only enhances the academic landscape within the Department but also broadens its influence to various corners of

the literary world, bridging minds and ideas across geographical divides. Serving as a dynamic nexus for disseminating knowledge, the journal plays a pivotal role in advancing and shaping academic discourse, nurturing a community of scholars committed to pushing the frontiers of knowledge and comprehension.

The journal is not only the manifestation of the scholarly writings of the Department but is also aligned with the university's vision of fostering a positive academic culture. We are delighted to announce that we have garnered not only substantial support from our university but also received timely responses from esteemed scholars. Despite the challenging time constraints under which we operated, necessitating us to reach out to some contributors on short notice, we are profoundly grateful for their prompt submissions. We extend our sincere appreciation to all the individuals whose invaluable papers grace the pages of this publication, enriching our academic discourse. It is through the collective effort and dedication of such esteemed scholars that our journal continues to thrive as a platform for intellectual exchange and advancement. We look forward to nurturing this collaborative spirit and furthering the growth of knowledge within our academic community. We hope you all relish reading.

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Teaching Literary Communication to B.A. Part-III Rural Students of Rajasthan through Rushdie's Novel *Shame*

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Introduction

The purpose of teaching literature is to develop literary competence. Literary competence involves responding to a literary text, its style, diction and language in an informed way. The purpose of the present paper is to teach some of the structural devices used by Salman Rushdie in the novel *Shame* through an innovative technique to rural students of B.A.Part-III studying at Shri Bhagwandas Todi PG College, Lachhmangarh. The selected literary devices chosen are Metaphor and Symbol, Satire and Magic realism. The paper is based on an experiment which was conducted by the researcher at this college.

Student Profile

The rural students studying at this college are within the age group of 19-21. Most of them were educated in Hindi medium government schools except a few who received education at so called English medium schools. They belong to the middle class families. There were 12 students in the class. They are well motivated and ready to try new methods & techniques.

Methodology

It was decided to teach some of the literary devices used in Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame*. They were divided into 4 groups with 3 students in each group. The literary devices chosen were Metaphor, Symbol, Satire and Magic Realism. The students were given notes in a typed script to study the same at home. The material is introduced below: **Metaphor** – It is a figure of speech in which there is comparison of one thing with another without the use of words “like” or “as”. The resemblance is applied. It is a figure of speech used for transferring the quality of one object to another without the use of comparison.

For Example-

- (1) *Infancy is the Dawn of Life.*
- (2) *Life is but a Walking Shadow.*
- (3) *My Love is a Rose.*
- (4) *Idleness is the Rust of the Soul.*

Symbol – It is a word, place, character or object that means something beyond what it is on a literal level. In other words, it stands for something else.

For Example-

A traffic light- red sign means stop, yellow means wait and green means go. Symbols can be cultural, contextual or personal. **Cross** is a cultural symbol for Christianity.

Satire – Satire is a way of criticizing something such as a group of people or a system in which one deliberately makes them see funny or silly or stupid so that people will see their faults.

For Example-

What is the use of speaking the truth when it is troublesome to speak the truth? And telling lies is not troublesome at all when the return of both is the same.

Magic Realism - According to Abrams (2007, pg. 195-196) the term Magic realism was originally applied to a School of Painters in the 1920's. Magic realism is a literary genre in which the fantastical are treated not just possible but also realistic. In Magic realism miraculous things happen “they are presented as real”.

For Example-

A woman is visited by death and told that she will die when she finishes the shawl she is working on. And finally a body is devoured by ants.

The students were also given excerpts from the novel *Shame* on these four elements. The excerpts are given below – **Excerpts**

Below we have given passages from *Shame* containing Metaphor and Symbol, Satire and Magic realism. State and explain which passage contain which structural device-

1. As to Afghanistan: after returning to London, I met a senior British diplomat at a dinner, a career specialist in ‘my’ part of the world. He said it was quite proper, ‘post-Afghanistan’, for the West to support the dictatorship of President Zia-ul-Haq. I should not have lost my temper, but I did. It wasn’t any use. Then, as we left the table, his wife, a quiet civil lady who had been making pacifying noises, said to me, ‘Tell me; why don’t people in Pakistan get rid of Zia in, you know, the usual way.’

Shame, dear reader, is not the exclusive property of the East.

2. The last time I visited Pakistan, I was told this joke. God came down to Pakistan to see how things were going. He asked General Ayub Khan why the place was in such a mess. Ayub replied: ‘It’s these no-good corrupt civilians, sir. Just get rid of them and leave the rest to me.’ So God eliminated the politicians. After a while, He returned; things were even worse than before. This time He asked Yahya Khan for an explanation. Yahya blamed Ayub, his sons and their hangers-on for the troubles. ‘Do the needful,’ Yahya begged, ‘and I’ll clean the place up good and proper.’ So God’s thunderbolts wiped out Ayub. On His third visit, He found a

catastrophe, so He agreed with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto that democracy must return. He turned Yahya into a cockroach and swept him under a carpet; but, a few years later, he noticed the situation was still pretty awful. He went to General Zia and offered him supreme power: on one condition. 'Anything, God,' the General replied, 'You name it.' So God said, 'Answer me one question and I'll flatten Bhutto for you like a chapatti.' Zia said: 'Fire away.' So God whispered in his ear: 'Look, I do all these things for this country, but what I don't understand is: why don't people seem to love me anymore?'

It seems clear that the President of Pakistan managed to give God a satisfactory answer. I wonder what it was.

3. In 1947, when India became free, her father's Empire Talkies was burnt to the ground. Her clothes were blown off and she stood infant-naked expect for her Muslim dupatta. Saved and loved by Captain Raza Hyder, she flies with him to Pakistan, that "new moth-nibbled land of God."
4. The Shakil sisters live in a cage first because of their father's order and then on account of their own will because of pregnancy.
5. They were all wearing the flushed expression of dilated joy that is the mother's true prerogative; and the baby was passed from breast to breast and none of the six was dry.
6. Sufiya blushed uncontrollably and she blushed for the world. Miss Shah Banou, the ayah of Sufiya, whenever she gave her bath, the water had scalded her hands, "having been brought close to boiling point by a red flame of embarrassment that spread from the roots of the damaged girl's hair to the tips of her curling toes." The students were also provided with the summary of the novel taken from the internet's website- <http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-shame> which is reproduced in Appendix 1 at the end of the paper.

The student came to the class next day and set in their allotted groups. They were engaged in warm discussion. The teacher went round the class helping the students if they needed any help. After 40 minutes animated discussion the students prepared their presentation and the group leaders were ready to make the presentation. The teacher went through their texts and corrected the grammatical mistakes which were there in the text.

Results :

We shall discuss the results by naming each group after the group leader and they are – Sulochana, Vinita, Payal and Kamal. They were provided excerpts randomly and the results they presented are reproduced below –

S.No.	Name of Group Leader	Excerpt's Serial No.	Results
1.	Sulochana	04	My excerpt was "Shakil sisters live in a cage." Here cage is a metaphor for imprisonment in which the Shakil sisters live. This refers to the imprisonment of social manners in the presence of military dictatorship, torture and jail. In simple words the metaphor of cage has been used for loss of freedom for woman.
2.	Vinita	03	In 1947 India became free. Bilquis' father's Empire Talkies was burnt to the ground. Her clothes were burnt and she stood naked. Her nakedness stands for Pakistan – 'a land without rules and order.' Hence it is a Symbol.
3.	Payal	01 & 02	Our group had two extracts and we found the use of satire in both of them. In the first one which reads the support of western powers for dictatorship of Pakistan is a satire on western countries who outwardly champion the cause of the democracy but inwardly support the dictatorship.
			The second extract was a joke about god. In this excerpt the writer satirizes god who thinks is helping the people of Pakistan by changing the dictators. But in fact he is helping the dictators.

4.	Kamal	05 & 06	We had trouble with the abstract in figuring out what literary device has been used. We wondered the blush of a girl could make water boiling hot that it could burn the hands of the maidservant. The teacher helped us during his round in the class. He gave us the term Magic-realism for this.
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It was discovered that the students had a lot of trouble in figuring out the difference between the Symbol and Metaphor on the one hand Comedy and Satire on the other and the notion of Magic-realism was quite new to them. But then the teacher had to help them at these places both in conceptualization and in language and style of their presentation.

Tentatively we can say that the results arrived at by the students are satisfactory.

Conclusion –

It is always very exciting to try new techniques in teaching English to the students. In most of the colleges the teacher just dictate notes on literary devices with examples and the students mug them up and reproduce the answers in the examination but they never learn to apply these tropes to the text. In this modest experiment it was the researchers attempt to combine both theory and application of the same. The students were very happy with the results and they asked their teacher to teach the other literary devices in the same way.

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Rushdie, Salman. *Shame*. London: Vintage, 1995.

Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New Delhi: Thomson, 2007.

<http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-shame>

Appendix 1

Shame begins and ends in a fantastic house in the town of Q., located on the arid, isolated border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Nicknamed Nishapur, home of the great Persian poet Omar Khayyam, it is inhabited by three sisters who for twelve years raise a son, named for the poet. They rear him in strict isolation from the world, instilling in his brilliant mind a strange feeling of being peripheral and inverted. In exchange for being

allowed to attend school, Omar is ordered never to feel shame (*sharam* in Arabic). He goes away to medical school and a brilliant career as an immunologist and shame does indeed appear to have no part in his voyeuristic, misogynistic character.

Omar befriends and debauches with a rich playboy, Iskander ("Isky") Harappa, who marries Rani Humayun, who immediately sees Omar as a threat. Isky and Rani have one daughter, Arjumand, nicknamed the "Virgin Ironpants," for her determination to overcome her gender sexually and professionally. On his 40th birthday, Isky hears the call of History and abandons his debauchery to enter politics. For years, he has been the rival of Raza Hyder, a military hero who calls himself "Old Razor Guts." Raza has married Bilquis Kemal, a woman whose mind is shaken by the suicide of her idealistic father. After a wrenching stillbirth, they bear two daughters, Sufiya Zinobia (nicknamed "Shame") and Naveed (nicknamed "Good News").

The elder, left mentally retarded by a fever as an infant, takes within herself all the unfelt shame of the world, which eventually becomes incarnate as a Beast. The Beast makes her behead a flock of turkeys and she falls ill with the plague of shame. Omar treats her immunological disorder and falls in love with her. At her sister's wedding, the Beast again makes her lash out and she bites the groom in the neck. Omar marries her quietly, nonetheless, but he is forbidden to have sexual relations with her. Despite her mental limitations, Sufiya Zinobia knows husbands are for giving women babies and when her Omar impregnates her ayah Shahbanou,, the Beast again takes over and four young men are forced to have sex with Sufiya Zinobia and have their heads torn off.

Omar and Raza Hyder realize the truth and drug and imprison Sufiya Zinobia, unable to kill her. Raza Hyder, who was placed in charge of the army by Prime Minister Iskander Harappa, has overthrown him, instituted Islamic law and allowed Isky to be tried, brutally imprisoned and executed. Raza is himself overthrown by a military coup and flees with Bilquis and Omar, to supposed safety in fortress-like Nishapur, disguised shamefully in women's burqas. There, Omar's three mothers rejoice to find Raza, the murderer of their second son Babar, in their hands. After the visitors endure the wild ravings of malaria, the three sisters dispatch Raza Hyder with great gore in the dumbwaiter they had specially customized to serve as their means of limited communications with the outside world. The Beast that has taken over Sufiya Zinobia hunts Omar in the bed where his grandfather died and after a last eye-to-eye confrontation, beheads him. The shell of Sufiya Zinobia is cast off, set free and the spouseprotagonists are consumed in a great fire.

Anthropocene and Ecological Imperialism in Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain: A Study*

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I

The rise of the Anthropocene has been a marked epoch in the history of our planet. Sonam Jalan defines the Anthropocene epoch as “an unofficial geological period (sic.) used to represent the period of extraordinary changes in the weather patterns induced by the profound human activities” (Jalan 210). The onset of the Anthropocene in the modern age is intimately connected with the prevalence of imperialism as a governing political idea in Europe since the seventeenth century. Imperialism, with its advocacy of the dominance of white races and the inherent inferiority of Asian and African civilizations, was just a tiny step behind a world view in which human beings were seen as the apex of creation and the subjugation of other species was considered the birthright of Homo sapiens. Animism and polytheism of non-western cultures, which were rejected by western rationalists and early anthropologists as primitive and thus, by implication, irrational, are systems of thought that are capable of visualizing “through symbolic threads the oneness of human and non-human, thus effectively dislocating the singularity of human and by implication subverting prioritizing of spirit over matter” (Singh 83).

Though most of the organized scripture-based religions contain seeds of the speciality of human beings, imperialism not only denied the right of existence to those who were different, but also negated the possibility of other modes of existence. The shared time line between colonialism and scientism in the west is not accidental; it reveals how a particular philosophy of imperialism that created the political and economic structure of colonialism was based on an exclusive cerebral understanding of the phenomenon, a view that rejected other equally valid perspectives of meaningmaking. Through the dominance of human beings and their use of natural resources for their survival, colonization led to a consequential decline in the species' survivability, as well as future mutations into new kinds of organisms. The tale of human existence on this planet of ours has an inverse tale of the destruction of variability and the growth of nonhuman organisms.

The relationship between indigenous models of ecological sustenance and the imported structures in cases of imperialistic subjugation of societies in Asia and Africa has been problematic due to the imbalance of economic and military power between the colonized and colonial cultures. While the indigenous models were labeled as primitive

and regressive, the technologically supported, consumer-based models of imperial cultures were considered more efficient and 'scientific.' These notions slowly became part of colonized societies' due to their imitation by persons bred and educated in a colonial power set-up. This indoctrination of the literate section of colonized societies has come under severe critical attack by the post-colonialists, who see in this process the possibility of a mimic culture that forgets its own rich cultural heritage to consume the ideas and ideals of a 'superior' culture.

One way in which the imperialistic powers appropriate indigenous knowledge systems is to disjoin beliefs and values from people and their context and thus to make it 'fix' within an alien cultural context. Donna Haraway describes this form of appropriation as connected with a "cannibalistic western logic that readily constructs other cultural possibilities as resources for western needs and actions" (Haraway 247). The concept of the noble savage, which became significant in 18th- and 19th century Europe under the influence of romanticism, has its roots in the socio-ecological conditions created by the industrial and scientific revolutions. Though the term noble savage was first used by Dryden in 1672, it gained prominence in the writings of JeanJacques Rousseau. The term captures the romance and exoticism connected with an alien figure, living away from the degrading effects of western culture. At the same time, it is to be noted that through the concept of the noble savage, "distinctions are established between civilization, progress and western culture on the one hand, and the idea of unspoilt people living in peace and harmony with nature on the other." (Heith 13). That is why critical works like *Orientalism* (1978), *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), and *The Location of Culture* (1994) decry the creation of binaries between the colonizers and colonized through such concepts by attributing rationality, progressiveness, and historicity to western cultures while relegating non-western cultures to the realm of mysticism, irrationality, and myths.

Situated within this catastrophic tale of the exploitation of ecology is another subset in which humanity is divided into two contradictory wholes based on an imbalance of power between sexes. Simone de Beauvoir noted with great prescience that the assignation of different skills and expertise to genders is not natural but social and cultural. While accepting the general nature of this proposition, it is also equally true that males and females carry different attitudes, emotions, and attachments to the reality around them. This difference in innate understanding of non-human elements between them has been part of many ancient cultures wherein 'prakriti' has been feminized and given a divine female form. The distribution of powers between 'Shiva' and 'Shakti' within Hinduism as those of 'stillness' and 'dynamic' recognized, on the one hand, the complementary nature of 'male' and 'female' principles; on the other, it connected 'femaleness' with life, productivity, and connection, against which the male principle

connoted 'separation' 'dominance' and 'acquisition.' The ecological imperialism thus allies itself largely to the male understanding of the universe, thus neglecting in the process the more intimate and dynamic exchanges between the human and non-human elements. It is based on the theory of exploitation and subjugation of nature for the benefit of mankind, a stance that not only neglects the centuries-old wisdom of non-European civilizations but also assigns a lower position to females in the world order. The rejection of both the females in nature and nature in females creates patterns of dominance and hegemony, thus revealing a desire to enclose oneself in a self-enclosed world of rejection and destruction.

II

Amitav's Ghosh's fable *The Living Mountain: A Fable of Our Times* symbolically presents how, with the rise of colonialism, a typical male understanding of the universe gained prominence over the other perspectives in which relation, communication, and mysticism predominated. The story, narrated as the dream of a young girl, makes fun of the proclivity of humanity in that it seeks to regain the very same patterns of understanding that it once rejected so vehemently. The tale presents a circular pattern wherein, under the guise of an anthropocene, masculine, patriarchal culture, the invader Anthropoi rejected, mocked, and destroyed the spontaneous understanding of nature as a living presence.

The indigenous cultural group, as presented by Amitav Ghosh in this tale, lived in perfect harmony with nature around them in a valley high in the Himalaya. They considered their mountain Mahaparbat as a living being and enjoyed all the bounties of nature, such as those of a magic tree whose "leaves kept insects away; its wood was impermeable to water; its roots nourished rare mushrooms; its flowers produced exquisitely scented honey; and its fruit was delicious to eat" (TLM 8). The presentation of this community, which existed as part of the larger ecology around it, is idyllic, and the writer gives images of their festivals and rituals. Women played an equally important role in sustaining this relationship as the preserver of sacred lore and its rituals: "Our dances were always led by women, and the most skilled of them were known as Adepts; sometimes when dancing, they would go into a trance and afterwards they would tell us that they had felt the Mountain speaking to them through the soles of their feet" (TLM 910).

The arrival of colonizers Anthropoi on the borders of the indigenous community in the guise of explorers and scientists called 'savants' parallels the broad pattern of colonialism in which European travelers, geographers, and explorers aided in the expansion of imperialism in the vast swaths of land in Asia, Africa, and other continents. The fact that the imperialists closely followed in the footsteps of the explorers and assisted in the process of subjugation of native cultures is an established historical fact.

The savant interrogates the native people about their trade goods produced in the valley and the mountain and “listened with great care, and wrote down everything, so diligently that some of our elders began to worry about his intentions” (TLM 12). The first wave of colonizers were surprised at the attitude of natives towards natural elements and considered them superstitious. In their binary understanding of nature and spirit, they saw native wisdom regarding the complex web of relations between human and non-human organisms as born out of ignorance and an unscientific attitude toward things. The missionary zeal with which the colonizers treated this ‘knowledge system’ and their attempts to use non-human resources for their aggrandisement are presented vividly in the tale. The way in which the colonized culture is stripped of its confidence as well as natural resources in the name of utilitarianism is aptly captured here:

They were convinced that unbeknownst to us, great riches—minerals, metals and the like—were hidden within the mountain. We were unaware of this because we were a credulous and benighted people, who believed that our Mountain was alive...they had decided that since we were not making use of the mountain’s riches, they were fully justified in seizing them and taking whatever they wished. (TLM 14)

The greatest ire of the colonizers is reserved for the females of the natives, who represent the mystical relation between nature and humanity. For them, to consider females as a repository of wisdom is the height of stupidity and is a living proof of the backwardness of the native culture: “They imprisoned our Adepts, and forbade all our ceremonies and songs, stories and dances. They were all worthless, they said; our ancestral lore, they said, had brought nothing but doom upon us, which was why we were now reduced to this state of degradation and despair” (TLM 16-17). The rise in political dominance of Anthropocene, represented by the dominance of colonizers, gets acutely reflected in the downgrading of females in the native society. From their position as the keeper of wisdom, they become merely a chattel, a shadow of their males under patriarchal codes, which the natives slowly imbibe from their masculine masters.

The attempts of the native society to imitate their masters lead to the further marginalization of women. Their rejection of their own cultural values and mimicry of imperialists parodize the rise of modernism in colonized cultures throughout the world. The irony is that the rise of modernism, which promised universality of values such as freedom, equality, and fraternity, was largely based on the very rejection of these values in colonized societies. The rise of Kraani and the downgrading of the native people as Varvaroi reflect how imperialism creates a wedge between the colonizers’ value systems in their own societies and in the colonized ones. Further, the narrative makes apparent the role of ideology in the subjugation of colonized societies, where the subdued communities are repeatedly made aware of their inferiority. Kraani’s chant about the

inherent weaknesses of Varvarois makes these assertions a part of colonized society: “Our bodies were not suited to the climb, we were not strong enough, our diets were enfeebling, our habits degenerate, our beliefs perverse, our minds weak, and our hearts lacking in courage” (TLM 17). Mies Miles, while discussing how colonized people give credence to the power of colonizing culture, notes that “the emotional and cognitive acceptance of the colonised is also necessary to stabilize such relationships. This means that not only the colonisers but also the colonized must accept the lifestyle of ‘those on top’ as the only model of good life. This process of the acceptance of the values, lifestyle and standard of living of ‘those on top’ is invariably accompanied by devaluation of one’s own: one’s own culture, work, technology, lifestyle and often also philosophy of life and social institutions” (P. 56).

A swing in the opposite direction begins when the colonizers realize that, despite all their scientific and technical knowledge, they are unable to stop the march of calamities in their adopted societies. Their attempts to subjugate and colonize the mountain also proved futile. The native mimic men, Varvaroi, carry forward those very values, attitudes, and beliefs that were slowly discarded by the colonizers. The zeal with which colonized societies adopt the ‘knowledge system’ of their colonizers and strengthen it creates problems for the Anthropois as they feel the pressure of competition and now feel cheated by their own mimic men. The rejection by the masters of their ‘Calibans’ creates a feeling of bewilderment in their native followers, who find themselves betrayed by those whom they considered their superiors. The Varvarois too feel betrayed by their masters, who now blame them for the destruction of ecology in their unholy haste for development. Both the Anthropois and Varvarois now feel that the traditional system of living, wherein the Mahaparbat was seen as a living entity, was perhaps a better way of co-existence between human beings and nature. The tale ends on the note of incomprehensibility inherent in the modern, consumer-oriented, utilitarian approach to life, in which humanity considers itself at the center of all things. The retort of the last Adept brings out with poignancy the falacity of all such positions:

‘How dare you?’ she cried. ‘How dare you speak of the Mountain as though you were its masters, and it were your plaything, your child? Have you understood nothing of what it has been trying to teach you? Nothing at all.’ (TLM 35)

The fable thus presents the composite process of subjugation, mimicry, and disillusionment, a process in which the rise of colonialism and the subsequent decline of synergy between females and ecology play an important part. The tale makes apparent how ecofeminism, in its western avatar, is an affirmation of values and beliefs in the innate connection between women and nature, as has been ensconced in most of the ancient cultures of the world. The tale, while affirming the organic relationship between

femininity and ecology, questions the modernistic genesis of this concept in those very cultures that rejected its inkling in traditional cultures. By situating eco-feminism within the overarching structure of colonialism, the text questions the linearity of the process of knowledge advancement and reveals how the insights of ecofeminism have always existed within those cultures that valued the interdependence of human and non-human through their myths, symbols, and folklore. It further asserts that the process of the Anthropocene, by creating binaries between human and non-human, productive and nonproductive, also creates other dichotomies. The resistance to the Anthropocene lies within its very existence, and this resistance is sustained by a female understanding of the relations, connections, and mutuality of all existence on this earth.

At the same time, while interposing indigenous cultural models of ecology against western models of environment through gender and culture, it is required to avoid binary constructions between the two. The distinction that needs to be emphasized is that all ecological models, in their outlining relations between ecology and human beings, are born in a specific cultural condition and may have been suited to a particular time and space. Once these models lose their specificity, they become harmful and create havoc on nature. What Clapperton notes about indigenous knowledge that it “does not impose itself onto other ways of ‘seeing’ the world and allows for many other modes of knowledge to exist alongside it.” (Clapperton 10), brings about a salient feature of all sustainable ecological models—that they do not become rigid and universal. What may suit a society of low population density living in an arid area might not be suitable for a culture existing in a wetland with a higher human and non-human population. Hun is not off the mark when he asserts that low population density and limited technology or consumer demand are connected with the life worlds of indigenous peoples before they were affected by modern western cultures.... the sustainability of pre-colonial life styles is related to concrete factors like these and not to beliefs and worldviews” (Heith 23). In Amitav Ghosh’s fable, it is imperative to understand the role of this factor in creating binaries between imperial and indigenous cultures.

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Memorizing Identities: Reading The Folktales of Medieval Kerala

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Abstract

Memory, fragments from the past, individual and collective in nature surfaces from time to time in different forms like thoughts and at times in more visible forms like literature, art or performances. Folklore being one of the means whereby memory of a folk reemerges, and brings back the tales, myth or legends related to social, economic and cultural aspects of any folk group. Folklore refers to the wisdom and learning cherished orally by any folk group. Folklore and memory is acting in a perpetual cycle in the lives of any folk group. Folklore perpetuates memory of places, people and events. Those memories manifest in the form of art, literature, performance, and festivals propagating folklores again. Here folklore plays a crucial part in forming identity of that particular event, place or person. The memory is connecting the past and present. Folktales constitute one of the categories of folklore. Folktales from erstwhile princely states of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore perpetuate the memory of places, events and people in its various manifestations like *theyyam*, *pooram*, *paattu* etc. The paper will be focusing on how folklore is important in identifying a place, an event or a person. It will also deal with how folktales in particular sustain these collective memory cherished amongst the people.

Keywords: Collective memory, Folklore, Folk group, *Theyyam*, *Pooram*, *Paattu*

According to Merriam Webster, folklore includes traditional customs, tales, sayings, dance, or art forms preserved among people (“Folklore”). Oral literature is mostly used synonymous to folklore. As the name suggests, oral literature has been commonly defined as literature that disseminate orally often with the accompaniment of performance. Richard Bauman, famous folklorist explains that a folk group can be defined by the proximity, shared experience and shared interaction. Informal and unofficial shared knowledge is the essential feature of a folk group.

Folktales are stories transmitted orally from generations to generations, and often of anonymous origin. Folktales comprises of fables, myth, legends, and fairy tales.

Folktales were predominantly passed down orally but later developments like printing led to the recording of folktales in written form.

After the fall of ancient Chera kingdom in Kerala, Kulashekara dynasty filled the vacuum until different small kingdoms emerged in medieval Kerala beginning 14th century. Calicut ruled by Zamorin, principalities of Thirivithankkor later known as Travancore, Cochin, Kollam etc emerged. It was during the time of Kulashekara dynasty Malayalam emerged as a distinctive language from its Dravidian origin root of Tamil. These regions shared similar form of expressive culture in the form of folk songs, folk tales and performances. Folk narratives in the form of folktales became a means of transmitting collective memory. Folktales in turn play a significant role in shaping the social structure, culture and identity of the respective folk groups of these regions.

Memory is an inevitable strain of source or origin of folklore. Memory is often explained as a receptacle from where the individual or group recalls events, places, and people to mould to a whole text. From the perspective of folklore, the text can be any form of oral expression like folktales, folk songs or folk performances. Memory is images of the past which is resurfaced to the present in different forms serving different functions. Memory is related to the history of the particular folk group. The group remembers and shapes narratives through their localized history.

The connection between memory and history has been interpreted in two approaches, namely integrating and disintegrating approaches. The disintegrating approach distances history from memory with the help of certain binary oppositions. With reference to oral literature, presence and absence of a folk group is such a binary opposition where memory is in a constant attempt to connect history to the present moment. At the same time, history leaves out these entire irrelevant episodes in between the historical timeline. Subjectivity and universality can be another binary where a social or folk group relates their subjectivity to their memory often expressed in folklore. But history in opposition to memory is universal in nature by distancing it from the individual or group identities.

Integrating approach of memory and history is more relevant to read any folk literature. In integrating approach memory and history are reciprocal to each other. Memory often serves as the reservoir of knowledge of the past and at times history and memory serves as a reference for each other. Memory being the origin of the past recollections, finds its expression either in the form history or in the form of folklore. Further folklore preserves and propagates the memory in different forms like folk songs, folk narrative, proverbs etc. Social interaction and communication in the group and between the groups further transmit the memory through different folk forms.

Jacek Nowak argues, collective memory is 'a set of images that a given social group shares of its past, images that are negotiated in acts of internal communication and

disseminated in cross-generational transmission in order to maintain coherent identity narration' (quoted in Wojcicka 37).

Collective memory can be understood as an extension of memory into a group of individuals. The group, with a shared history and memory, both being reciprocal to each other, recollect from the past and communicate it amongst themselves through expressive literature. Initially, the transmission is oral in different forms including performances in accompaniment of songs or narration. Later on the cherished images of past is preserved in written form, which as Bascom explains is not freezing the folklore rather only a means of preserving it. Collective memory is advantageous in many senses as it remembers extraordinary or spectacular events, personalities or places. It is unique as it is not homogenous as the same memory is recollected in different way by different members of the group. It can restore memory losses as it is preserved collectively. Collective memory provides for social group grounding and cultural group grounding. To certain extent they play a role in the formation of culture of a group as well.

Functionality of collective memory is discussed by sociologists like Marian Golka. There are two relevant functionalities of collective memory to this study, namely, identification function and socio-cultural function. Identification function explains the collective identity of the group shaped by collective memory. According to Golka, "collective memory bring past events into more or less coherent form, it remind group of their essential values, facilitate transmission of shared identities to their progeny as well" (Wojcicka). In the context of socio-cultural function memory plays a crucial role in shaping the social structures and culture of a folk group.

In the context of identification function of collective memory, this paper takes up three categories namely, places, events and, personalities forming identity through folktales recollected and shaped from memory.

Place 1. Sabarimala Temple

The famous Sabarimala Temple also has an origin story. When sage Parusurama, after consecrating the Lord Sastha or Ayyappa across eastern boundaries and western coast of Kerala, then called as 'Malayaladesam', happen to meet Lord Ayyappa in an auspicious spot in the eastern hill boundary of Kerala. Ayyappa remind Parusurama about the significance of the spot that they are standing on. The great sages like Matanga was living in this spot in deep penance and a great ascetic, a tribal woman called Sabari also lived and attained salvation in that place. With the blessings of Lord Ayyappa, Parusurama consecrated an idol of the Lord in the peak of the hill, which later came to be known after Sabarimala or Sabari hills and Lord Ayyappa came to be also known as Sabarimala Sastha.

2. Nagarkoil

There is a famous tale behind the consecration of Serpent God and the formation of the town called Nagarkoil, situated to south of Travancore. A sage was traveling through a forest area where he meets a woman wailing over a stone bleeding when her sickle bruised it. Upon discovery the sage along with his company find a five hooded serpent idol and they consecrated it there by building a roof over it. People around the place started worship of the Serpent idol and called the makeshift shelter as 'kovil' or temple. The place where the 'naga' or serpent idol consecrated came to be known as 'nagarkovil' or the temple of serpent, later the town came to be known by the modified name 'Nagarkoil', which is still famous for the temple and influx of devotees.

3. Kuttanad

The tale behind the naming of the low lying backwaters of Kerala, Kuttanad, located between Alleppey and Tiruvalla, is fascinating. The tales goes this way, before ages these region was a dense forest. Arjuna, one of the Pandavas, had burned down the forest with his divine weapon to help Agnideva, the fire God. Later on the place came to be called as 'chuttanad' meaning the land which is burned, later modified into 'Kuttanad'. The story connects the memory to the present to form a common identity and a cultural bond.

There are numerous tales regarding the origin and identity formation of different local and famous places in Kerala. These tales are part of the collective memory of the folk groups and they are transmitted to the contemporary times. These tales play a significant role in shaping the identity of the places.

Personalities

When the memory about personalities in the past is transmitted, it often takes the form of legends. According to Cambridge dictionary, a legend is , "a very old story or set of stories from ancient times, or the stories, not always true, that people tell about a famous event or person" ("Legend").

1. Shakthan Thampuran

The famous king of erstwhile Cochin State, Pooyam Thirunal Rama Varma received the title

'Shakthan Thampuran' meaning mighty king. There are several stories regarding him achieving the name. Birth of the king with some planetary anomalies vexed the queen mother and she approaches a hermit. The hermit predicts that he will grow up to be one of the renowned kings. The prince lost his mother when he was just three years old. He was brought up by his maternal aunt and he grew into an eminent scholar, great warrior and king. There is lot of feats to his credits that earned him the title 'Mighty King'. For instance, when there happened to have disarray in the kingdom due to the presence of robbers and dacoits, the King met with the group of people who is involved in robbery.

He gave the fierce order to drown the entire group in the backwaters if the culprits from the group refused to surrender. This made the culprits surrender for the dacoit they committed. Then onwards the King could control such issues. There are several other tales regarding the valor of Shakthan Thampuran. The folk tales are still used to invoke the fearlessness and honesty in people through the tales of Shakthan Thampuran. He still lives in the collective memory of the folklore from Kerala.

2. Kalidasa

There is a famous tale celebrated in South India regarding how the famous poet and one of

Navaratna in the court of Vikramaditya, Kalidasa, got the name. Kalidasa was prodigy in Sanskrit literature since his childhood. Once he made fun of a Yogi or saint for making a grammatical error in his speech. The Yogi curses Kalidasa to forget all knowledge that he has acquired only to recover from the state with the blessings of Goddess Bhadrakali. He becomes a lowly shepherd. Meanwhile, a rich landlord was looking for a suitable husband for her daughter through his courtiers. The courtiers find Kalidasa in the woods cutting the branch on which he was sitting. Courtiers select Kalidasa as the prospective groom as they had intended of mischief towards the landlord. Kalidasa gets married to the daughter of the landlord but she ousts him from her house upon knowing that he is a fool. Kalidasa leaves to the dense woods and finds a Bhadrakali temple and take refuge in the temple. The goddess, upon returning find the door of the temple closed and she demands to open the door of the temple by asking the details of the one who is inside the temple.

For this, Kalidasa replies that he is Goddess Kali's dasa or servant.

Goddess pleased with the reply blesses him with 'vidya' or knowledge.

3. Arakkal Beevi

The first Muslim family in Malabar region has a story of its establishment. The coastal town of north Kerala was renowned for their trade relations with foreigners especially Arabs.

Once the niece of Chirakkal ruler in Kannur region happens to drown in the river and an Arab trader who was nearby rescues her. He offers her his cloth as she lost hers while drowning. As per the Hindu tradition, a man offering cloth to a woman is considered as a matrimonial ritual. The girl, as she received a cloth from the man refuses to enter the Chirakkal palace and decides to marry the Arab trader and convert into Islam.

Her uncle, the king of Chirakkal helps them to have a place of their own and the first Muslim family of Malabar came into being known as Arakkal. Later on, as they followed the matrilineal system of Chirakkal, all the female members were called by the name 'beevi' which still continued.

Events

Events like *pooram*, *theyyam*, *paattu* are some of the explicit manifestation of expressive culture of Kerala.

1. Kathivanoor Veeran

Theyyam also known as 'kaliyattam' is a traditional dance ritual of Kerala. Most of the theyyam performance is preceded by the narration of the tale behind that theyyam. Kathivanoor Veeran is one of the famous Theyyam. The theyyam is representation of the tale of the legendary hero Manthappan. Manthappan leaves his home at Kathivanoor to reach his uncle's place in Coorg. He grows up to become a great warrior in Coorg and falls in love with Chemmarathy and get married to her. She complains about her husband being lazy but he renders military service when called upon to do so against Coorg ruler. After winning the battle, upon returning home he was deceived and murdered by the enemy. Chemmarathy saddened by the news kills herself in the funeral pyre of Manthappan. The tale is preserved in the collective memory of the folk group and it finds its expression in theyyam performance named after the local hero and his lover.

2. Songs of Vaikkom Temple

Vaikkom, a place which was part of the Vadakumkooor Kingdom was infested with small pox. The king met an astrologer who explained that it happens because of the wrath of Goddess Bhadrakali. The remedy for this was to offer certain rituals to please the Goddess. The tale says that the Goddess appeared in the dream of the King and instructed him to organize *kalamezthum pattum*. *Kalamezthu* refers to drawing of a humungous picture of Goddess Kali in her original form with indigenous colors and in accompaniment to the drawing hymns praising the Goddess is sung and which is called *pattu*. This is celebrated for duration of twelve days. It is believed that when people celebrated and worship Goddess in this way, they are being protected by the Goddess from diseases like small pox. It is a memory and this memory is recollected every time the folk group celebrates the festival.

3. Pooram

Pooram is a kind of temple festival which is celebrated in different temples with varied ceremonial grandeur. Thrissur pooram is the largest temple festival in Kerala. It is largely a social celebration rather than being a solely religious festival. The tale of the beginning of pooram can be traced back to Shakthan Thampuran. Earlier, Arattupuzha Pooram was the famous temple festival in Kerala. On the day of festival, all deities of the temple nearby are taken to Arattupuzha temple in procession of caparisoned elephants and traditional drum beats. Once, due to heavy rain, some temples in Thrissur could not reach Arattupuzha temple and they were denied permission to participate. The complaint reached Shakthan Thampuran, then king of Cochin; he arranged another festival in the premises of Vadakkumnatha Temple, Thrissur. This festival later became the largest

festival of Kerala. The rituals associated with the festival as well as Shakthan Thampuran is equally revered and memorized through the celebrations.

Manifold manifestations of expressive culture have played a significant role in preservation of the memory of different folk groups in various parts of Kerala. As memory and history serves reciprocal to each other in integrative approach of understanding a society and culture, folklore have become the platform for the representation of both memory and history.

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Safar Hai Dushwar: A Study of Chandni Begum as a Narrative of Women's Life and Suffering

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The tapestry of human life is woven in *tana bana* of varied emotions. Human beings have the innate tendency to “weave by night and day a magic web” of life “with colours gay.” (Tennyson 43) It is in that intricately woven web that life sustains its complex entity. The ideas of humanity, love, compassion, kindness, empathy, pain, and, suffering can be considered a few of the colours that create the hue of human life. And human suffering is an integral part of the grand canvas of life. T. S Eliot calls life an “infinitely suffering thing.” (51) It plays a vital role in carving human sensibilities and creating a world worth living in and for.

The idea of human life often prevails against the backdrop of a social structure founded on the grounds of equality, compassion, and mutual respect. But the unfortunate reality of human existence and its social order is that it breaks away from these essential elements. Instead, the ideas of power, violence, inequality, hatred, disdain, etc are the ones that often start dominating the social setup thus leading to the creation of the binary discourse of Us versus Them. The concept of gender has always been at the core of it. The social order is usually regulated by the male fraction and other genders mostly exist at the periphery, thus marginalised. Human suffering and pain which are the inherent part of human existence, become even more arduous for these marginalised sections. In a patriarchal societal setup, when power is concentrated at the center, in the hands of men, women's fraction is left suppressed, confined, without rights and freedom, and most of the time, emotionally, and sexually violated. The marginalised communities more often than not become human tools to demonstrate the idea of power and associated politics in the hands of power holders and regulators.

With time, marginalised communities, especially women, gradually started becoming aware of the fact that they have been confined in the veil of patriarchy in the garbs of culture, religion, economy, traditions, customs, politics, etc, and started acting towards gaining a certain kind of agency even if it's of miniscule scale. Art and Literature work as a great device to be used to confront and challenge the gender binaries, biases, and confines persisting in the social order. The paper tries to study the location of women

in post-independent India and delves deep into their constant struggle to survive against all odds of the social order through the narratives of three central characters of Qurratulain Hyder's *Chandni Begum* (1990) keeping the city of Lucknow as the microcosmic representation of the civilisational curvature of the nation.

Qurratulain Hyder is known in the literary corridors for her unapologetic, permissive, and fearless representation of women characters in her novels. Hyder's literary oeuvre is laced with examples of women who dared to stand against the stringent societal norms. Her female characters are not spared suffering and pain. Rather it is in their suffering that they find the vigor for sustenance. Her female characters are presented to possess some sort of unimaginable spirit of not giving up even when quitting seems like a peaceful outlet. Hyder, in *Agle Janam Mohe Bitiya Na Kijo*, presents the idea of life as a journey and how for women, "*Safar hai dushwaar... Khwaab kab tak... bahut bade manzil-e-adam hai. Kamar ko bandho, uthao bistar ki raat kam hai.*" (The journey is difficult...how long will you delve in the dream world? The destination is far away. Get ready and wrap your things, for time is less and the journey is still not over. TM) (13). Here Hyder presents the metaphor of 'manzil-e-adam' i.e the idea of heaven which in itself is considered a metaphor for a space which is full of peace and happiness, and 'raat kam hai' presents the idea that life is a *rangmanch* replete with constant challenges and struggle with a little window for dramatic relief. Hyder's literary corpus incorporates narratives of women of different eras. She is not restricted to only representing the women of her times. Rather in her magnum opus *River of Fire*, the representation of women spans from the Buddhist era in India to the times she was writing. She presents women from Buddhist times through the character of Nirmala who renounced the earthly world and became a bodh bikshu, living in the seclusion of Jetvan Vihar, a courageous act that challenged the social order of the times. The character of Champa is a microcosmic representation of women in pre and post-independent India who refused to walk on the traditional pavement but rather took the 'road less travelled'. The metaphor of '*Aag Ka Dariya*' talks about the hurdles in the river called life. The idea is that even obstacles can't stop the river of life from flowing.

After 200 years of slavery and imperialism, India was reborn from the ashes in 1947. But unlike human birth, this rebirth was marred by a bloodbath that followed the broken umbilical cord of India. Both nations were faced with the herculean task of nation rebuilding amidst the savagery and carnage. Women on both sides of the border were violated, and sexually assaulted. "Some seventy-five thousand women were raped, and many of them were then disfigured or dismembered." (Dalrymple) Amrita Pritam wrote about the decimation of human values and humanity at the time of partition,

Ajj Aakhan Waris Shah Nuu,
Kiton Qabraan Wichon Bol,

Tey Ajj Kitaab-e-Ishq Daa,
 Koi Agla Warka Phol
 Ikk Royi Sii Dhi Punjab Di,
 Tu Likh Likh Maarey Wain,
 Ajj Lakhaan Dhiyan Rondiyan,
 Tenu Waris Shah Nu Kain (Pritam xiv)

I ask you Waris Shah. Let your voice rise from within your grave. When one Heer died in Punjab. You penned an epic lament. Now that hundreds of Heers are being violated. Why are you silent Waris Shah? TM

In the aftermath of the catastrophe, the huge challenge that befell both countries was to provide a secure environment for women. The socio-political ecosystem was so chaotic and disillusioned in the post-colonial times that women's sufferings became even more severe. Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence* brings forth the suppressed narratives of the female fraction of the Indian subcontinent.

Twelve million people were displaced as a result of Partition. Nearly one million died. Some 75,000 women were raped, kidnapped, abducted, forcibly impregnated by men of the 'other' religion, thousands of families were split apart, homes burnt down and destroyed, and villages abandoned. Refugee camps became part of the landscape of most major cities in the north, but, a half-century later, there is still no memorial, no memory, no recall, except what is guarded, and now rapidly dying, in families and collective memory. (Butalia 28)

Hyder's last work *Chandni Begum* offers an insight into the new realm of the subcontinent and presents a commentary on the idea of a new India and closely observes the location of women in the post-colonial Indian society. Not only India, she quite judiciously slips into the social order of Pakistan and its treatment of women. In the novel, *Chandni Begum*, Lucknow becomes the microcosmic representation of the idea of a new India in the post-colonial, post-independent, and post-partition times. Like many other cities on both sides of the border, the city of Lucknow and its inhabitants had to bear the burns of the Partition as well. Nasir Kazmi, a great poet of the Indian subcontinent wrote about it the plight of cities in the wake of partition, "*Sheher dar sheher jalaye gaye / Yun bhi jashn-e-tarab manaye gaye. // Ek taraf jhoom ke bahar aaye / ek taraf aashiyen jalaye gaye.*" (1.09-1.22) (Cities and cities were burned to ashes. This was how people celebrated independence. On one hand, spring arrived in full swing and on the other hand, homes were set ablaze. TM)

Chandni Begum, the central text of the paper, is the post-colonial narrative of the lives of three women, Bela, Chandni Begum and Safai Sultan in the post-independent social settings of the city of Lucknow. They are the representatives of women belonging

to different classes of Indian society in the post-independent era. The narrative primarily flows through the lives of these three women but the hallmark of Hyder's writing is that the narrative travels through generations and quite skillfully traces the transformation of the socio-cultural milieu. The narrative chronicles the aftermath of partition and how it changed the dynamics of human relations in Muslim families. Bela, Chandni Begum, and Safia Sultan illustrate the struggles of the lives of young women in the new India. Whereas, Badrunnisa Azhar Ali aka Bittu Baji, Chandni Begum's mother Aleema Bano, and Bela's mother Chambeli Begum are representative of the women of pre-independent India who went on to witness the calamity of Partition of 1947 and pang of separation from the loved ones. Shahala, Firoza, Laila, and Mehnaaz portray the lives of women of the generation who were born or were children after partition. These three generations along with the transforming civilisation curvature of the city of Lucknow paint the grand canvas of Hyder's narrative. Hyder puts forth the idea that women's struggle for their rights moves from generation to generation and is intertwined. It is on the foundation laid by the previous generations that the next generation constructs the further movement.

To challenge the social order, often revolutions are called for. The women in the novel are no less than any revolutionary. They defy the norms imposed on them in their distinctive ways. Sometimes, in doing so, the fluctuating boundaries of sanity and insanity, right and wrong are often blurred. Hyder is mindful of these slips in the silent revolution and addresses them through the violent characteristics of Bela.

Bitto Baji, Safia, Firoza, Shahla, and Mehnaaz belong to the elite class of Lucknow. Bitto Baji breaks the glass ceiling present in her family, works as a social worker, and fights for female interests at both domestic and international levels. Although she is aware of the invisibility and nonrecognition of women's space, she is still bound by the traditional customs of society. Once her leftist son Qambar Ali argues with her about the cultural futility and suppressive nature of rituals of vermilion, and bangles. To her dismay, he strongly condemns these rituals. She can be perceived as the representative of revolutionary women of the first phase of post-independent India. But she departs from the world in hopelessness and pain of separation. She was a woman of familial values. Her family was her true treasure. But post-independence she lost her husband and due to the partition her family moved to Pakistan without even informing her about the departure. She could not come to terms with this and died in despair.

Safia Sultana is another character belonging to the elite section of Lucknow, a young blood. She is an educated, independent woman of a feudal Indian Muslim family. Most members of her family are either stuck in the feudal setup or have lost sense of the world because of the partition. She is rejected by Qambar Ali, Bitto Baji's leftist son because she belonged to an upper-class family, and marrying her would have meant acting against his ideology. Safia Sultan refuses to be deterred by this even when she is

left emotionally vulnerable. She shields herself from the heartbreak and fabricates a tough exterior. She endeavours to carve her identity sans any traditional image of a woman. Her education and professional success are representative of the social structure of Lucknow where women could dream of having a career and sustaining financial independence. Hyder writes, “*Tang aakar Safia ne Teen Katori House ki dusree manzil par Saint John’s Convent ka board lagaya aur school khol diya*” (13) (She opened a school named Saint John’s Convent on the second floor of Teen Katori House. TM) Safia’s physical deformity always remains a *nasur* for her. She would always cover her hand under her saree. Because of the heartbreak, her deformity, her psychological condition in which she would hear voices in her mind, and her sense of alienation in the family, a complex personality is shaped in Safia. Gradually she completely breaks away from the earthly sense of the world and transcends into the philosophical realm where she starts to question the idea of being and becoming. She starts getting consumed by the “soothing thoughts that spring out of human suffering... (and give rise) to philosophic mind” (Wordsworth 184). She develops a sense of detachment from the world. That detachment is the direct bearing of the sufferings she undergoes. Through her character, Hyder presents the harsh reality of a feudal family that survives in the days of past glory. Her character is not free of flaws. She becomes the victim of her complexes. She keeps her insecurities intact and tries to find solace in the plight of Chandni Begum, the central character. She remains envious of Bela as Qambar Ali chooses to marry her instead. But her eventual transcendence to the philosophical realm is the subsequent consequence of the realisation that Bela, Chandni Begum, and she are adjacent pages of the same book. The societal setup and Qambar Ali, a man, unknowingly force them to stand against each other. Hyder’s portrayal of Safia, her entanglement with the ideas of being and becoming, and her detachment from worldly affairs go on to show how educated, liberated, and financially independent women of post-colonial India survive amidst their suffering. In the climax of the novel, Safia departs from the world with the oscillating visions and sounds of her allies in suffering i.e. Bela and Chandni. The chabutra and Pipal tree of Teen Katori House become a space of their union and death works as a means. They could not be together when they were alive but leave the word united.

Safia serves as Bela’s antithesis in the narrative. Bela becomes representative of the lower class, and its struggle and also represents the plight of folk artists in postindependent India. She is desperate for a release from her neverending pathetic circumstances. Her talent remains largely unrecognised in the fast-moving modernised space of Mumbai’s Film Industry. Qambar once remarks, “*Ye bade manmohak log hain. Itne talented aur itne badnaseeb...fankaar hamare punjivadi samaaj me itna pareshaan kyu hai?*” (Hyder 31) (These people are so talented yet so unfortunate. Why do good artists remain unrecognised in our capitalist society? TM) Her parents, especially her

father, is a man of dreams. They nourish the belief that Bela's talent and beauty can divert the chaotic flow of their lives. Hyder, through Bela's family, shows how the lower section of society strives hard to survive in the most dire circumstances. Her parents dare to dream even in the direst circumstances. But Bela, since childhood, closely observed and experienced her mother Chambeli Begum's struggle in the industry and how with time, folk art was slowly being replaced by modern art. There was not much space left for the kind of art they pursued or had talent for. Bela's dreams were simple. All she wanted was a family and a peaceful life where she didn't have to struggle for the most basic needs. Qambar Ali entered her life as a ray of hope and escape from her miserable days. Qambar Ali always wanted to marry someone from the working class. Both of them found what they needed in each other. However, Bela's marriage only manages to give her financial support. Her husband Qambar Ali becomes too occupied with his newspaper agency and elections that he deprives her of the idea of family which was an integral part of her life before marriage. Bela, just like Safia, is not without flaws. Once she acquired financial stability in life, her entire focus shifted to making herself more stable financially. This can be seen as her coping mechanism as even after marrying Qambar Ali, she had to face humiliation from society. Her husband never gives her the respect a wife deserves on the social front. Because of her musical background, the post-colonial society sees her in a bad light. She resorts to physical violence and often ends up hitting her husband and hurting herself to get things done her way. Qambar Ali had great aspirations and wanted to change the society for the better. But both Qambar Ali and Bela fail terribly in realising their dreams. Hyder goes on to show how the institution of marriage works in a society. Oftentimes the idea of marriage fails to deliver what it promises to do. People subscribe to this institution thinking that it would lead to the creation of a family, a peaceful and contented life but the reality is that it creates just a semblance of the idea of family. They depart from the world amidst familial violence. Whatever was left of their marriage, was shattered to pieces, and Chandni Begum's involuntary action of dropping the alight candle set the stage for their exit from the world. Fire becomes metaphorical in the scheme of things. Fire means both destruction and creation. With this fire, three central characters, Chandni Begum, Bela, and Qambar Ali leave the narrative. The Redrose Kothi which in itself stood as a metaphorical representation of the post-colonial Lucknow burns to ashes with a few remains left to be remembered by the future generations. The post-colonial society of Lucknow also undergoes regeneration against the backdrop of this tragedy. With Qambar Ali, the dream of post-colonial India of refurbishing the nation for the weaker section of society also goes away. Hyder shows how with time, those who wanted to work for the well-being of the country departed, and slowly the capitalist tendency clouded the societal, economic, and political sphere of India.

The protagonist of the novel, the one who becomes the prime representative of young educated women of the post-colonial times, one who belonged to a feudal setup but lost everything in the wake of partition, one who held her self-respect most dear to her and never compromised with her values no matter what the circumstances were, one who had to suffer the most at the hands of others, one who stood up valiantly against all the odds, Chandni Begum. She can be perceived as a flawless character. It is in her that Bela and Safia converge. She has a little of Safia in her as she also belonged to a feudal setup and was a woman of values and principles which she would never compromise with and she had a little bit of Bela in her as well as she was reduced to become a servant, a working-class woman because of her financial circumstances and her talent, her education, her degrees were left unused. She also tried to climb the social ladder through the institution of marriage. But she could not compromise with her respect. Both Bela and Safia became reasons for her plight. But she always remained thankful to god for always protecting her. After the death of her mother, Aleema Begum, she was left with no one in her family. Bela left her at Safia's place because Chandni Begum was a former fiancee of her husband. Safia also does not help her for the same reason. Still, she was grateful for whatever they could help her with. She was an educated woman who had a successful career in a school but had to leave it because of the sexual assault she faced at work. Here at Teen Katori House, Safia's place, she worked as a servant. At one point, Chandni thought of escaping the torturous reality of her life by marrying Safia's elder brother Vaqar, who had lost his sanity in the wake of partition and the bloodshed that followed. But in a feudal setup, even if a servant becomes a member of the family, she is not given respect. Bela had to bear that kind of behaviour after marrying Qambar Ali. Eventually, she had to leave Safia's place as well and shift to Qambar Ali's Red Rose Kothi. There she was not welcomed by Bela and eventually, she also departed from the world amidst her homelessness, loneliness, and suffering in the fire that engulfed Qambar, Bela, and Red Rose Kothi. The irony was that Chandni Begum unintentionally was responsible for the fire. Just before this horrific incident, she prayed, "*Ya Allah! Tu kaynaat ko naye sire se bana. Sare maamlaat jo duniya ke bigad gaye hain, Allah tu bilkul shuru se shuru kar taki ek baar phir aadmi theek ho jaye*" (Hyder 124). (Oh Almighty! Recreate the world. Whatever is problematic in this world, oh God kindly correct them so that human being can again become human. TM) Even before half of the novel is over, the protagonist of the narrative dies. Yet she remains alive throughout. After her death people come to realise how they were responsible for her suffering and that they could have done something to reduce it. Safia's conscience always remained guilty of Chandni Begum's plight. After many decades of Chandni's death, she plans to name the new branch of her school in Chandni's name. She says, "*Ab mujhe aakhirkaar Chandni Begum se liberation haasil ho gaya- Azaadi... Chutkara*" (Hyder 289). (I am

finally liberated from Chandni Begum™) But sadly she dies the very next day. Yet she gets the liberation in her union in death with the other two. Hyder presents a very harsh commentary on the postindependent social order of the nation. Education in itself can't provide a safe haven for women. A woman remains in the shackles of class, caste, and gender. Society in totality needs regeneration. Perhaps, then a woman like Chandni Begum would be able to get her due. Chandni Begum, the character stands as a metaphorical representation of women of post-colonial India. She sustains herself in her miseries and tries her level best to make sense of the world around her with dignity, composure and patience. She once says, “*Log acche bure nhi hote. Zamana accha bura suluk karwata hai*” (Hyder 110). (People are not good or bad. It's the society that makes them behave in a certain manner.™)

The next generation of women that follows the three of them, emerges as professional career-driven women who can exercise a certain level of agency and sustenance in society. Shahala becomes an advocate. Firoza, a Pakistani woman, could choose to marry someone out of her religion and country. Mehnaaz pursues her career as a C.A. Laila, Qambar Ali's niece, manages her family business and becomes the sole owner of the land where once Red Rose Kothi stood.

Hyder offers a hopeful future for women at the end of her narrative. She believes that although women's suffering will not cease to exist as suffering is the eternal reality of life, women can cut through the harsh currents and sustain themselves. Auden says, “About suffering they were never wrong, // The old Masters: how well they understood//Its human position: how it takes place” (10). Love and Suffering are the two most crucial threads of the tapestry of human life. Hyder's narrative of *Chandni Begum* presents the lives of her women through their journey of life full of suffering and lack of love from fellow humans and simultaneously reflects on the emerging picture of the nation in the twenty-first century. Through her central character, Chandni Begum she imagines a space that is nothing less than a colossal embrace.

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Decoding the Satirical Implementation of Anthropomorphism in Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

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Abstract:

Drawing an anthropomorphist world especially in children's literature has been an appealing method of narration for its quality of transporting the reader into a fantasy world of talking animals. But the use of anthropomorphism in the adult oriented literature turns out to be a shockingly evocative device to create a widespread appeal in narration, especially to handle controversial themes. The modern author George Orwell and the graphic novelist Art Spiegel man 's works introduced the anthropomorphism method to a significant extent to directly examine political satire and issue-based themes such as the Holocaust. The present paper will concentrate on how the use of anthropomorphism became a plausible method for representing political propaganda and satire in the selected literary works.

Key words: anthropomorphism, political propaganda, satire, narration, holocaust.

Anthropomorphism

The art of giving human characteristics to non-human agents is commonly known as anthropomorphism. It primarily aims to act and behave a non-human agent like a human, who is essentially intended to perform all human characteristics in an anthropomorphic identity. According to David Herbert, "anthropomorphism is the attribution of a human personality to something that is not human" (69). The discourse of non-human or anthropomorphic representation occupies a particular space in the narrative which primarily aims to release the narrative stress and complexities of the thematic. Theoretically, we could describe it as a form of defamiliarization that combines aspects of human nature with animal images to produce a novel method to characterization in a single non-human agent. In essence, the anthropomorphic portrayal defines the idea of "making sense by making strange." These non-human characters in the story frequently exist in fantastical settings and foster empathy for the human aspects of the tale, which could lead to an erroneous perception of morality and human existence. The conventions surrounding characterization in literary works, which emphasise characterization and its relationship to the literary theme, are directly challenged by the usage of anthropomorphism.

By creating a hybrid portrait of characters in animal imagery, the anthropomorphism technique creates a representational discourse, which directly opens various interpretations and critical approaches to the subject matter. The anthropomorphic identity of characters also shows abstract intentions and other motives of the author, which he problematized in the narrative itself. The modern treatment of the anthropomorphism in the narrative completely alters its previous connotation and serves as an evocative device to successfully point out the sensitive issues that are controversial and cannot be directly addressed. Graphic novelist Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer-winning work *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* and George Orwell's literary classic *Animal Farm* are entirely based on the concept of anthropomorphism. Due to their profoundly embedded political meaning and their apathetic handling of the subject matter, both works have garnered a great deal of attention within the literary canon. Both authors have mastered the use of metaphor, defamiliarizing persons as nonhumans and frankly casting scathing satire on historical figures and political events. Decoding the perception of anthropomorphic identity and its satirical implementation is the theme of the present paper.

Anthropomorphism in *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*

"The Jews are undoubtedly a race but they are not human" Hitler's statement itself gives the notion of dehumanizing humans. The non-human treatment of the characters is the main discourse in the two volumes of *Maus*. The graphic representation of anthropomorphism with the Holocaust realities expanded the arena of the work and offered a variety of perspectives to examine the comic medium itself. For its artistic innovation, the novel received great academic attention and won the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction in 1992. The propagandistic approach of the work establishes a whole new definition of the comic medium as compared to its previous one. The exceptional use of anthropomorphism in the novel thematized Nazi propaganda in an artistic manner and brought a more mature perspective towards anthropomorphism and its use in literature. The novel's handling of the subject matter is far more difficult since it depicts Holocaust facts that were too horrible and unfathomable to portray in any kind of storytelling. However, the graphic novel's verbal and visual tracks effectively foster a special narrative capacity where the horrific aspects of the Holocaust can be shared. The novel's primary technique for overcoming historical injustice and the widespread dehumanisation of the Holocaust is anthropomorphism. There have been many critical interpretations of the use of anthropomorphism in the *Maus* that brought the work to a discursive realm to examine its special characterization. By combining the visual representation of animal metaphor with a meticulous description of Holocaust realities exceptionally made this work central among other Holocaust works. As the basis premise

of animal-headed humans became a crucial feature to visualize different groups of people in the novel, its anthropomorphism placed more emphasis on the racial and ethnic identity of the people to determine their position, especially in the context of Nazi Germany. Without the anthropomorphic identity, readers would be unable to differentiate between their particular race, as the work is completely illustrated in black and white art. The anthropomorphic characterization in the novel somehow serves the primary language of the author, which, to a greater extent, releases the narrative stress to communicate the mass dehumanization that happened during the Holocaust and forms a hierarchy in the characterization to make it more specific to describe their characteristics. Spiegelman in the novel visualizes Jews as mice, Germans as cats, Poles as pigs, Americans as dogs, the British as fish, the French as frogs, and the Swedish as reindeer. His unique treatment of anthropomorphism with the complexities of war exhaustion substantially praised and expanded discussion on racism beyond the conventional method. To give a better understanding of this choice of metaphor, Spiegelman defines “is a “defamiliarization” that allows for a stronger “empathic response” and thus a greater sympathetic proximity to the characters and their experiences. (qtd.in Shores 5)

In *Maus*, animal metaphor as a representation of different ethnic and racial groups deliberately serves multiple purposes, such as depicting racial stereotypes and their relationships, depriving human conditions and dynamics of power relations that facilitate anthropomorphism’s borders to political discourse. Michael Staub argues that Spiegelman’s depictions “work to expose the hollowness of ‘racial’ theories of all kinds” (38). Spiegelman’s hybrid identity of characters itself is a subject to be meditated on in terms of racial essentialism and its determined meaning, especially in Jewish discourse, as Jewish people were the most unwanted race in Nazi Germany. Their inferior identity as mice accentuates the narrative to show their profound sense of struggle and racial injustice. The use of animal metaphors for different racial groups in the novel also formed a hierarchy in the narrative that symbolically conveyed fixed traits and racial attitudes of different groups of people. Here, the animal metaphor became an agent for the continual remaking of meaning in consideration of the inhuman treatment of people during the Holocaust. Throughout his animal metaphor, Spiegelman problematized the Jewish discourse in an indirect way. His use of metaphor releases the complexities of narrative and systematically communicates the actual events of the Holocaust.

Spiegelman’s distinctive use of animal metaphor and its racial implementation satirically draw an analogy to the cat and mouse hunting game in the anthropomorphic world of the Holocaust. In *Maus*, Nazi cats represent the ruthlessness and oppressive nature of Germans, who are constantly chasing Jewish mice, while Jewish mice are depicted as passive victims of oppressors. “According to Erving Goffman (1969 [1959]), identity is an amalgam of the many different roles we all adopt in life in order to evoke

the desired responses from our audiences” (Refaie, 53). Here, the mouse identity of Jewish people represents victimhood and vulnerability; it determines their derogatory social position in Nazi Germany. In the novel, all Jewish people almost appeared in rodent form, hiding themselves in the bunker to save their lives. Which resembles the actual inhuman condition of Jews during the Holocaust. Despite the satirical application, the anthropomorphic identity of Jews as mice also weaves a sympathetic thread into the narrative. The life of the mouse at the multiple layers symbolizes the sense of struggle and experiences of Jews, which completely synchronize in the narrative.

In the novel, the anthropomorphic characterization symbolically conveys power dynamics, historical tension, and mass dehumanization that happened during the Holocaust. The animal analogy here defines the power dynamic between cat and mouse, and its categorical representation shows different races of people. By implementing animal imagery, Spiegelman also disrupts the notion of fixed traits and racial stereotypes associated with human characters. His animal-headed humans provide a universal appeal to enable different critical interpretations beyond racial essentialism. In the novel, the existing analogy of becoming an animal also raises an afflicting question about humanity; its non-human treatment serves as an appropriate method to convey the notoriety of the treatment of other humans. In reality, the Holocaust was insane; to capture its dehumanization and full horror in one book is still impossible. But Spiegelman’s nonhuman representation of the characters satirically sculpted the mass dehumanization of Jews in a precise and innovative manner. His metaphorical language shows possibilities for addressing the intolerable torture of extermination camps, which is unspeakable. Spiegelman says his animal characters are “humans with animal heads” who “stand up and insist on their own humanity” even though they are capable of profoundly and incomprehensibly inhumane treatment of others. The Nazis, Spiegelman notes, “slated Jews for extermination, which is not something that is done to people. It is done to pests, to vermin” (qtd. in Shores 3).

Apart from the existing analogy of becoming an animal, Spiegelman’s metaphor runs deeper than his choice, as it also communicates satirical notions and political analogies in Jewish discourse. Expanding its arena to the political borders, the metaphor mouse also evades propagandist interpretations; symbolically, it evokes Hitler’s notion of Jews as “vermin,” infesting the entire world. For Hitler, Jewish people were the reason for Germany’s problems, and his final solution was to wipe out the vermin for the betterment of the country. Here, the victim metaphor of Jews as mice satirically redefines the political notion of vermin as the most hateful and inferior type of animal among other animals. Similarly, Jewish people received the same kind of inferiority and abusive treatment from other people in Nazi Germany. Again, the crucial example of Vermin establishes a similar interpretation and application for the famous cartoon character

Mickey Mouse. In the mid-1930s, the German newspaper Pomerania scrutinized him for being an inferior kind of vermin or a Jew who was the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom. With Mickey Mouse, Spiegelman draws resemblances between his mouse characters in the novel. He quotes from the newspaper in the second volume of *Maus*:

Micky Mouse is the most miserable ideal ever revealed. Healthy emotions tell every independent young man and every honourable youth that the dirty and filth covered vermin, the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom, cannot be the ideal type of animal.... Away with Jewish brutalization of the people! Down with Micky Mouse! Wear the Swastika Cross!

Comic critic Elizabeth El Refaie discusses the visual embodiment of characters “Comics artists cannot ignore sociocultural assumptions and values that render bodies meaningful, for instance, those related to gender, class, ethnicity, age, health/ sickness, and beauty/ ugliness” (8). In drawing the anthropomorphic identities of characters, Spiegelman also attests to the socio-political assumptions and racial stereotypes of that time, which extend its satirical implementation. The animal identity of characters shows multiple layers of interpretation in terms of how a character defines their social position, racial and ethnic attitudes, and most importantly, the dehumanizing aspects in a symbolic way. Spiegelman’s mature and extensive use of animal metaphor widened the scope of anthropomorphism and its use in literature. In *Maus*, anthropomorphism occupies a special space that enables its multiple functions and capacity to assimilate critical themes. **Anthropomorphism in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm***

“Man is the only real enemy we have. Remove Man from the scene, and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished forever” (Orwell, 4)

Removing men from the entire scene is the main premise of the *Animal Farm*. In the novel, Orwell has created a whole new world of animals; all the animals on Manor Farm rebel against men for their equality and a better future without men. In Orwell’s anthropomorphic world, all animals can speak and exhibit many human characteristics; they work like humans and do business with humans, and the most human thing in the novel, only intellectual pigs, has achieved that they stand on two feet and dress like a man. The work is carefully organized around the concept of anthropomorphism, which became an obnoxious piece of propaganda that can be read as a criticism of any number of political ideologies for its organization of fundamental concepts for each. Orwell said on the purpose of writing the novel that “*Animal Farm* was the first book in which I tried, with full consciousness of what I was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole.”

There are many indefinite analogies about the book; mainly, the story is an allegory of communism in the U.S.S.R.; it casts a discussion in an indirect way about the actual political system of Russia during the rise of Stalin. Orwell's choice of anthropomorphism not only gave a timeless example of political satire, but it also showed meticulous descriptive quality and integrity of representation in both fictional and historical scenarios. To give an appropriate understanding and motivation for his works, Orwell, in his essay "Why I Write," explains:

Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I understand it. It seems to me nonsense, in a period like our own, to think that one can avoid writing of such subjects. Everyone writes of them in one guise or another. It is simply a question of which side one takes and what approach one follows. And the more one is conscious of one's political bias, the more chance one has of acting politically without sacrificing one's aesthetic and intellectual integrity.

Orwell's approach to anthropomorphism on the animal farm became a tool to attack the existing political system, where he attests his personal anguish and political thought in disguise. Orwell was a pro socialist and much of his work represents the ideas of freedom and equality. As he himself commented on his writing, "where I lacked a political purpose, I wrote lifeless books." The Russian Revolution in the second decade of the 20th century and the Spanish Civil War between 1936 and 1939 were two significant events that have greatly influenced Orwell's political thought. For Michael Sheldon, "the idea for the book," which was to serve Orwell's desire to "make a forceful attack, in an imaginative way, on the sustaining myths of Soviet communism, had been in the back of his mind since his return from Spain" (Shelden, 399). *Animal Farm* reveals his consistent belief in democratic socialism and received much critical acclamation for evoking political consciousness beyond conventional methods. The work shows the assimilation of political satire and artistic innovation.

In conjunction with the anthropomorphism, *Animal Farm* concentrates on satire about subversion and equality; its plot shows a great similarity with the totalitarian government in Russia. Inspired by Marxism, the novel is again a movement of the proletariat class, suppressed and betrayed by the top ruling class of the bourgeoisie. The oppressed consistently rebel and demand a new governing class. It shows a parodic version of the Russian Revolution of 1917, which became apparent during the novel. In the novel, the oppressed animals of Maron Farm are designed to represent the working class, who rebel against Mr. Jones (the owner or capitalist) and expel him and his wife from the farm after a tug of war. Farm animals tried to practice socialism, but it couldn't be successful and eventually turned into a totalitarian state. Animal's rebellion satirically

presented the failure of communism in general. All animals represent a hierarchy between individuals, and their levels of intellect distinguish them in a different class of the system. The presentation of political thought in the novel conveys how people were manipulated and became oppressed victims of the governing political system and its leaders.

Nearly all anthropomorphic identities of characters symbolically represent the main leaders of the U.S.S.R., who participated in the 1917 revolution in Russia. The white boar, Old Major, represents the political leader V.I. Lenin of the Bolshevik party, who took control in the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Old Major formed the ideology of animalism—the basic rules of equality—that inspired other animals to revolt against their oppressor man. Soon, farm animals became comrades and executed an event similar to the Bolshevik revolution in the novel. The ideology of animalism indirectly communicates the theory of Karl Marx's communism; precisely, it says, 'All Animals are Equal' and 'Four Legs Good, Two Legs Bad'. Achieving equality was the ultimate goal of animals' rebellion, but their rebellion was a failure. satirically, it shows the failure of Marx's communism. Apparently, the book is anti-Stalin, as it concentrates on the rise of Josef Stalin and the growth of the Soviet Union during his dictatorship. As a dictator, Stalin eventually altered the ideology of communism to fill the needs of his dictatorship and ultimate power. The novel's anthropomorphic parallel mostly focuses on the two central characters, Napoleon and Snowball, who represent Josef Stalin and Leon Trotsky, respectively, and were engaged in an unrelenting war for control of the USSR.

The Bolshevik pig Snowball who is symbolically compared to political leader Trotsky, who was often accused when anything goes wrong on the farm and he later became a scapegoat for farm animals. In the actual political context, Trotsky was the head of Lenin's Red Army, and he was expelled from the U.S.S.R. just after the Bolshevik revolution. Snowball's aim was to improve life on the farm; his idea of a windmill resembles Trotsky's own ideas of industrialization in Russia. Another character, Napoleon, a "large, rather fierce-looking Berkshire boar", suggests Josef Stalin and other tyrant dictators who believe in increasing their personal power and privileges. The obvious connection to their real-life counterpart became more visible when both pigs disagreed on the ideas for the development of the farm. Orwell describes "These two disagreed at every point where disagreement was possible. If one of them suggested sowing a bigger acreage with barley, the other was certain to demand a bigger acreage of oats. Each had his own following, and there were some violent debates..." (15). Here, Napoleon's disagreements with Snowball suggest a constant political stress between Stalin and Trotsky after Lenin's death.

For Napoleon, ideas were less important; he gained power through fear, oppression, propaganda, and violence. He practiced many punitive methods to get total control and absolute power at the farm. With his secret police of dogs that symbolize Stalin's

NKVD, he spread fear among animals. Napoleon's regime in the beginning shows better progress than Mr. Jones, but later it ended up in a totalitarian state, and the rest of the animals became oppressed victims of the new ruling class. His two-year plan for the windmill gives rise to the notion of Stalin's five-year plan for agriculture and industrialization, which eventually caused mass starvation through collectivization. Napoleon was in full control at the farm; his orchestrated killings of other animals remind us of Stalin's in the 1930s. The third pig, Squealer, a brilliant talker, spreads the propaganda of Napoleon; he changes the Seven Commandments and makes other animals believe in them. He frequently convinces other animals about false production at the farm, and many times he persuades the oppressed animals of what is absolutely necessary for the well-being of all animals, ironically for pigs only.

Spiegelman and Orwell: A discussion

Like Art Spiegelman, Orwell's anthropomorphic characters also formed a hierarchy in characterization and determined a class distinction on the basis of their level of intellect and behaviour. On the farm, not all animals are able to do intellectual activities; some of them were not even able to read and write. Due to their limitations, they ended up as oppressed labourers and victims at the farm, which stands in for the proletarian class. The horse is a metaphorical representation of the working class or proletariat in Orwell's novel *Boxer*. Boxer was always willing to put in extra effort to improve the farm. He remains loyal to representative leaders, as he always says, "Napoleon is always right" and "I will work harder," but he was never rewarded for his hard work and was eventually sent to the slaughterhouse by cruel Napoleon. His execution symbolizes the deportation and execution of Jewish people in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. Orwell's human character Frederick (a neighbour farmer) also shows satirical implementation; he bears a resemblance to Hitler; Orwell uses him to show his immense hatred for dictatorship.

Animal Farm somehow leaves pessimism for the impossibility of establishing socialism. At the end of the novel, all seven commandments lose their meaning and are replaced with new ones, which hardly communicate the idea of equality. The main idea of animalism, "All Animals Are Equal," changed into "All Animals Are Equal But Some More Equal Than Others," and "Four Legs Good, Two Legs Bad" changed into "Four Legs Good and Two Legs Better." Because they couldn't read properly, the afflicted animals didn't recognise the preceding commandments. Napoleon's reign destroyed the spirit of the uprising. The younger animals on the farm were unaware of the elder animals' rebellion and sacrifices.

The novel successfully meets Orwell's idea of combining his political thoughts into art. Its satirical implementation in the work infuses power dynamics and redefines the manipulation tactics of political leaders who have an insatiable lust for power. Roger

Fowler reports, "In his preface to the Ukrainian edition of *Animal Farm*, written in 1947, Orwell writes that his aim with *Animal Farm* was not only to attack and criticize Soviet Communism, but to attack "Soviet Myth" as received in Britain. To him, this myth was giving harm to the socialist movement" (Fowler, 163). Orwell's intention to investigate Soviet myth through the novel is to assimilate distinctive strategies that invite other critical perceptions to be discussed. Throughout the novel, he not only discussed Soviet myth in the allegory but, in general, he designed the novel to make his readers aware of political supremacy and their betrayal of political principles. His socialism in the work shows an appropriate resemblance to Russian history. Orwell's indifferent approach to the work shows innovation in narrative and became an exquisite example of political propaganda in literary classics, which facilitates the use of anthropomorphism in various literary contexts.

Conclusion

Gorge Orwell and Art Spiegelman's poignant treatment of anthropomorphism in their literary works establishes a vigilant example of political satire that makes their works notorious pieces to examine multiple discursive dimensions. By incorporating political discourse in a fantasy world of anthropomorphism, both novels show authentication in their historical context and provide an approximation of the political scenario of the described time. The projection of the truth about the political system in the defamiliarization method completely changed the approach of the text to its literal meaning, and it provides a more serious perspective on the use of anthropomorphism. The implementation of anthropomorphism in both novels also shows the author's personal anguish over the injustice of the governing system. Both authors used the animal metaphor as an abstract icon to attest to their hidden intentions. The political propaganda exhibited in both novels aims to raise awareness about the political system and the manipulative strategies of the dictators. Its characterization formed multiple layers of criticism, which expanded the horizon to examine the text beyond the intended discursive realm.

A distinctive approach to narrative in both works draws similarities as both authors employ anthropomorphism to criticize the totalitarian governing system in Russia and Germany. Despite casting satire on the political scenario, both novels show artistic innovation in their selected context. The anthropomorphic principles in both works weave an empathetic appeal in the narration, and because of the indifferent approach, readers easily understand the descriptions of the experiences of the characters. The nonhuman treatment in both themes also shows its relevance to describe racial essentialism, dehumanization, and the power dynamics of the described time. Selected characters bear a resemblance to the intended political leaders as they provide descriptions of their behaviour and attitudes. Both novels secure a place for anthropomorphism in adult-oriented literature, especially in dealing with complex and

issue-based themes. Here, the innovative use of anthropomorphism serves as an important device that should be used to communicate the sensitivity of the subject matter.

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Interpreting Susan Sontag: A Critical Analysis of “Against Interpretation”

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Abstract

Interpretation of any piece of writing or art is believed to help the audience to understand their personal, social, historical, and cultural background. But is this really the case? Does it not halt one's experience of these works? This is what Susan Sontag is rebelling against in her essay “Against Interpretation.” Her challenge to the act of extracting meaning from literary and artistic works and advocacy for the direct and sensuous experience of these works make her different from her contemporaries. Her call for the “eroticism” in art in the place of “hermeneutics,” paves way for distinct artistic experience. This paper critically engages with her ideas in the essay “Against Interpretation,” to understand what she actually means by interpretation and “eroticism” in art.

Keywords: interpretation, sensuous, eroticism, hermeneutics, art

The paper aims to critically analyse Susan Sontag's “Against Interpretation,” published in 1964. It will study how her reflections in the essay critique the prevalent ways in which the works of art and literature are interpreted and analysed. It will also uncover her call for the sensuous and aesthetic approach to experience the works of art. Besides, the paper will attempt to answer the following questions: What is Sontag's view about form and content in art and literature? What role does interpretation play while experiencing a work of art and literature? How do the history and the culture influence the ways in which these works are experienced? What alternative does Sontag provide for interpretation?

Sontag wrote this essay against the background when many literary theories had been grappling with the question of the relationship between the form and the content—whether the former or the latter is more important. These theories include: Russian Formalism, New Criticism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, and Structuralism. Generally, form is defined as an artistic style or technique; content refers to the significant message or meaning of an artistic and a literary work.

Sontag, in her essay, arrives at the discussion of form and content after referring to the ways in which the art had been experienced earlier. First, she discusses about the “incantatory” and “magical” representation of art; the other one is the ‘mimetic’ theory of art that Plato had proposed in his books entitled *Ion* and *The Republic* (“Against Interpretation” 10). She underlines the question of the “value of art” as the ‘mimetic’ theory challenges art to “justify” itself (10). Plato does not consider art to be useful and true. But Aristotle negates Plato’s idea and views art as something valuable; he considers art useful in his *Poetics*, as it evokes and “purges” one’s emotions (10). It can be interpreted to have useful effects. For Sontag, the whole “Western consciousness” of art remained restricted to the mimetic theory of art. The theory made art “problematic” that it had to be defended; such defence gave way to the separation of form from content, making content necessary and “form accessory” (11).

The difference between form and content became the subject of many literary theories. Formalism, in the early twentieth century, dealt with the complex relationship between form and content. In literary theory, it refers to the approaches that analyse, evaluate, and interpret the intrinsic features of a literary text. These features include: grammar, syntax, metre, etc. Literature is “autonomous” for the formalists, independent of “contagious spheres of culture” (*Russian Formalism: A Metapoetics* 245). They considered it to be self-contained, with its own unique identity. Their advocacy was for the study of literature that would be independent of the biographical, historical and cultural elements. Sontag is critical of formalists’ excessive focus on form. She puts forward her idea that the best criticism “dissolves the considerations of content into those of form” (“Against Interpretation” 18). In this way, Sontag favours the compatibility of both form and content.

Sontag also attacks the New Criticism, a school of literary criticism in the United States. Its principal concern was the close examination of the literary texts, belonging to poetry and fiction especially. By ignoring the historical and the biographical aspect of a text, the New Critics believed that the close analysis of the formal aspects, such as structure, language, imagery, etc., can help in finding and understanding the meaning of a text. Sontag, however, does not support this. For her, the contextual understanding of an artistic and a literary work is essential for its interpretation. She does not regard interpretation to be an “absolute value” and proposes that it must be judged inside the “view of human consciousness” (13). Her proposal indicates that interpretation is completely dependent upon the individual, historical and cultural facets of literary and artistic works. It also uncovers the subjective character of interpretation, indicating the crucial point of Sontag’s essay. The New Critics considered the literary works to be independent of its political and social ambience. Sontag criticises the detachment of the New

Critics; her non-fictional works *Illness as Metaphor* and *AIDS and Its Metaphors* manifest how even illnesses cannot be understood and analysed independent of their surroundings.

Hermeneutics, referring to the theory of interpretation, has its origin in the word “*hermeneuein*” from the ancient Greek language, which means “to utter, to explain, to translate” (*Hermeneutics: A Very Short Introduction* 25). “Hermeneuein” has its Latin equivalent word “*interpretari*” that is associated with understanding the spoken and written communication (25). The realm of hermeneutics includes various fields, such as Biblical studies, medicine, humanities, philosophy, literary theory, etc. But earlier, it dealt with the interpretation of religious texts only. Sontag neglects the theory of hermeneutics and her essay “Against Interpretation” underlines her critical stance on interpretation. She writes that the prevalent distinction between form and content, and the continuous focus on the content of artistic and literary works requires the “perennial, never consummated project of *interpretation*” (“Against Interpretation” 12). For her, the interpretation of these works gives ways to the idea that there is something known as the content of an artwork.

Sontag states that her meaning of the word “interpretation” is different from Friedrich Nietzsche’s understanding of this word. In the third part entitled “Principles of a New Evaluation,” Nietzsche highlights that there are no facts but “only interpretations” (*The Will to Power* 298). Everything that is defined as a fact is actually an interpretation; even, for him, the notion of being “subjective” is an interpretation (298). His idea of “perspectivism” indicates that one’s desires, needs and attitudes make the way in which one understands and interprets the world (298). Emphasising on the subjectivity of human experience, he rejects the idea of one being objective and adherent to the fixed facts. Sontag’s understanding of interpretation is different. Her use of the word “interpretation” is not as comprehensive as that of Nietzsche’s. She refers to it as a “conscious act of mind,” an intentional action that analyses things by following particular “‘rules’ of interpretation” (“Against Interpretation” 12). She is critical of the overemphasis put on the decipherment of artistic works within the traditional order of interpretation.

Sontag highlights how during the 1960s [before also], the act of interpretation was regarded as “reactionary” and “stifling” (14). This suggests how an artistic work is restricted by the fixed interpretations. She argues that the increase in interpretations “poisons our sensibilities” in the same way as the proliferation of pollution degrades the cities (14). For her, intellectual interpretations can deprive one of the instant experiences of art. She states that interpretation is actually the “revenge of the intellect upon art” and the “world” in a culture, where the conundrum is the exaggeration of the “intellect” at the cost of “sensual capability” (“Against Interpretation” 14). Sontag underlines the

overemphasis on the intellect. The intellectual excavation of an artistic work can strip the work of art of its originality. Interpretation can “impoverish” and “deplete” the world as it creates a “shadow world of ‘meanings’” (14). It distracts one from experiencing the art as it is.

Sontag writes about two distinct aspects of interpretation in any culture: first aspect presents it as a “liberating act” that helps in escaping the ideas of the past and embracing the new ones; second presents it as “reactionary, impertinent, cowardly, stifling” (13). Here, she wants to highlight how in some cultures, interpretation of artistic or literary works can be perceived as limiting their true meaning. In this way, Sontag presents the context-based outlook of interpretation.

One needs interpretation when the difference between the meaning of the original work and the demands of the readers highlights itself; interpretation, in such case, tries to reduce it [difference] (12). For Sontag, interpretation is a “radical strategy” that helps in the preservation of the old texts—which cannot be rejected or which are not in harmony with the contemporary ideas (13). She emphasises that the interpreter is gradually changing the text without rewriting it. But interpreters claim that they are actually explaining the true meaning of a text instead of altering it (13). Sontag suggests the interpreters to read what is there in a text.

In her comparison of the modern and the old style of interpretation, Sontag finds the old one “insistent, but respectful” (13). The interpreters of this style built fresh and new meaning of a text on the top of a literal one; they did not suppress the meaning at the surface but rather added more to it. For her, the interpretation of the modern style is complex. Its interpreters excavate and uncover the “sub-text,” which contains the underlying and significant meaning of a text (“Against Interpretation” 13). The modern style of interpretation can destroy one’s understanding of literature and art. Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* (1915) serves as an ideal example for this kind of interpretation. Its existential and psychological aspects have been analysed extensively. Some interpretations define the insect symbolically, and delve into the text to uncover the absurd nature of existence. The decipherment of symbols of the artistic and literary works can obstruct their instinctive experience.

Sontag agrees that the interpretation of literary works is more common in comparison to that of the artistic works. Many literary critics, for her, have themselves assumed the role of interpreting poems, plays, novels, etc. But some of the writers themselves include the interpretations in their works to present their work explicitly to the readers. Thomas Mann is such writer according to Sontag. His well-known novel *Death in Venice* (1912) deals with the themes, including the conflict between reason and passion, creativity in art, etc. Mann unfolds and interprets these themes through Aschenbach’s character in the novel.

Sontag briefly refers to the modern poetry and how various movements like Symbolism rejected the idea of straightforward interpretations. The poets belonging to such poetry use figures of speech and symbols in order to make readers undergo the extreme sensual and emotional experience. The prominent French poets, such as Stéphane Mallarmé and Arthur Rimbaud preferred creating poetry with the help of their visions and dreams. Sontag underlines a significant change in the poetry during the 1950s and 1960s when poets like T.S. Eliot—with their interpretable poems—have been replaced by the poets like Ezra Pound. This kind of shift highlights how the idea of content and interpretation was neglected by poetry (“Against Interpretation” 17). This rejection happened only to provide more aesthetic pleasure to the readers during their reading of poetry.

During the time she was writing, Sontag also engaged with various prevalent movements in art. Apart from poetry, the period was influenced by various modernist movements in art. Modernism and the modern art referred to the “succession of art movements” that critics have recognised since the realism of Gustav Courbet, and “culminating” in the “abstract” art and its expansion and development in the 1960s (Tate). The movement rejected the conservative art—that was known for depicting the reality of society and thus, was open to interpretation—and experimented with the form of art. The development of new forms and abstraction in art influenced and shaped Sontag’s views about the primacy of the work of art.

Abstract Expressionism became famous during 1940s and 1950s with its principal focus on form. It separated itself from the art that represented the reality. The abstract expressionists considered a painting to be a “revelation” of an artist’s “authentic identity” (*The Met*). They conveyed their emotions with the help of abstract forms and distinct use of brushstrokes. Willem de Kooning is one of the prominent artists of this movement. Sontag’s advocacy for this movement can be seen as she has used his statement as one of the epigraphs of “Against Interpretation.” It says, “[c]ontent is a glimpse of something, an encounter like a flash. It’s very tiny—very tiny, content” (“Against Interpretation” 10). In these lines, Kooning suggests that content is not something that can be defined explicitly. It passes like a flash, and is momentary. He advocates for the content of artistic importance.

Sontag discusses the idea of interpretation in the context of the modern art, especially painting. Her use of the Abstract painting and Pop Art as examples underlines her challenge to the conventional role that interpretation plays in art. Pop art has its objects from the popular culture and they are easily recognisable. Sontag considers the content of pop art so “blatant” that it escapes interpretation (16). Such art was a totally different response to the post-war period where the material things came to occupy the central position in routine life of common people. Many ordinary items, such as soup cans,

hamburgers, etc., were the objects of the works of the Pop artists. Andy Warhol's famous painting *Marilyn Diptych* (1962) represents pop art of his time. The painting contains fifty images of Marilyn Monroe; half of these images are black-and-white and half are coloured. An abstract painting has unrecognisable objects as its subjects, thus evades interpretation. Mark Rothko's *Untitled* (1961) is an influential abstract painting of the 1960s.

Opposed to abstract and pop art, the paintings of the surrealist artists were open to interpretation. These artists used their dreams to create their paintings; their subconscious mind provided them with their content. Their paintings were often unfolded in the context of psychoanalysis. Salvador Dali's famous painting *Dream* (1944) invites psychoanalytic interpretation. The interpretation of Max Ernst's painting *Ubu Emperor* (1923) presents it as a painting showing an absurd image of power. Susan Sontag's reference to the Abstract and the Pop art indicates her interest in the popular culture during the 1960s.

Sontag suggests that the works of art with "unified and clean" surface have the potential of escaping interpretation ("Against Interpretation" 17). For her, cinema has this potential. She finds it the most "alive," "exciting" and significant of all forms of art during her time (17). Her emphasis is on the directness in good cinema that saves it from the clutches of interpretation. Sontag advocates a form of art which does not need any interpretation, and where the work of art is "just what it is" (17).

Cinema emerged as a new form of art during the time Sontag had written this essay, i.e. in 1964. Its newness might be the reason that it escaped interpretations. Besides, Sontag underlines how films were considered "just movies" for a long time; they were regarded as a part of the "mass" culture instead of high culture ("Against Interpretation" 19). So, critics and intellectuals did not pay any attention to them as they were more interested in interpreting high culture, including artistic and literary works. Sontag considered cinema different from literature or novels. Other than the content, there is a "vocabulary of forms" in cinema, such as editing, framing, camera movements, etc., which one can analyse independently (18). Along with the story of the film, its visual representation can also be analysed. In the contemporary period, cinema as a form of art has been exhausted by interpretations. James Cameron's film series *Avatar* has been interpreted from distinct perspectives, including the spiritual and colonial interpretation.

Sontag writes that the works of art with "transparence" in themselves can get rid of interpretations (19). She is against interpretations of works of art and strongly asserts that in the place of the "hermeneutics" of art, an "erotics of art" is needed (20). The latter idea signifies the immediate, sensuous, and the emotional experience of the observer of an artistic work. She compares this with the hermeneutics [of art], i.e., the interpretative

and analytical approach, that seeks to uncover the hidden messages within an artistic work. The term “erotics” does not have any sexual connotation in Sontag’s essay. Instead, it signifies the emotional and sensory side of one’s encounter with an artistic work. She encourages the shift from analytical approach to the appreciation of art.

In Greek literature and philosophy, in Plato’s works specifically, the term “eros” is often associated with love or desire; it can encompass various aspects of longing, such as spiritual and intellectual. Plato explores this term in relation to beauty and love in his book *Symposium* in which various philosophers discuss the nature of love and “eros” (6). In this context, Socrates’ argument is based on the notion that “highest form of eros is the contemplation of the Beautiful itself, an abstract and perfect idea of beauty” (qtd. in *Plato: The Symposium* xiii). He suggests that the real happiness lies in the intellectual union with the abstract idea of beauty. Socrates’ idea can be associated with Sontag’s idea of the “erotics of art” (“Against Interpretation” 20) Socrates’ concern was the amalgamation of the intellect with the abstract idea of beauty and Sontag votes for the immediate engagement with the aestheticism of the artistic works. The commonality between these both perspectives is the appreciation for the pleasure that goes beyond the physical aspects [of art].

Sontag’s fondness for aestheticism in the essay attracts one’s attention to the fundamental principles of the Aesthetic Movement in the late nineteenth century. Besides Willem de Kooning’s words, the essay also has a preface from Oscar Wilde’s only novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). The lines that serve as the preface are, “[i]t is only very shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The mystery of the world is in the visible, not the invisible” (“Against Interpretation” 10). It suggests the importance of the immediate artistic experience. The movement promoted the idea of the “art for art’s sake” and challenged the idea that art should be useful for the society. It opposed the art that was didactic. Sontag carries on this legacy of the Aesthetic Movement with her idea of the “erotics of art” (“Against Interpretation” 20).

The critical analysis of Susan Sontag’s “Against Interpretation” has brought out her ideas of form, content, interpretation, and the sensuousness of art. Her excessive focus of the sensory experience of the works of art, and her call for the “erotics of art” invited the criticism of her contemporaries. The study has also uncovered that she is not against interpretation, but is against over-interpretation. She is against the tendency of destroying works of art with the interpretations based on theories, including Psychoanalysis, etc. She acknowledges the significance of form in artistic and literary works. She suggests that in order to have an authentic experience of these works, attention should be paid to the compatibility of form and content. But in this experience, Sontag does not rule out the role that senses have to play.

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Of Nation, Food and Love: A Reading of the Films “Tadka” and “The Hundred-Foot Journey”

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“Nation” is a word, an idea, a concept that has endless research being done in various disciplines and is yet to be defined. Perhaps it is the plurality of the understanding of “Nation” that lends it its significance. From Rabindranath Tagore to Ernest Renan, the idea of nation has been understood variously as the “aspect of a whole people as an organised power” (Tagore, 86) and “a vast solidarity, constituted by the sentiment of the sacrifice one has made and of those one is yet prepared to make” (Renan, 261). Each philosophical and academic mind has painted and offered the idea of nation with a colour of their own.

“Nation” shares root with the Latin verb “nascar” which means “to be born”. Instead of picking a colour, I see a palette in formation, wherein takes place a gathering of myriad colours, creating space for each other while simultaneously blending and merging, bringing in new colours. However, Nation is not a colour; it is a painter’s palette which provides a space for countless tones and shades. To put it differently, it holds a space for different cultures, languages, and histories to exist and coexist. Nation, like the ideology, thoughts and emotions of its people, evolves with time. Popularly considered as the marker of identity, we often tend to bind its potential to boundaries leading to a reductive interpretation and stagnant outlook. Moving beyond the conventional definition of “nation” understood as something confined within a defined border, I study the notion of nation through food and its ability to bring people from different nations together whilst being culturally rooted. Kwame Anthony Appiah, in his essay *Cosmopolitan Patriots* (1997) presents the notion of “rooted cosmopolitanism” which he defines as one being “attached to a home of one's own, with its own cultural particularities but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people” (618). Using this notion, this paper shows the boundarylessness of the idea of nation by highlighting the cultural rootedness through the shared love for one’s country’s food and the central role that it plays in bringing nations together.

Through this paper, I explore the boundarylessness of the idea of nation through food as characterized in the films “Tadka” (2022) and “The Hundred-Foot Journey” (2011). Here, food transcends its basic purpose of sustenance and creates a space for manifestation and expression of love and its inherent emotional ambiguities. “Tadka” is a

Bollywood film directed by Prakash Raj, starring Nana Patekar, Ali Fazal, and Taapsee Pannu. The film is a remake of the Malayalam film "Salt N' Pepper" (2011) and explores the themes of love and food through the story of two people who come together over their love for cooking.

The film highlights the budding relationship between the characters Tukaram and Madhura which is initiated by a wrongly dialled phone call made with the purpose of ordering food. The mistake eventually becomes countless consciously made calls and conversations that are based on and around food. Here, the shared passion for taste stirs a meaningful relationship between the two strangers. The journey of their bond is shown mainly through their shared phone calls; the two characters do not meet throughout the film, and yet their relationship undergoes a taste of sweetness, sourness and bitterness.

The film is focused on Indian cuisine, its nuances, and how relations are built on recipes passed down through generations. Tukaram, the protagonist, is an archaeologist with an intense passion for cooking as well as eating. His relationship and enthusiasm towards food unfold in the film through memories from childhood and the memory of taste. In the first scene, the viewer sees Tukaram as a child struggling to reach an earthen jar of pickles as he gets late for school. The mother is taken aback by hearing the chaos in the kitchen and seeing Tukaram sitting with a jar on the floor. He explains his desire to have the garlic pickle sent by his grandmother and not the mango pickle, as the mother had packed lunch with rotis made of *bajra* and not *jowar*. The determination to relish the flavours in a harmonious way is where the priorities of the little Tukaram are set. Moreover, the protagonist accepts and rejects people in his life based on their food preferences. Tukaram connects and conceives food not just with its taste but also emotions. These emotions embed themselves in the tastebuds as an aftertaste, a memory. What is aftertaste if not a memory. It transcends its literal dimension and lingers as a remembrance at the back of the palette. The oft-used phrases such as “maa kehaath ki dal”, “daadikehaath ka khaana”, “Nathuram ki chaat” are impregnated with a memory, a story and an aftertaste altogether. To put it in Tukaram’s words, “Khaane ka harzaika jo hai meri yaadon se judahuahai. Agar mai achar khauntohnani ki yaadaatihai, moongphali ki chutney khauntoh maa ki yaadaatihai.

Matlab ye zaike jo hain meri yaadon ki pagdandihai” (*Tadka* 40:52-41:06)

The film “The Hundred-Foot Journey” accentuates the use of hands, whether it is for tasting the food or sprinkling the spices. The hands, in this context, gain a metaphorical significance. Hassan as a child dipping his finger to taste the sea-urchin, Marguerite tasting the five sauces, kneading of the dough, handpicked red currants and eating with hands express a certain amount of intimacy involved in the gastronomic experience, from cooking to savouring. Juxtaposing the first half of the film with the second half,

there is a stark contrast between the methods of cooking and cuisines as well as the behaviour of Hassan towards food. His passion helps him become a Michelin star chef, and practice his art in a fancy Parisian molecular restaurant. The process of cooking takes a sharp turn from being highly emotional and spiritual to mechanical and industrialised. The character is portrayed as detached and disconnected. The use of various mechanical tools, especially syringes, rips off the personal touch that the hand offers. A pinch of spice adds a personal touch to the dish being cooked.

While in Paris, the chef is literally and, as seen in the film, emotionally disconnected from the food that he curates. The dish or rather a petri dish becomes a space to experiment i.e., sans intimacy. However, the monotony and the blandness are broken when in the same restaurant Hassan finds a co-worker savouring a home-cooked meal. The first bite brings tears to his eyes, taking him back and reminding him of Home. The film, in its own way, reiterates the relationship between food and memory. The image of the box of spice, each jar labelled and packed cautiously, facilitates memory. It is handed down to Hassan by his late mother. For him, it serves as a reminder of his mother, her teachings, her recipes, of himself and a memory of Home.

Recipe transcends its definition to become a metaphor. The steps evolve and change with time and space.; certain ingredients are added, removed, substituted according to their availability and sensibility of taste. Recipe, like nation, is a shared space where timelines and sensibilities blend and merge. It is a story being revisited by each generation, adding a character, a spice, a flavour of their own. There is a history to each and every recipe, alas it is born somewhere.

In “Tadka”, Tukaram is reminded of the unforgettable fruit cake that Naroni auntie used to bake. He recalls the recipe in order to share it with Madhura. The scene creates a personal shared space, where the two characters gain proximity and intimacy. Both of them follow the same steps yet their aesthetic presentation of the cake is expressed differently. Recipe creates a space for the coexistence of differences and adapts with time and space.

In “The Hundred-Foot Journey”, the plot highlights the differences and dissimilarities in the cuisine and lifestyle of the Indian emigrant family and the French restaurant. Both sides pull up tricks to pull the other down. Madame Mallory buys all the necessary ingredients required by Maison Mumbai in order to perturb and halt the opening of the restaurant. The characters of either side openly declare war. However, there are moments in the film where boundaries do not exist and arbitrariness thrives. To quote a few, Marguerite, upon finding the Kadam family in an accident, offers a hand of help. She welcomes the family to her abode and serves them different types of cheese, bread, coldpressed olive oil, tomatoes etc... Even after the cultural war has been declared,

Marguerite silently helps Hassan learn about French cuisine by sneakily leaving her books on his door. She even lets him in on the secret about how Madame Mallory tests the abilities of a good chef. Eventually, it is this secret which opens the door to opportunities for Hassan. Although the story knits quite a competitive world through the cultural war stirring a bitter flavour, we see the simmering and sautéing of relations and love. The French chefs annoyed with their competition take revenge by spray painting on their boundary wall “La France aux Français” (France to the French). They firebomb the outside eating area of the Indian restaurant, setting it on fire which causes burnt injuries on Hassan’s hands as he struggles to save it. Upon knowing the ill intentions and actions of the chefs, Madame Mallory takes responsibility, fires the chef, and scrubs the black ink off their wall. Mr. Kadam suspiciously comes out to check what Madame Mallory is upto. Upon finding her trying to make up for the unethical behaviour of her employees, his hard exterior softens and so he holds the umbrella over her head to protect her from rain. The vignettes, such as these, expose the silently existing boundarylessness, a spatial dimension where competition is replaced with cooperation.

The films “Tadka” and “The Hundred-Foot Journey” explore the boundarylessness of the idea of nation through food. A nation is a palette where the rendezvous of time and space creates a historic sensibility. It is layered with dense memories, consisting of stories, tastes and recipes each of its own kind. Food, here, has an element of shareability. It doesn’t belong to one but to each and every one who dares to claim it. From dried spices to fruits to vegetables, different species simmers in a cauldron to become a dish. The fragrance from the kitchen is the symphony of orchestra in its rhythm.

Where “Tadka” expounds on the Indian cuisine and explores the nation through taste, “The Hundred-Foot Journey” expands the intercontinental palette and highlights the nuances between Western and Indian cultures and cuisine. The initial portrayal of differences as a result of contrasting cultures dissolves as the shared love for food creates a space for manifestation and expression of togetherness, love and its inherent emotional ambiguities. The simple acts of cooking, sharing recipes, eating together, and conversation about food obtain a metaphorical significance.

The colours of the cuisines become a metaphor for the representation of Nations and coalesce on the palette, initially contradicting, eventually confronting and gradually coexisting; the palette of food becomes the palette of emotions.

The recipe, traversing time, is a story which silently sings of the historical sensibility, a journey.

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The Satirical Writing of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay—The Case of Ode to the Englishman (*Ingrajstotram*)

BY

Santanu Bandyopadhyay

Ridicule dishonours more than dishonour does, said Francois De La Rochefoucauld, the influential observer of French *societe aristocratique*, in his unflattering analyses of human behaviour in *Reflexions Diverses* (Miscellaneous Reflections) in 1678 A.D. He also contends that some rebukes are praises, and some praises are slanders. Of all the forces of retaliation available to the Davids against the Goliaths, the force of ridicule is perhaps the strongest. People have mocked the high and the mighty across time and civilisations. What the oppressed cannot say ordinarily in fear of the powerful they say extraordinarily in jest using a full dish of various kind of fruits (*lanx satura*) of humour, irony, sarcasm, hyperbole, parody, burlesque, caricature, double entendre, and the like. Thus born the genre of satire. Satire *ipso facto* is a stylised expression of protest of the oppressed through humour against the perceived flaws and excesses of the rich and the powerful. The equation of power is of singular importance in satire. Nobody lampoons the poor or the wretched of the earth. Only the rich and the powerful are the objects of ridicule in all societies. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894), known as the *Sahityasamrat* (साहयसाट), the *litterateur extraordinaire* of the nineteenth-century India, was not only responsible for introduction and popularisation of a new powerful structural form in Bengali literature i.e. the *novel* with full vigour but also was instrumental in introducing quality satirical writing in Bengali language usually penned in a mock-serious tone. Unlike the atmosphere of the day, Bankimian satire was never directed to any specific individual. And most certainly his sarcasm never lapsed into abuse of any person and was never borne out of any personal grudge or dissatisfaction about the conduct of an antagonistic individual. The twofold *raison d'etre* of Bankim's literary

journey, by his own admission, was either creation of something pure and beautiful or to reform society for the good. As a trained physician first diagnoses the disease through identification of the symptoms and proceeds to cure the patient even through administration of the most bitter pill if required, Bankim wrote fearlessly about any social evil he observed and proceeded to suggest remedies for removal of the same. He was a shining product of Western education and of classical Sanskrit teaching. Being an admirer of Positivism (*Dhruvavada* ववाद) ु of Auguste Comte,

Bankimchandra maintained the highest standard of European rationalism as well as of the incisive logic of the Nyāya in his satirical writings. However, unlike many of the English-educated countrymen of his time, Bankim's genius saved him from falling into the dark abyss of unmixed adulation of European culture. He understood the relative merits of Indian culture vis-à-vis its European counterpart objectively and he understood the importance of standing up to our colonial masters to resist their nefarious design to establish cultural hegemony over us as it was practised day-in and day-out publicly declaring the liability of ruling India as white man's burden while secretly putting it squarely on the brown man's back. Such nationalist resistance, being a confidence-building measure for the colonised, was an integral part of the grand nationalist scheme of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay against the evils of colonialism.

Bankimchandra harboured a firm belief that prose is a stronger vehicle of social reform compared to poetry though it is well documented that poetry has been the predominant form of critical expression all over the world. Still, from the vast repertoire of his satirist writings containing mainly prose, the poem "Ode to the Englishman" (*Ingrajstotram in Bengali original* as the Englishmen were known as 'Ingraj' in British Bengal) has been chosen by the present author because of the fact that the satire in the Ode has been most direct and presented in a unique fashion of classic Sanskrit *stotra* (*hymn*) to pour scorn both on the Englishmen of the day and their anglicised Indian devotees who pathologically extolled everything English. To add derision to the scorn and to confer the Ode with a ring of

mock authenticity, the Ode has even been playfully described by Bankim as translated from the Mahabharata. *Ingrajstotram*, first published in Bengali in the Bankim-edited pathbreaking literary journal, the “Bangadarshan” (*The Mirror of Bengal*) in 1874 A.D. as a part of a series of articles named Lokrahasya (लोकरह य, i.e.

the *Public Jest*), has been translated by the author of the current essay from Bengali to English in rhymes to make it more consistent with the Sanskrit term ‘stotra’ (as there was no prosody followed in the Bengali original) as ‘Ode to the Englishman’ from Bengali to English which is produced below :

इंगराज तो म(*Ingrajstotram*)

Ode to the Englishman

O Englishman! I salute Thee. [*stanza 1*]

You are adorned with qualities,
And with physical vitalities,
Full of immense riches,
Without any breaches,
Ergo, I salute Thee [*stanza 2*]

Destroyer You are, of nemesis,
Lord You are, of laws and lis,
Master You are, of job and occupation,
Without a hitch or aberration,
Ergo, I salute Thee. [*stanza 3*]

In war Your weaponry is blessed,
In the hunt You lance the wretched,
In the Court You hold the half-inch rule,
In the dinner You hold the knife-fork tool,
Ergo, O Englishman! I salute Thee. [*stanza 4*]

You rule from royal palaces,

Sell goods for profit without malices,
You plant tea on the high hills,
Rather waiting in the foothills,
Ergo, the Triumvirate! I salute Thee. *[stanza 5]*

Your books manifest your goodness,
Your battles manifest your rudeness,
All of the native press
Is full of Your excess,
Ergo, O ! the Supreme! I salute Thee. *[stanza 6]*

You are the sacred being as you exist,
Your enemies fall in the battle failing to resist,
You are a source of pure
delight To all jobseekers
outright, Ergo, O! the
RealityAbsolute!
I salute Thee. *[stanza 7]*

You are the Lord Creator! From You are the creatures,
You are the Lord Protector of the riches and related features,
You are the Greatest Lord and last
resort, Benign benefaction is Thy
consort, Ergo, the Englishman!
I salute Thee. *[stanza 8]*

You are the God of thunder and rain,
Cannon is your lightning that brought Your reign,
You are the luminous Luna having some blemishes,
Income tax are those dark spots which none relishes,
Being the God of winds, You blow in so many ways,
Among them the fastest is the gale of steaming railways,

You are the Lord Neptune, ocean being Your realm,
None can disobey You as You can overwhelm, Ergo,
O!Englishman!

I salute Thee. *[stanza 9]*

You yourself is the Helios,
Removes the darkness of chaos,
You are the fire-breathing Vulcan,
As You eat whatever You can,
Babus fall from grace,
Seeing Your Mors-like face. *[stanza 10]*

You script the scripture, I forgot mine,
Thesis and antithesis, all are Thine,
You are the philosophy, You conclude,
I am delighted, I don't brood, Ergo,O!
Englishman!

I salute Thee. *[stanza 11]*

You have a face ivory-white,
With a beard clear in sight,
I want to pray before Thee,
O! I salute Thee. *[stanza 12]*

You have colourful hair,
Most brilliant and quite rare,
Golden red and black and blue,
Dyed carefully with all hue,
To hair You apply a lot of grease,
You are always quite at ease,
Ergo, O! Englishman!

I salute Thee. *[stanza 13]*

You are the saviour of our age,
You are wise just like a sage,
You are crowned with a hat,
And You are not so fat,
You sit on a chair and Pantalon You wear, ‘u
crack a whip with a sound we like to hear,
Ergo, O! Loverboy!
I salute Thee. [*stanza 14*]

O! the kind boon-giver! Grant me a boon,
Or I shall start following You everywhere soon,
You can give me a job,
So that I cease to sob,
Ergo, I salute Thee. [*stanza 15*]

O! Lord Auspicious! Do me some good,
I shall flatter Thee, don't be rude,
I shall speak only to
please, I shall do as you
please, O! the Eminent!
Make me prominent,
I salute Thee! [*stanza 16*]

O! Great Appreciator!
Give me all titles and give me all honours,
Thee must know we are great fawners,
Throw us some pieces,
Out of your riches,
I salute Thee! [*stanza 17*]

O! Lord Gracious!
I totally survive on Your leftover,
Place me in the society higher forever,
If You write a few letters to me,
I shall keep them being full of glee,
Be kind to me,
I salute Thee! [*stanza 18*]

O! The Dux of the Inner!
Whatever I do is for You, the Redeemer!
I shall do some acts of charity,
As a sycophant with clarity,
Towards munificence, I shall go,
As long as You order me so,
Whatever books I read, many or few,
Only to be called the learned by you,
Ergo, O! The Englishman!
I salute Thee! [*stanza 19*]

I shall found a dispensary charitable,
As You find it most preferable,
I shall establish schools and colleges,
Which Your Grace readily acknowledges,
As per Your prescription,
I shall pay subscription,
O! Lord! Be good to me!
And, once again I salute Thee! [*stanza 20*]

O! the Majesty! I shall always go by Your opinion,
I shall be in boots and pantalon within your dominion,
I shall wear the specs right on my nose,
To read poetry or any prolonged prose,

I shall eat at dinner table,
Using cutlery most valuable,
Please have mercy on me,
Ergo, I salute Thee! *[stanza 21]*

O! the Lord Charming!
My demeanour is not alarming,
I shall forget my own dialect,
To show You my intellect,
And I shall speak Your tongue,
To be on the upper rung,
I shall decry the religion of my forefather,
To join the flock of converts of any other,
'Babu' henceforth will never be my title,
'Mr' will be prefixed to my name as You entitle,
Please be benign to me,
And again, I salute Thee! *[stanza 22]*

O! the Consumer of the delicacy,
Know my efficacy,
I no longer take rice,
As I consider it a vice,
I am no longer afraid,
To wholly shift to the bread,
I shall always be ready to eat,
A meal stuffed with forbidden meat,
Fowl is my breakfast,
Without being aghast,
Never be angry with me,
Ergo, O! the Englishman, I salute Thee. *[stanza 23]*

O! the giver of all!

Give me all!
 Give me wealth and what not,
 Fame and status and what not,
 Give me high service, make me a king,
 Make me a Rai Bahadur or any such thing,
 As You will make me what I want to be,
 Ergo, O! the Englishman, I salute Thee. [*stanza 24*]

You invite me to a dinner or make me a senate member,
 Appoint me as a Justice or a magistrate they remember,
 Please listen to my speeches and read all my essays,
 I do not give a damn if my own make angry faces,
 O! Dear Lord! I am less than nothing,
 I stand at Your doorstep most heart-touching,
 I send You gift packages quite unfailingly,
 Please keep me in Your mind quite lovingly,
 O! the Englishman, I salute Thee,
 O! the Englishman, I salute Thee. [*stanza 25*]

Bengali original of Bankimchandra contains twenty-eight stotras (hymns) which the current author reduces to twenty-five in translation due to prosodial reasons and to avoid repetition of thoughts.

A plain reading of *Ingrajstotram* readily reveals that the object of ridicule is the English-educated *bhadralok* (or *Gentoo* as derisively called by the Britishers) class fawning over anything and everything English, be it lifestyle or intellectual standard. Bankimian satire has been presented here in the form of a literary burlesque which treats the *ordinary* i.e. the Englishman with mock dignity by putting him on the high pedestal of a deity and making him the object of highest veneration for his devotees i.e. the anglicised Indians. The choice of the very name ‘Ingrajstotram’ and the use of the format of ‘stotra’, ordinarily reserved for ancient scriptures, has been most deliberate.

The penchant for everything English or more generally European (a preference extended even to selection of pet dogs, as exasperatedly mentioned by Bankimchandra elsewhere in the introduction of *Krishnacharitra*, the Essence of Krishna) of the anglicised Indians amused Bankimchandra to no end. Be it the look or the attire, the ethics or the morals, the mundane or the imaginative, the material or the spiritual—everything has to be borrowed from the English. The English decides even the good and the bad. If the English does not approve of something it must be bad, if they approve of something it must be good. This cultural hegemony of the coloniser over the colonised as an effective instrument of domination has been a common phenomenon all over the colonised world. The English way became the only way to live for these anglicised Indians, lamented Bankim.

It also appears in no uncertain term that this unqualified adherence of the anglicised Indians as a class to the cultural mores of the English has nothing to do with the perceived superiority of the English civilisation over the Indian civilisation felt by this class. This adherence was fundamentally exhibitionist in nature *ab initio* and was in play for the sole purpose of getting favour from the coloniser. Bankim could see through this charade of the anglicised Indians and decimated them through humour accordingly. He hated with passion the courting of the English by this class which arose out of a primordial human trait of thirst for power and authority which was hoped to be derived from the English.

Bankimchandra expressed in personal conversation with Shri Suresh Samajpati (an eminent scholar and the grandchild of Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, the great educationist of the nineteenth century Bengal) the opinion that satire had to be original, smart and to the point to be effective. In this Ode such traces are present throughout in gay abundance. As a nationalist Bankimchandra had his pride as an heir to the rich legacy of an ancient civilisation and his pride was hurt if his countrymen, especially the English-educated class being the *hoi polloi* of the native society decided to mimic the English in each and every aspect of life. Such conduct by this class drew nothing but contempt from Bankim. Constitutionally Bankimian

socio-political satire lies between the Horatian lightheartedness and Juvenalian bitterness. *Ingrajstotram* portrays the incisiveness of the Bankimian prose though it resembles a poem in format. To use a slight variation of the borrowed phrase from Frantz Fanon, the noted Algerian antiimperialist intellectual, the *Ode to the Englishman* exposes the sheer futility and absurdity of putting on white masks by the anglicised Indians over their black faces to placate their colonial masters. (Santanu Bandyopadhyay)

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Language and Indeterminacy in Post-Saussurian Literary Theory: An Enquiry

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Abstract

In pre-Saussurian view of language, it had been regarded as a 'transparent labelling system' in which there were words for the corresponding phenomena around. As such, it was assumed to be merely a neutral, ideology-free means of communication. But, Saussure's conception of language as 'a set of arbitrary signs' that signify by convention as 'shared meanings' dealt a deadly blow to the conventional view of language and opened up a whole new possibility of seeing languages as being inescapably loaded with ideologies, culture-specific world-views and individual-specific stances on any given issue in any given context. This movement towards semantic plurality eventually led, via Barthes and Derrida, to what is often termed as 'the poststructural indeterminacy'. As a consequence, most of the post-structuralist approaches (and even the post-modern *avatars* of other earlier approaches such as feminism, Marxism, Race theories) have made use of this purportedly 'anti-essentialist' critical repertoire to further their polemics.

The paper is a humble attempt to trace this trajectory of radical shift from a determinate meaning of literature to a plethora of meanings or mere significations, each of which is said to carry equal legitimacy. The idea is to analyze this process and to explore its repercussions for interpretation of literature, which is what most of the literary theory aims at.

Key Terms: Literary theory, indeterminacy, interpretation, signification, text, meaning.

Language is a typically human possession if the crude non-verbal communicative acts of other animals are left aside. The linguistic communication that humans are capable of is highly wide-ranging in spatio-temporal referentiality, and limitlessly intricate in its semantic, attitudinal, and ideational nuances. As such, language, in preSaussurian conception, had been taken to be a set of neutral, transparent words which only record reality and act merely as a vehicle for thoughts. Simply put, language was seen to be an effect rather than the cause of thought. It naively assumed that thoughts lay somewhere anterior/prior to language. And this view of language survived even the staunchest of skeptics in the Western philosophy of language. However, in the Eastern world, the

Budhist philosophy had come quite close to challenging this belief in language in its idea of 'apoha'.

Interestingly, in the West, it was with Ferdinand de Saussure (a scholar of Sanskrit), the Swiss linguist and philologist, that this traditional view of language got challenged as he insisted on 'synchronic linguistics in preference over 'diachronic' one. His synchronic study of language yielded some insights the most fundamental of which was the realization that language is not only arbitrary and relational but also 'constitutive' of reality. Peter Barry has succinctly put this point:

Language itself conditions, limits, and predetermines what we see. Thus, all reality is constructed through language, so that nothing is simply 'there' in an unproblematic way—everything is a linguistic/textual construct. Language doesn't *record* reality, it shapes and creates it, so that the whole of our universe is textual. (35) Therefore, what language communicates cannot just be a matter of simple 'word-to-thing correspondence' as had traditionally been believed. Instead, it is a highly complex cultural space where meanings are not only encoded and decoded but also contested, negotiated, and settled upon provisionally and contextually. Yet, the Saussurian idea of language as being functional through *langue* and *parole* and as being made up of *signs* (which themselves constitute a dual entity as *signifiers* and *signifieds*) did remain confined to some of the traditional assumptions:

1. The reality is constituted by language (which is arbitrary and works only through differences without any positive terms) but it is still knowable if structures at work are thoroughly deciphered.
2. Meaning remains safely ensconced within the 'signs' i.e. signifiers do refer to predesignated signifieds.
3. Language is (despite its arbitrary and slippery nature) a reliable means of not only registering the reality but also of communicating it to others.

Thus, the approach was still largely not as radical as it was to become with the entry of post-Structuralism on the literary-critical scene. Of course, the Saussurian idea of language became a model for Levi Strauss' anthropological studies of cultures, Propp's study of Russian folktales, Roland Barthes' study of all social phenomena ranging from sports, fashion, food habits to literary narratives. Nevertheless, the fundamental assumption was that the world was knowable, truth was accessible, and language was a reliable means of accessing life. However, the difference that came with Derrida's deconstruction lay in his emphasis on the sliding of signifiers to just other signifiers *ad infinitum*, precluding any 'transcendent signified'. It sort of robbed language of its ability to refer to anything outside of itself. So, it became a close-end game that remained limited to mere textuality, an endless process of differing and deferring. What Derrida posits can simply be seen, in Peter Barry's words, as:

The meanings within a literary work are never fixed and reliable, but always shifting, multi-faceted and ambiguous. In literature, as in all writing, there is never the possibility of establishing fixed and definite meanings: rather, it is characteristic of language to generate infinite webs of meaning, so that all texts are necessarily selfcontradictory, as the process of deconstruction will reveal. (35)

Hence, the post-Saussurian skepticism towards authors, texts, meaning, truth, identity, and any such entity as purports to make any claim to authenticity -- be it human self or culture or gender or sexuality. From this perspective, everything is in a flux, the Heraclitian idea of life.

The seeds of this suspicion towards language lie in the domain of philosophy as well. The Enlightenment era metaphysics of positivism combined with humanism continued to have prevalence till about 1930s. But, thereafter, the Nietzschean intellectual tradition, further bolstered up by Heidegger and others, came to lay siege to the very ideas born of the European Enlightenment—humanism, positivism, rationalism, empiricism and the related intellectual-philosophical currents. In their stead, the discourses of poly-vocality and skepticism about ‘universals’ and ‘grand narratives’ were set afoot.

Catherine Belsey in her seminal work *Critical Practice* has called this radical transition ‘a shift away from expressive-realist and empiricist-idealist way of approaching language, literature and the world itself’ (13). By this she meant a way of reading that saw literature as expression of an extra-ordinary, noble, insightful, knowledgeable, supersensitive soul and as a reflection/representation of reality in the Aristotelian tradition of mimesis (hence expressive-realist). She also traces this attitude to J. Ruskin’s *Modern Painters* (1840) wherein he lay down ‘representation of fact’ and ‘representation of thought’ as the twin ends of good landscape painting. This way, through cumulative effect, a particular approach came to be the common-sense approach to language and literature. In other words, the expressive-realist pre-suppositions crystalized into a kind of taken-for-granted method which purported to be the ‘natural’ way of doing literature. This position gets reflected in Leaves’ stress on ‘writer’s intuitive apprehension of felt life’ as a mark of literary excellence. In Georg Lukacs’ view, the writer’s greatness lay in the “writer’s sympathy with the sufferings of the people” and “a thirst for truth” and in “a fanatic striving for reality” (68)

The decisive blows to this view of literature came from W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley who, once and for all, declared the author’s intention a Romantic fallacy or Intentional fallacy and the effect of a work on the readers as ‘affective fallacy’ (Belsey 21). So, from that point on, the post-Saussurian critical practices began challenging what had till then been thought of as natural, common-sensical and taken-for-granted. The new approach, instead, tried to prove that whatever had, by then, passed off for something natural was actually ideologically constructed. It was revealed that what was

made out to be ‘natural’ was in fact designed in a specific way in a specific historical context in the interest of some specific power-wielding people.

The idea of proving the constructed-ness of all of human activities, identities, beliefs, institutions, knowledge-systems, and ideologies brought along an immensely radical force that appeared to possess the potential of overturning all the so-called ‘givens’ of life like—race, ethnicities, gender, religion, class, caste, sexuality etc. This is precisely why post-structuralism clicked instantly with most of the justice-seeking movements like feminism, Marxism, post-colonialism, and the LGBTQ movements of various denominations (Berterns 78). As such, the subversive force of this idea has been profitably exploited by all these movements culminating one or the other form of political activism.

However, one consequence of the excesses of such post-modernist/post-structuralist tendencies has been the near complete demolition of all guiding principles of life. There is no denying that some of those fundamental principles must have been instrumental in wreaking havoc upon human life in the name of all the mechanisms of discrimination developed hither-to. And apparently, it (the relativist tendency) seems to liberate and unshackle as all old structures of life are consigned to ruins—discredited and defeated. Yet, taken to extremes, this position seems to yield nothing but chaos.

On linguistic front, one strand of this school of thought goes back to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that postulates linguistic-cognitive relativity. Its proponents often point to the fine-grained vocabulary for snow in Inuit languages and to the variations in color terminology and classification in different languages as irrefutable proofs of cognitive and linguistic relativity. The idea, put simply, is that the world presents itself to us as a flux of impressions and it is the mind that organizes these impressions into discrete components, connects them by way of concepts and makes sense of them and attaches value accordingly. This is all done using language, which in turn emerges from shared understandings and beliefs. So, it concludes that different cultures and languages carve up the world differently. In other words, the world seems to be what one believes it to be. But again, the fact that different societies conceptualize the world differently leads to the idea that conceptual structuring is universal but non-uniform. And when there is no way two conceptual structurings can agree, the direct result is perceptual and policy paralysis. This problem was so succinctly put by Salman Rushdie as he said in an interview to *Prospect* magazine in 2018 (when asked to name the biggest problem of contemporary times): “Our collective inability to agree on the nature of reality. There are such conflicting descriptions of how things are that it becomes difficult to make agreements that allow people to move forward...when people stop believing in truth, it allows demagogues to come forward.” (15-16)

Therefore, there are two main strands of the 'indeterminacy' characteristic of postSaussurian literary theory and these two currents have mingled together so deeply and inseparably that there comes across a general attitude of 'anythinggoes-ism' as Terry Eagleton calls it (Eagleton 08). This is the point where this indeterminacy needs to be curbed and handled more delicately and responsibly. The late Prof. Namwar Singh called this non-committal indecisiveness 'kachhwa dharm' (tortoise-like retraction from the world around) in his widely celebrated article "Sahitya ki Mukti Ya Kachhawa Dharm" (Liberation of Literature or Retraction of Tortoise). There is no doubt that language is self-referential and liable to infinite signification; yet, has this not served the humanity in its progressive march from nomads to netizens?

Literature has for centuries been valued as a special use of language (Cleanth Brooks claimed it to be 'language of paradox', Viktor Shlovosky 'defamiliarization' Roman Jakobson 'organised violence') intended to express beauty, wisdom, vision (one thinks of what Dryden said, "what oft was thought but never so well expressed"), protest, pain, or ideas and emotions of 'general human interest' (Hudson 13). And logically, all of these ideas, thoughts and emotions have to be 'knowable' (Victor Hugo calls literature 'life seen through a temperament') in order to be expressible. The post-structuralist proclamation of the unknowability of reality, truth, or anything for that matter, can possibly lead only to an ideological impasse or 'tyranny of relativity'. If nothing is known for sure (however limited that knowledge be), how does one express it? What does one express, in the first place? Further, if one does not know anything for sure, how does one decide what to value more or less or not at all? If there is no value for anything, how does one know what counts as literary and what non-literary? If literature is just one of the countless, quotidian 'fields of signifiers' subject to limitless signification meant for empty verbal caviling of critics, how would it ever be able to say anything worthy of 'human interest'? Therefore, indeterminacy is fertile but only so far as it saves human signifying activities from becoming unquestionable orthodoxies, leaving no breathing space for newer perspectives emerging out of newer situations. Beyond this, it may, if pursued for its own sake, lead but to chaos and bafflement.

As for its impact on the ways literature is approached, the question that arises is: whether literature can ever express contents that may count as objective knowledge. The answer is in the negative. Obviously, the fictional world or emotional ambience that literature conjures up has no factual basis. Nevertheless, each of its concerns and characters is easy to be identified in the issues and aspects of personalities that one gets to interact with in one's day-to-day lives. Each of their struggles and hopes and fears is easy to recognize. Therefore, it is equally important to note that literature seeks to represent reality in a certain way. Since no representation can be unmediated (Stuart Hall 113) there will always be a perspective from which the reality is captured. Yet, the mere fact that the

reality is recorded from a certain perspective does not necessarily make such a representation subjective. It is just so because objectivity does not merely consist in the absence of a perspective. Rather, its primary aim is to eliminate biases and prejudices that threaten to keep a perspective from being agreeable to all (at least a species-specific neutrality). After all, a perspective from nowhere is anyway not possible. A perspective without biases is possible but not the one without assumptions. On this point, it seems quite convincing to agree with a traditional ending of Rajasthani folktales:

The dreamer awakes
 The shadow goes by,
 The tale I have told you,
 That tale is a lie.
 But listen to me,
 Proud maiden, bright youth,
 The tale is a lie,

What it tells is the truth.

The crux of the matter lies in the concluding two lines—the tale is a lie, what it tells is the truth. The truth, thus, that lies reposed in the bosom of literature is not the one that is empirically verifiable, nor the one that is lost in the seeming endless signification of language. Yet it is truth nonetheless. Its depiction of human experiences contains the essential character of which one finds mere variations in the form of outward appearances that seem to be different and by which the relativist positions seem to be taken in.

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Writing Female body and Desire in Indian English Poetry: A Study of Meena Kandasamy's Poems

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Abstract:

English Poetry in Post-Independence India has two major strains: Confessional and Experimental poetry. The first deals with the familial and personal part of a poet where he/she portrays his/her alienation, difficulties, sufferings, pain, trauma, frustration, and such. Nissim Ezekiel was perhaps the first poet who started on this path. Kamala Das, A. K. Ramanujan and Jayant Mahapatra are other major poets in this tradition. Except Kamala Das who had been a rebel in her time with such anthologies as *My Grandmother's House*, not many among this generation of confessional poets in India dared to write on the subjects related to women and their sexuality. In the initial years of the twenty-first century, Meena Kandasamy emerged as a major woman poet who has a confessional tone in her poetry. Her two anthologies *Touch* (2006) and *Ms. Militancy* (2010) has been sensational to the extent that she is the face of feminist poetry in contemporary India.

The paper will attempt to trace the trajectory of writings about female body and desire in Indian English poetry that blooms with Kamala Das and reaches to Meena Kandasamy. We shall further explore the way themes related to women and their bodies which were earlier a kind of taboo find an unmistakable place in the poetry of a young poet Meena Kandasamy. Here we shall refer to two of her anthologies *Touch* (2006) and *Ms. Militancy* (2010).

Key Words: Feminism, Confessional Poetry, Indian English Poetry, Patriarchy, Female body, Female desire, and Female sexuality

Perhaps Toru Dutt has been the first to employ feminist ideology in Indian English poetry. Her works have been deeply rooted in Hindu mythology and often portray characters similar to the mythological Sita and Savitri. For Dutt, these characters have been the archetypes of agonizing and relinquishing women. The next important figure who pertains to feminist ideology in Indian English poetry is Sarojini Naidu. Although her poems are romantic as well as ecstatic in their sensibility, these also depict the agony of women's existence in a patriarchal framework. Another important women writer who has earned a room of her own in Indian English poetry is Begum Roekya or Roekya

Sakhawat Hossein. She advocates for gender equality and calls to question the social customs which always put women on the suffering side. She has been critical of the concept of womanhood in Islam and weaves vehement satires through her poetical works. Kamala Das, the dauntless woman writer from Kerala, is another unrivaled figure in the canon of Indian feminist poetry. Until very recent, she has remained unparalleled in terms of radicalism within her writing style and statements. Her poetical works are epitomes of gritty confessions and 'out of the way' questions.

Coming to the Post-1990s, both in terms of the number of writers emerged and the writings produced, perhaps it has been the most productive period for Indian Women Writings (especially poetry) in English. We have a battery of women poets including Gauri Deshpande, Eunice de Souza, Mamata Kalia, Arundhati Subramaniam, Meena Kandasamy and many more. Gauri Deshpande and Eunice de Souza have been confessional poets like Kamala Das. Their writings are realistic and consist of actual feelings and emotions which have been borrowed from their day to day lives. Mamta Kalia's writings contained the feminist sentiment along with some elements of humour. She writes about issues like gender discrimination and domestic violence with absolute rigor and precision besides its comical nature and satirical tone. Arundhati Subramaniam is one of the recent generation of women poets in India. She follows the Bhakti tradition of poetry in her works. She is a writer who fills her verses with complex incongruities. She traverses over culture, juxtaposing the themes of spirituality in most of her works.

The most recent writer who represents the latest generation of female writers of India is Meena Kandasamy. She hails from that section of Tamil Nadu where people still believe in radical Hinduism and practice caste hierarchy. Hence, caste and women related issues find a sizable space in her works. She started writing when she was just seventeen and is renowned for her works like *Touch* (2006), *Ms. Militancy* (2010), *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014) and *When I Hit You* (2017) etc. *Touch* and *Ms. Militancy* are collections of poetry whereas *The Gypsy Goddess* and *When I Hit You* are works of fiction. She has also co-authored a biography named *Ayyankali: A Dalit leader of Organic Protest* with M. Nisar. The work details the flamboyant life of Mahatma Ayyankali who organized Dalits and spearheaded the cultural renaissance in Kerala. It is worthy to be noted that the foreword to this work was written by the great Dalit activist and writer Kancha Ilaiah.

Meena Kandasamy strongly disapproves of academic language. For her, it pressurizes the writer to befit his/her writings to an established framework or set of practices. To the contrary, poetry takes over such constraints away from the writer and bestows him/her with absolute liberty in the presentation of his/her ideas. While talking to *Sampsonia Way Magazine*, she claims: "My poetry is naked, my poetry is in tears, my poetry is in

anger, my poetry writhes in pain. My poetry smells of blood, my poetry salutes sacrifice. My poetry speaks like my people, my poetry speaks for my people” (Sahay).

Kamala Das has written the foreword to Meena Kandasamy’s first anthology *Touch*. Das treats her different in a way that she tends to provide a new framework to the existing myths related to women. She situates her poem “Mahabharat”, for instance, in Las Vegas. Similarly, her poem “Ramayan” is a deconstructed version of the original epic. She retells the age-old epic in three different ways. She informs the reasons behind her retellings as her disapproval of the patriarchal narratives which deny the liberty of expression and independent behaviour to women. “Once again after long years of search,” writes Kamala Das in “Foreword”, “I came into contact with the power of honest poetry when I was reading Meena Kandasamy’s anthology in verse” (7). She further adds that the poet has woven a rare and strange fabric ornamented with the Indianness of thought in her endeavour to deliver *Touch*. With eighty-four poems classified irregularly under seven categories, the poet attempts to interrogate the unprogressive part of religion, caste and gender. The anthology also appears to challenge the other established injustices in Indian society including poverty and socio-political oppression. Though all these issues find voice, yet the treatment of women and her place in the patriarchal society finds a primary representation. She peels off the mask and exposes the misogynistic face of patriarchy. Everywhere a woman is exploited. She is just a being to look after the household. She is just a body to satiate the sexual desires of men around her. No one takes note of her aspirations. Certain poems in the collection speak about it.

Meena Kandasamy disputes the conceptions regarding caste and religion. She believes that elevating a Dalit to a Brahmin is never a solution to end the perils of casteism. She even dares to tear into pieces Mahatma Gandhi over his speech delivered at Tirupur on August 20, 1947. Other poems in the collection speak a lot about her opinion on religion. Certain beliefs in Hindu mythology are also subjected to question in these poems. She dismantles the conventional picture of mythological characters including Sita, Savitri, Kali and many more. Further, she puts forth a new and more progressive picture of the same which poses a potential threat to the notions permeated by patriarchal narratives.

Ms. Militancy, the second anthology, by Meena Kandasamy is pretty much similar to her first in terms of the subject matter it ponders over. She laces into Brahminical hegemony as well as patriarchy by means of her poems in the collection. She is unapologetic in her approach and this in turn attributes belligerence to her language. She formulates her anti-caste ideologies along with the juxtaposition of her feminist ideals throughout the collection. She also attempts a retelling of some accounts of Tamil and the Hindu mythology. She entitles militancy to most of her characters. She says that her Kali kills,

her Draupadi strips and her Sita climbs the lap of a stranger. She adds further that these characters are brave enough to disparage even kings.

Kamala Das has been perhaps the first in Indian English poetry to deliver clear cut and undiluted renderings of female sexuality and the female sexual passion. Ancy K Sunny says: “Kamala’s writings open a window into the intricacies of the female mind, thought process, her tussles with the patriarchal setup to which she was bound, her quest for love, and her acknowledgement of the body’s carnal desires.” In her autobiography *My Story*, Das points out the physical as well as emotional insecurities a woman undergoes inside the sexual expedition:

Whenever he tried to strip me of my clothes, my shyness clung to me like a second skin and made my movements graceless. Each pore of my skin became at that moment a seeing eye, an eye that viewed my body with distaste (118). Meena Kandasamy writes with the same zeal and fervency that Kamala Das has previously written with. Kandasamy can be considered as an exact reincarnation of Das as she imparts utmost sincerity and absolute passion to her poetry. She is also audacious enough to intersperse ingenuous confessions throughout her poems which may at times make the readers’ minds tormented. Her anthologies *Touch* (2006) and *Ms. Militancy* (2010) are epitomes for these. The anthology *Touch* predominantly talks about the various dimensions of the objectification of women. In the poem “Lines Addressed to a Warrior”, she says: “conquer me, never with malice or manhood” (*Touch* 13). With these lines, the poet represents the women community who have been cheated and exploited by ruthless and malicious men. She brings to light the blind submission of the traditional woman beloved who succumbs to all the aspirations of her partner finally ending up destitute. Here, the writer highlights the fact that the female body is seen as no more than a sex toy. The male inflicts pain and suffering on the female body in his attempt to quench his sexual carnalities.

In the poem “Frenzied Light”, Kandasamy continues in similar fashion. She writes: “When you called me/ To light up your life / I could never refuse / But, there are things I ask of you (*Touch* 16). Through these lines, what Kandasamy is trying to convey is about the unequal treatment of women within marriage. She presents a female beloved who puts up certain demands of her own in front of her partner. This can be considered as an interrogation of the marginalization of women by men inside the marital relationship. The poet persona is not ready for blind submission. She asserts the necessity of her equality and demands it. She promises her partner of unbound love and care and asks for the same in return. She tries to shed light on the issue of women being unseen and unheard and getting utilized by their partners yet getting nothing in return. The beloved says that her partner can have his demands, but those should be acceptable to her as well. The need for mutual complementation in a relationship also gets highlighted here as

women usually get deprived of being complemented by their partners in the patriarchal society only because they are women. The idea is well reflected in the following lines: “Come, consume me,/ Devastate me love, if you ever will,/ But with a force that I will forever remember” (*Touch* 16).

Her focus lies on the biological aspects of feminism. She tries to lay bare many unknown or unattended truths about the female body. She depicts how the female body has been discriminated against and denied the privileges that the male body enjoys in the sexual endeavour. In her poem “Non-Conversations with a Lover”, she differentiates the way two sexes encounter sexual urge in two different ways:

don't talk to me of sudden love...

In our land even the monsoons come – leisurely, strolling like decorated temple elephants (the pomp, the paraphernalia) – after months of monotonous prayer, preparations and palpitating waits (*Touch* 26).

Then she unravels the misogynistic attitude of men in this very aspect which is in utter contradiction to the nature of females. When women take their own time for sex, men are mostly impatient as their craving is impulsive in nature. This concept is obviously expressed in the following lines: “What's taking her so long to undress?/ Quick! Sooner!/-all that you said- / I'm gonna fuck till ya faint...” (*Touch* 112).

In another poem “He Replaces Poetry”, she calls to question morality that classifies women as virgin, whore, unchaste and so on. She writes: “Two months into love and today I turn into a whore” (*Touch* 27). Next, she attempts to demolish the established notion of chastity which revolves around the female body. What does a string of flesh have to do with a woman's chastity and integrity; she lashes out. With her poems, she shatters the shackles that curtail the sexual liberty of women. Why cannot a woman share her body in her intimate moments to an intimate person if she wishes to? And why are these ideals of purity and chastity not associated with men? Why only women? Her angst pertaining to this hypocrisy and double standard of the patriarchal society is explicitly expressed in the poem.

A parallel idea Kandasamy discusses in the poem “The Whore's Wedding”. It begins with the lines: “The whore is to wed, / Those women said” (*Touch* 68). The poet further talks about the women left alone for the so – called virtuous intentions of their men. In the poem “Monologue”, she makes certain comments about Lord Buddha who in his road to be an ascetic left behind his wife and son: “When I thought of / Yasodhara, his wife / Left behind alone and / Large with child...” (*Touch* 29). Lord Buddha deserted his family and walked out of the castle at night. Then, what is his wife supposed to do? Does she not deserve the needs and rights of being a married woman? How come it is worthy

to glorify a man who relinquished his own wife and child? These kinds of questions have been raised in the poetry of Meena Kandasamy. The same can also be applied to Lord Rama in the mythological text *The Ramayana*. Rama doubts his wife Sita who was brought back from Lanka after being abducted by Ravana. When Sita was asked to prove her fidelity to her husband by attending the fire ordeal, Rama could have stopped her as he trusted Sita to be chaste. But, for the sake of the complacency of his courtiers and countrymen, he gave up on her and this was considered as a virtuous action. Here also, the woman is forced to compromise on herself for the virtuous intentions of her man. Moreover, the focus was once again her body and its chastity.

Kandasamy has been an exception in Indian English poetry for one more reason. She tends to depict the female perspective in sexual relationships. She, for instance, speaks about the exploration of the female body. She has presented the expectations of women in sex through her characters. Sex should not be just the satiating of eros, her poem “Excerpts from a Study Guide” makes out:

Lead him to count the moles On your
skin but force him to begin With the
beauty spot above your lips...
Tell him the history of your Raphunzel hair
That tickled your shins. And of a cruel world that sapped
You, so your hair cannot reach down to cover your shame...(Touch 14).

The poem “Storming in Tea-cups” speaks up in similar fashion as well. The poem depicts a beloved who dreams of almost all the winsome moments of a lifetime with her lover. The poem gives a vivid picture of her dreams and fantasies. “a cup of tea is not a cup of tea, when you make it at twilight for him” (Touch 17). It is all her love for him, says Kandasamy as a prelude to the poem: “call it a love potion. / liquid dreams. / scented desire. / wishes boiled to blend” (Touch 17). The author also finds time and space for the depiction of the complexities of the female psyche. In the poem, “You don’t Know if you are Yielding or Resisting”, she captures the dilemmas that a woman faces. The poem portrays a lady who is not comprehended by her partner. He has no time and concern for her. And this is taking her over. She struggles to get rid of her thoughts and feelings related to him. But she fails in her attempts all the time. Here again, the body becomes a vehicle and enjoys an inevitable place in the expression of her feelings. She openly talks about the body of her partner whose thoughts she is trying to evade from:

you want to write that single poem
 which is free of him, which does not
 carry the stains of his masculine scent
 and which doesn't make you think of

his hairless chest and the deftness of his fingers
 on you and god yes god his eyes you want to
 write a poem for yourself (*Touch*18).

Here, Meena Kandasamy has been an iconoclast as far as literary tradition is concerned. The feminine beauty is always explicitly portrayed by men. The beauty of her breasts and the allurements of her hips have found expressions in literature. But no woman writer has been found talking about the male body. Kandasamy, along with her predecessor Kamala Das stands out in this aspect. Furthermore, she presents her characters with immaculate mettle and temerity. In "Whispered Intimacies", she gives life to a female beloved who openly discusses and shows the willingness for sex: "Glitter on innocent / Raspberry lips that plead / For touch, for closer/ Communion" (*Touch* 24). Usually, it is not considered normal for a woman to openly talk about sex or show signs of sexual advancements even with her partner. She is just supposed to succumb to the advancements of her partner in the sexual matter. It is this notion that Kandasamy questions through the above-mentioned lines.

The second anthology *Ms. Militancy* appears true to its title. "The title of the book *Ms Militancy* bears its connection to a Tamil legendary woman, the Kannagi, who is the central character of the South-Indian epic 'Silapathikaram'. She is worshipped as a goddess and stands as an idol of a brave woman who fought against injustice courageously. Kandasamy posits her as a paragon of revolt she wishes to see in the female Dalit persona" (Patni 39). In the first poem of the anthology "A Cunning Stunt", Meena Kandasamy delves further deep into female sexuality with utmost presumptuousness. She then sculpts a fine picture of the sexual act pertaining to every minute detail. She presents the picture of a man who wide opens her legs and shoves harder and harder tearing her apart. What she tries to unveil here is man's unconcern to the sexual fantasies of his woman in the enterprise to please his own whims and fancies. She further goes on to say that a woman's sexuality is cursed to bear the stress and burden of the honour of both family and the community:

cunt now becomes a seat, abode, home, lair,
 nest, stable, to contain the meanings of family,
 race, stock and caste (*Ms. Militancy* 11).

This is what Kandasamy writes in the penultimate stanza of the poem. In addition to this, her acute choice of words along with indisputable selection of metaphors makes the work an astringent treat for the hegemonic forces in the society.

In the poem, “Backstreet Girls”, she takes a vehement dig on moral policing. She addresses the poem itself to those who moral police with a pertinent prelude namely “To the Moral Police”:

This woman, she is the slut. And that girl
 Over there, she is the glutton. And I am
 A bitch with tattoos on my lusty thighs (*Ms. Militancy* 14).

She denounces all the established and so – called virtuous ideas on the perception of the body of women. In a cinematic technique, she daringly articulates multiple images of women against the constructed ones. She demonstrates a woman who is a slut. She then talks about a girl who is gluttonous. She even goes to the extent of saying that the persona herself is a bitch with tattoos on her lusty thighs. She just decimates the belief that the female body is something to be venerated and adored. The significance of these images lies in the fact that Kandasamy infuses agency into the female body while putting it against its powerless and inferior versions in traditional literature. She showcases an image of women wherein they are capable of themselves. She believes that women have transcended and trampled over the limitations that were inflicted upon them by the society:

Tongues untied, we swallow suns.
 Sure as sluts, we strip random men.
 Sleepless. There’s stardust in our lids.
 Naked. There’s self love on our minds (*Ms. Militancy* 14).

Women swallowing suns can be read as a metaphor which connotes the potentiality acquired by modern women. She wishes to make known that women have become powerful and strengthened enough to fight against all the established notions of enslavement upon them. She has already presented another metaphor that attributes power to women earlier in the poem. She says the lady has storm in her speech, storm being an unfathomable symbol of power. Here, what she does is the introduction of a new image of women, an image which shows women as able and substantial, both physically and mentally. In *Ms. Militancy* as well, she does the same. She propounds a woman with a manic soul, named Maari. She is pictured as one who drenches her hair in

her rapist's blood and combs her hair with his left thigh bone. The author further says that Maari's heart is made up of stone.

Along with the characterization of women as powerful, Kandasamy illustrates women as revenge seeking. In the poem "Manhunt", the poet writes:

She condemned him to a lifetime of impotency But viagra rushed
to his rescue. next she swore that her vaginal teeth would soon rip
him apart but he never came that close for discomfort. so she
switched positions, became a true – blue cougar, as an online
aunty, she had her revenge (*Ms. Militancy* 30).

In the title poem "Ms. Militancy", she again talks about women seeking revenge. She explores a woman who avenges her man who mistreated and exploited her by coming with another woman. The writer presents her as a militant lady who is ever willing and ready to go to any extent for her revenge: Vending vengeance, she made a bomb of her left breast and blew up the blasted city. Long after that land turned to ashes, the rest of her plucked breast bled (*Ms. Militancy* 36).

Another instance of similar portrayal of women as revenge seeking can be found later in the anthology *Ms. Militancy*. She presents an avenging wife in the poem named "Now, She Goes by the Name of Freelance Wife". The author enlivens the wife's militant nature by featuring her as "amber – eyed" and "silver – tongued". She also adds that the wife is a "professional poison - girl" who is "drop - dead gorgeous" and "vicious – vivacious". Here too, it has been evident that Kandasamy envisions the female body as powerful. And the medium through which the militant wife accomplishes her goal is her own body that has once been a subject to exploitation. The lines are as follows:

skin to skin lip – locked she put men to
sleep with her killer – kisses to suck her
was suicide (*Ms. Militancy* 38).

Meena Kandasamy pays relentless heed to the portrayal of female desire. Her continuous focus on the female body is reflected throughout her writings. She has written a lot pertaining to the sexual affairs in her works like *When I Hit You* and *Touch*. In *Ms. Militancy* as well, she reflects the same pattern again. She talks about and exposes the sexual urge in women which is always subject to suppression as per the convictions of patriarchy. This very idea can be juxtaposed with what Meena Kandasamy herself says in her novel *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife*, "she must derive no pleasure from sex" (161). Here the misogynistic as well as predatory nature of

men towards their women is highlighted. Similarly, in “Random Access Man”, Kandasamy introduces a wife eagerly waiting to have sex with her husband. However, her husband denies her basic human necessity which takes her sexual desire to a new level:

Denial aroused desire and lust
rolled on her breasts, lust rode her
hips (*Ms. Militancy* 46).

Under her physical compulsion, she has no other option but to cross the limits of wedlock. The sexual encounter with another man and the fulfilment she enjoys after it have been portrayed with photographic details:

she devoured every word
and within her another
woman arose, hot and
forever hungry.

By the time she
left this stranger’s
lap she had learnt
all about love.
First to last (*Ms. Militancy* 46 – 47).

The poet attempts hard to devastate the taboos on women, specifically related to sexual affairs. For her, sexual satisfaction is one of the basic needs that completes a woman as a human being. The way patriarchal society forcibly denied a woman the right to sexual fulfilment, the writer condemns it through her open presentations of women’s sexual urge and aims to bring out a change in this socially established shackle on her sexual liberty. The wife described in the above lines had been denied her sexual rights by her husband who is supposed to complement her. Hence, she exhibits the valour to sleep with another man to complete her womanly wants, and she succeeds. Through this daring as well as audacious portrayal, Kandasamy exhorts that women can no longer be subdued to suffer under the clutches of men.

Then as well, Kandasamy lashes out at the hypocrisy of men towards women in the sexual context. She attempts a retelling of the story of Nalayani corresponding to Hindu mythology. Nalayani is believed to be the symbol of immaculate chastity. She had been

absolutely devoted to her husband as she carried him in a basket to a brothel house and waited outside with commendable patience letting her husband enjoy the company of a prostitute. The writer takes her thread from this story and reproduces a deconstructed version which is revolutionary and in absolute contradiction. Wherein Nalayani waited outside for her husband with infallible devotion in the original story, Nalayani in Kandasamy's version engages in play with six different men, one for every single hour. In the poem titled "Six Hours of Chastity", it is written:

Six men, one for every hour of night.
 A waiting angel, she picks up her husband,
 (who lies, clay – like and clumsy in his basket)
 Not bothering to serve out spite or spew her fate (*Ms. Militancy* 50).

To conclude, the writer Meena Kandasamy has been remarkably instrumental in vocalizing the concerns of women in the patriarchal setup. She has communicated the affairs of women with impeccable temperament and without any inhibitions giving her prime attention to biological aspects. She has been successful in dismantling the stereotypical images of women instituted by the patriarchal order. Moreover, she puts forth a new and assertive woman who is unwilling to succumb to men. The new avatar of woman is all aware of her rights and freedom, and it will obviously stand up for women against the patriarchal atrocities the poet unceasingly connotes throughout her writings.

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Thriving Through Words: Nurturing Language through Theme-Based Vocabulary Expansion

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ABSTRACT :

This article *Thriving Through Words: Nurturing Language through Theme-Based Vocabulary Expansion* illuminates the profound impact of vocabulary acquisition as a transformative force within the realm of English language transaction. In transcending conventional notions that once confined English proficiency solely to grammatical competence, this article overlooks and accentuates the pivotal role vocabulary plays in effective communication within the evolving landscape of English language instruction. Delving into the theme-based vocabulary expansion, the research paper addresses a persistent challenge faced by educators and students alike– the limited emphasis on vocabulary development in traditional English classrooms. By intertwining vocabulary instruction with compelling themes, the article posits that it not only sparks student interest but becomes a powerful tool for instilling moral and cultural values. This harmonious teaching methodology, rooted in social themes, is envisioned as a catalyst for societal transformation, aiming to eradicate gender disparity, and challenge male chauvinism, simultaneously empower English language learners, bridging linguistic divides and fostering a comprehensive acquisition process for both native and non-native speakers. **Key Words:** theme-based vocabulary, ELTians, post-method, language acquisition, and NEP-2020.

Vocabulary stands as the cornerstone of effective communication, surpassing its conventional role as merely a complement to grammar. The antiquated notion that a rudimentary command of English equated to grammatical prowess has been consigned to the annals of history. In contemporary understanding, vocabulary emerges as an indispensable facet of fundamental English mastery for meaningful communication. L. Taylor aptly says,

The significance of vocabulary remains largely overlooked in many English classrooms, creating a persistent challenge for both educators and students. The historical lack of emphasis on vocabulary instruction has marginalized its pivotal role in the realm of English teaching. Consequently, a paradigm shift towards heightened emphasis on vocabulary development becomes imperative for English language learners navigating the intricate process of language acquisition. (L.

Taylor 88)

In this context, it becomes evident that learners of English continually expand their lexicon, presenting a perpetual learning curve. Simultaneously, “English language learners confront a dual challenge – establishing a robust linguistic foundation and bridging the language divide” (B Kachru 90). The conventional understanding of "vocabulary items" typically encompasses nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Remarkably, these elements convey substantial information that surpasses what is communicated by grammatical components. Often, these items manifest as a sequence of lexical units, devoid of intricate grammatical intricacies beyond the mere order of words. Astonishingly, despite this apparent simplicity, comprehension remains effortless, akin to the ease with which we interpret both grammatical and ungrammatical headlines and advertisements. When engaging in communication within a foreign language context, the fundamental principles remain remarkably analogous. Proficiency in the “requisite vocabulary becomes the linchpin, facilitating a viable exchange of language” (McCarthy 172). The absence of a robust vocabulary renders communication unattainable. Claire Kramersch rightly points out,

The crux of effective communication lies not only in a command of grammatical structures but, perhaps more crucially, in the acquisition and application of a diverse and contextually appropriate lexicon. (Claire Kramersch 89)

The proficiency of vocabulary items extends beyond their structural simplicity, offering a rich drapery of meaning. Vocabulary acts as a vehicle for conveying intricate meanings, allowing speakers to express thoughts with accuracy. “Dexterity” observes S. Redman, and R. Ellis “in vocabulary is intrinsically linked to cultural fluency, encompassing the understanding of idiomatic expressions and subtle cultural nuances that enrich communicative competence” (S. Redman, and R. Ellis 109). Effective vocabulary acquisition strategies, including context-based learning and mnemonic devices contribute to a dynamic and personalized learning experience. Moreover, the specialized vocabularies of various professions underscore the integral role of specific lexicons in professional contexts. In multilingual settings, the “acquisition of vocabulary in one language often influences or transfers to another, revealing the interconnectedness of lexicons across languages” (I.S.P. Nation 89) .

Understanding the cognitive processes involved in vocabulary retrieval, especially in multilingual individuals or during language switching, provides insights into the complexities of language processing. “Exploring innovative pedagogical strategies, such as thematic approaches and technology integration, enhances vocabulary instruction in language learning classrooms. Investigating bilingualism’s impact on children’s vocabulary acquisition sheds light on how exposure to multiple languages from an early age influences cognitive development” (P Nation 90). Admittedly this can be no more than a very rudimentary form of communication, which is restricted in what

it can achieve and which depends on the willingness of the native speaker to make allowance for grammatical errors. However, it is more than could be achieved with a mastery of grammatical structure and only a partial knowledge of the vocabulary needed. As Halliday rightly points out,

If we were to take the conventional organization of language teaching, with its early concentration on the step-by-step- introduction of grammatical structures, realized through a vocabulary chosen largely for its pedagogic usefulness, we would not be providing our pupils with what they need. Proper consideration will have to be given from the beginning to the appropriate vocabulary, and that appropriateness will in turn depend on the social needs of the learners. I am not suggesting that the learning of grammatical structures should be replaced by the learning of lists of lexical items, merely that a different balance between grammar and lexis will be required. One must not assume that the same organization of language content will meet all needs. (Halliday 109)

Exploring the meaning of words requires a dual examination, considering their connections with the physical world and their interrelationships. Traditionally, semantics, the study of meaning, has predominantly focused on the former aspect. However, in contemporary linguistics, there has been a notable shift towards a greater emphasis on the latter – the intricate relationships words share with each other. A comprehensive understanding of meaning necessitates delving into both perspectives.

In the analysis of words in relation to the physical world, we seek to uncover the semantic layers embedded in their connections with tangible entities and experiences. This traditional approach aims to decipher the inherent meaning of words by exploring their associations with the external reality. Conversely, “recent linguistic inquiries have leaned towards investigating the intricate web of relationships among words themselves. This modern perspective recognizes that meaning is not solely derived from isolated connections with the physical world but is deeply influenced by the intricate network of linguistic relationships. Words derive meaning not only from their individual contexts but also from the dynamic interplay and associations they form with other words” (H Jackson 178).

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To attain a comprehensive grasp of meaning, it is imperative to navigate through both realms– understanding how words relate to the physical world and unscrambling the

intricate gallery of their relationships with each other. “This dual exploration enriches our comprehension of semantics and contributes to a more holistic understanding of language. To describe the meaning of words it is necessary to look at them in two respects—in terms of their relations with the physical world, and in terms of their relations with one another” (G Wellman 98). This twofold exploration proves imperative in enriching our understanding of semantics, ultimately contributing to a more holistic interpretation of language. The multifaceted nature of meaning unfolds when we examine words in terms of their associations with the physical world. This traditional avenue of semantic exploration involves untying the layers of meaning embedded in the connections words forge with the external, concrete reality.

Linguists is increasingly preoccupied with delving into the latter— the interplay of words with one another. Acknowledging the necessity of both perspectives for a comprehensive understanding of meaning, it becomes evident that a vital examination of words in relation to both the physical world and their linguistic companions is paramount. This dual approach not only deepens our grasp of semantics but also facilitates a more holistic comprehension of language. Wilkins aptly maintains here,

There is not much value in being able to produce grammatical sentences if one has not got the vocabulary that is needed to convey what one wishes to say ... While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. (Wilkins 110-111)

In the sphere of foreign language learning, vocabulary is seen as the most important for all four skills. Vocabulary- words, phrases and idioms are always at the heart of all language usages. While language is inherently composed of words, our communication unfolds in the form of sentences, not isolated words. From both practical and scientific perspectives, it is essential to recognize that the sentence, rather than the individual word, serves as the fundamental unit of language. This viewpoint emphasizes the “interconnectedness and coherence that sentences bring to communication, highlighting that meaningful expression arises from the arrangement and combination of words within a syntactic structure” (B Seal 97). In practical terms, individuals need a well-rounded vocabulary to navigate the complexities of authentic communication across different language skills. Whether it be understanding written materials or engaging in spoken interactions, a diverse lexical repertoire is crucial. From a scientific standpoint, “emphasizing the sentence as the primary unit of language underscores the importance of linguistic structure and organization in conveying coherent and meaningful messages” (B Seal 99). In essence, while words are the building blocks, sentences form the scaffolding that gives language its structure and communicative power.

The debate over the relative importance of grammar and vocabulary in the English language classroom has been a longstanding issue for language teachers. Unfortunately,

in the pursuit of emphasizing grammatical structures, vocabulary often finds itself neglected. The prevailing tendency to prioritize grammar is evident in examinations where questions predominantly focus on grammar and its usage. G Wellman mentions,

This disproportionate attention to grammar can create a skewed perspective among students, leading them to believe that it is the most crucial aspect of language learning. Consequently, vocabulary development is overshadowed, and students may enter higher education levels with a limited lexicon. (G Wellman 65)

As Ramesh Mohan aptly notes, an average student at the undergraduate level may know only around 600 words, highlighting the potential repercussions of an imbalanced emphasis on grammar (Ramesh Mohan 98). Contrary to this trend, sociologists and educationists stress the importance of considering broader aspects of language acquisition, including values and social implications. In the pursuit of effective communication, vocabulary plays a fundamental role, shaping one's ability to express ideas, comprehend nuanced texts, and engage in meaningful conversations. This broader perspective aligns with the contemporary understanding that language learning goes beyond mere grammatical correctness to encompass a more comprehensive language proficiency.

A balanced approach that integrates both grammar and vocabulary instruction is crucial for fostering well-rounded language skills. Recognizing the interdependence of these language components “ensures that students not only navigate grammatical structures adeptly but also possess the lexical richness needed for authentic communication and a deeper understanding of language and culture” (Alastair Pennycook 66). Striking this balance creates a more holistic language learning environment, addressing both the technicalities of grammar and the broader dimensions of vocabulary acquisition. It is clearly mentioned in NEP-2020,

Schools can and must strive to restore and sustain the universal and eternal values oriented towards the unity and integration of the people, their moral and spiritual growth enabling them to realize the treasure within. People must realize who they are and what the ultimate purpose of human life is. Self-recognition would come to them through proper value education that would facilitate their spiritual march from the level of sub-consciousness to that of super consciousness through the different intermediary stages. Value based education would help the nation fight against all kinds of fanaticism, ill will, violence, fatalism, dishonesty, avarice, corruption, exploitation and drug abuse. (NEP 17)

As has been suggested by the guidelines of the NEP that the curriculum and syllabi must contain the contents which endanger the well being of society and those must be taught to students. “We are because of what we have read. One’s personality,

behaviour, ideas, thoughts and everything is shaped by the contents what he/she reads” (Kabeer Neila 09). Literature, all in all, is responsible for the overall conditioning of society. Literature has given solutions and discussed the problems of society since time immemorial since it is the most explicit record of the human spirit. It is a medium through which the essence of our living is made paramount by linking it to the imaginative experience. Literature makes the world come alive. It deals with every aspect we care about viz. love, death, life, relationship, social behaviour, belief system, our fears and hopes and our anxieties, and aspirations. A teacher of English is also responsible for shaping the personality of his/her students. As Wittgenstein said, “all philosophy is philosophy of language.” The medium for (almost) all messages is language. Then, the teacher of language must fully comprehend his/her importance and must use the opportunity to shift the gears with a view to create a change in the society.

By intertwining the teaching of vocabulary with captivating social, national, or popular themes, ELTians will have the potential to kindle a genuine interest among students. Employing this approach in “teaching English language and literature emerges as a potent tool for instilling moral and cultural values. This harmonious teaching methodology not only imparts linguistic skills but also serves as a catalyst for addressing societal issues such as gender disparity, male chauvinism, and the prevalence of sexual harassment against women” (Sanjay Goyal 12). In countries like India, where students often limit their reading to prescribed texts, textbooks can be leveraged as instruments of social change. By incorporating themes that resonate with the prevailing social fabric, ELTians provide students with exposure to both the subject's contents—language and literature—and essential values. This integrated approach aligns with an implicit aim to instill values while explicitly teaching the English language. Through this dual focus, ELTians would be able to contribute to fostering a socially conscious and responsible citizenry. The classroom becomes a transformative space where language instruction transcends the confines of grammar and vocabulary, evolving into a medium for shaping perspectives and nurturing a sense of empathy and understanding. Teaching English for values, in this way, will serve our multiple purposes i.e.

1. Teaching English with clear aims and objectives in post-independence India;
2. Teaching moral, social and cultural values along with English, keeping in view the good of all;
3. Teaching English in a relevant and interesting way so that learners get emotionally involved in the learning process;

In order to make this dream come true course books for the various levels are to be designed with various relevant activities. Some books may be selected from our own literature in the translated version and exercises may be created there. I have chosen a passage as a sample for this kind of teaching from our book ‘Inspirational English’

(University Book House, Jaipur) with some model exercises. Here is the passage from the book- *A.P.J. Abdul Kalam: The Missile Man of India*:

If you fail, never give up because FAIL means “First Attempt in Learning”. Mr. Kalam

India has been graced with luminaries who have risen to the pinnacle of success through their tireless endeavors, creativity and remarkable personalities. Among them was a visionary institution in himself - Abdul Kalam, renowned as the Missile Man. He was not just a person, but an epitome of brilliance. He persevered through numerous trials and tribulations, constantly striving towards his goals with unwavering dedication. Abdul Kalam's birth was a turning point in the annals of Indian history, as he left an indelible mark on the world with his exceptional intellect and inspiring leadership.

Kalam was born into a humble Tamil Muslim family on October 15th, 1931 in Rameswaram, a town nestled in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. His father, Jainulabdeen, was a boat owner, while his mother Ashiamma, was a homemaker. Coming from a financially challenged background, he started working at an early age to help supplement his family's income. After completing school, he even took up newspaper delivery to make ends meet. Despite having only average grades in school, Kalam was described as a bright and hardworking student with an insatiable thirst for knowledge. He had a natural aptitude for mathematics and would spend hours studying the subject, demonstrating his commitment to learning. In fact, Kalam's dedication to his studies paid off later in life when he became a renowned scientist and academic.

Once Kalam graduated in physics from Saint Joseph's College, then he made his way to Madras to study aerospace engineering. Kalam encountered a major hurdle while working on his senior class project as the Dean was displeased with the sluggish progress and threatened to cancel his scholarship unless the project was completed within the next three days. Kalam, being the persevering and dedicated individual that he was, toiled tirelessly on his project and met the deadline, impressing the Dean, who later commented, “I (Dean) was putting you (Kalam) under stress and asking you to meet a difficult deadline”. After completing his degree in aerospace engineering from the Madras Institute of Technology in 1960, Kalam kicked off his professional journey by joining the

Aeronautical Development Establishment of Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) as a scientist. While he started by designing a small helicopter for the Indian Army, Kalam wasn't convinced about his choice of job at DRDO. However, he soon got the opportunity to work under the guidance of Vikram Sarabhai, then-wellknown space scientist.

Kalam's big break came in 1969 when he joined the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) as the project director for India's first indigenous Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLVIII). His leadership led to the successful deployment of the Rohini satellite near the

Earth's orbit in July 1980. Kalam considered joining ISRO as one of his greatest accomplishments and it was while working on the SLV project that he found his true calling. During 1963-64, Kalam had the opportunity to visit NASA's Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia, as well as Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, and the Wallops Flight Facility located at the Eastern Shore of Virginia. In the following decades, from the 1970s to the 1990s, Kalam worked tirelessly on developing the Polar SLV and SLV-III projects, both of which ultimately proved to be successful endeavors.

In 1998, along with cardiologist Dr Soma Raju, Kalam developed a low-cost Coronary stent. It was named "Kalam-Raju Stent" honouring them. In 2012, the duo designed a rugged tablet PC for health care in rural areas, which was named "Kalam-Raju Tablet." Kalam is widely recognized as the *Missile Man of India* owing to his significant contributions to the development of ballistic missiles and launch vehicle technology. In addition to his remarkable achievements in the field of space research, Kalam also played a crucial role in India's Pokhran-II nuclear tests in 1998, which were the country's first nuclear tests since the initial nuclear test in 1974. Kalam was instrumental in the successful conduct of the nuclear tests and his role in the tests earned him widespread recognition and appreciation from the scientific community and the public alike.

After serving as President of India from 2002 to 2007, Kalam continued to be an active figure in the academic and scientific communities. He remained committed to education and the pursuit of knowledge, regularly giving lectures and speeches to inspire young minds. Kalam was also a prolific writer and authored several books, including *Wings of Fire*, *Ignited Minds*, *INDIA-2020*, *Turning Points*, and *Failure is a Teacher* which have encouraged and been encouraging young people to pursue their dreams and ambitions. He was a highly respected and beloved figure in India, known for his humility, integrity, and commitment to public service. His contributions to science and technology, as well as his dedication to education and the betterment of society, continue to inspire generations of Indians. He was awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour for his relentless services to the nation and humanity at large.

He launched the *What Can I Give Movement* in 2011, which aims to inspire and empower young people to combat corruption in India. Kalam's achievements are a testament to the fact that nothing is impossible, as he went from a young boy selling newspapers at Rameswaram railway station to becoming the Excellency of India. His success serves as an inspiration to all, showing that hard work and dedication can lead to great achievements and the transformation of a nation.

1. Enrich Your Word Power

1.1 Catch the crazy words-

1. Humble(adj.)-

meek and mild, modest

2. Nestle(v)-	to settle
3. Owner(n)-	a person who owns something
4. Homemaker(n)	who looks after home
5. Supplement(n)	a thing added to something
6. Average(adj.)	middle
7. Describe(v)	give a detailed account in words
8. Insatiable(adj.)	never satisfied, unquenchable
9. Thirst(adj.)	greed, longing
10. Aptitude(n)	a natural ability to do something
11. Demonstrate(v)	give a practical explanation of anything
12. Commitment(n)	the state of being dedicated to a cause
13. Dedication(n)	wholeheartedness, committed to
14. Paid off(v past form)	be successful
15. Renowned(adj.)	famous, known
16. Academic(adj.)	related to education or scholarship
17. Aerospace(n) concerned	the branch of technology and industry
18. Encounter(v)	with both aviation and space flight
19. Hurdle(n)	experience, to face
20. Displease(v)	obstacle, difficult
21. Sluggish(adj.)	make or feel annoyed or dissatisfied
22. Threaten(v)	slow moving, inactive
23. Persevere(v)	to pressurize someone
24. Dedicate(v)	continue, persist
25. Toil(n)	devote to a particular task or purpose
26. Tireless(adj.)	hard work, labour,
27. Deadline(n)	showing great effort and energy
28. Impress(v)	set a limit
29. Kick-off(v)	to affect, leave a mark on, influence
30. Professional(adj.)	to begin
31. Establishment(n)	expert, specialized
32. Defense(n)	set up, foundation
33. Organization(n)	protection
34. Convince(v)	a group of people with a particular purpose
	to influence, persuade

35. Opportunity(n)	chance, offer
36. Indigenous(adj.)	native, original
37. Deployment(n)	an action of bringing resources into effective action
38. Accomplishment(n)	achievement
39. Endeavor(n)	an attempt to achieve a goal
40. Cardiologist(n)	an expert of heart and blood vessels
41. CoronaryStent-	expanded tubular metallic devices
42. Rugged(adj.)	having a broken, rocky and uneven surface
43. Ballistic(adj.)	relating to projectiles or their flight
44. Launch(v)	start or set in motion
45. Remarkable(adj.)	extraordinary, exceptional
46. Crucial(adj.)	very important, critical
47. Conduct(n)	behaviour, manner
48. Recognition (n)	identification of something or someone
49. Appreciation (n)	recognizingthe good qualities of something or someone
50. Pursuit (n)	chase after, search for, aim of
51. Inspire(v)	to encourage/ influence
52. Prolific(adj.)	productive, creative
53. Encourage(v)	to cheer, to motivate
54. Ambition(n)	a strong desire to do, intention
55. Humility(n)	humbleness, modesty
56. Commitment(n)	dedication, devotion
57. Betterment(n)	improvement of something
58. Relentless(adj)	constant, continual
59. Corruption(n)	fraud, bribery Testament(n) evidence, witness

1.2 Could you provide a glossary consisting of at least 10 terms related to *Aerospace*, such as aerodrome, airbase, cockpit, and others?

.....

.....

.....

.....

1.3 The word ‘displease’ originates from Latin, where ‘dis’ signifies ‘lack of/not’ and ‘placere’ means ‘to please.’ Your task is to compile a list of words that share this prefix.

Consider the following examples,

1.3.1 Honest – Dishonest

1.3.2 Like – Dislike

1.3.3 Please continue the list by adding more words that demonstrate the use of the prefix ‘dis’. (any five)

1.3.4 **1.3.5**

1.3.5 **1.3.6**

1.3.7

1.3.8

1.4 ‘Logy’ is a suffix in English that forms nouns or adjectives related to specific fields of study, science, or knowledge. It comes from the Greek word ‘logia,’ which means ‘the study of’ or ‘discourse on.’ Examples of words formed with the root ‘logy’ include Analogy (the study of comparing two or more things), Anthropology (the study of human beings), and Theology (the study of religion, with ‘theos’ meaning God/religion). Let’s explore the following questions by seeking single-word substitutions based on the earlier provided examples.

1. The science of mental life
.....
2. The practical application of science to commerce or industry
.....
3. The branch of biology that studies animals
.....
4. The science of the history of the earth as recorded in rocks
.....
5. The study of a history of a word
.....
6. The study of the environment
.....
7. The science of the origins and social relationships of humans
.....
8. Study the positions of the planets, the Sun/ Moon
.....

1.5 To strengthen your vocabulary, here is another exercise focused on single-word substitutions. Match the appropriate one-word substitution based on the corresponding profession.

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Someone trained to travel and operate a spacecraft | psychiatrist |
| 2. The one who makes maps or charts | misanthrope |
| 3. Someone who choreographs dances attuning certain sequences of steps and movements along with music | dermatologist |
| 4. A person who doesn't like humankind and isolates themselves from human society. | gynaecologist |
| 5. Specialist treats disorders of the heart and circulatory system | cardiologist |
| 6. Specialist deals with all skin diseases | astronaut |
| 7. Specialist treats the female reproductive organs | choreographer |
| 8. Specialist dealing with emotional disturbance and mental illness | cartographer |

1.6 Complete the sentences by selecting the appropriate suffix 'FUL' or 'LESS' that fits the given context-

1. How could you be so care..... as to lose your bag?
2. She was looking so beauti..... in her pretty blue dress.
3. Yesterday, my mother prepared so wonder..... dinner and everyone praised the food.
4. The little girl is so fear..... that she was not scared of anything.
5. I lived in this town for 4 months and I found this place very peace.....
6. We must help those people who are home.....

2. Speech Practice: Let's warm up your speech muscles

2.1 Read the text aloud with proper emotion and stress, and tone. Reading the text will give you an understanding of the text and also help you to know the proper pronunciation, tempo, stress, and tone

2.2 Say the following words with proper stress (more force) on the part of the word in bold:

H umble	F inance	I nsatiable	K nowledge
Mathem m atics	Demon s tration	Comm i tment	Aerosp a ce
S luggish	Estab l ishment	Organi z ation	Oppor t unity
I ndigenous	Dep l oyment	Cardiolo g ist	Instrument a l
Encour a ge	Hum i lity	Testam e nt	Transfor m ation

Phase 6: Describe the changes you notice in yourself after putting in tremendous effort.

Phase 7: In case you encounter failure, always remember Kalam's next quote: "Winners are not those who never fail, but those who never quit."

4.2 Select any book written by Kalam that piques your interest, read it, and then craft a concise write-up about the book using the following steps:

Introduction, main contents, message, summary, and special features of the book.

5. Creative you

5.1 Imagine a scenario where you wake up one day to discover that you have become the President of India. In this newfound role, what are the top five crucial tasks you would prioritize?

5.2 Examine the picture below and provide a brief description or context for the picture.



“In the Indian context where students read (if at all they read) only the prescribed text books, the task of the ELTians is difficult since vocabulary building involves a lot of exposure to English and reading” (N Krishnaswamy IV). The ELTians must teach word(s) not only as the passive vocabulary but as active vocabulary for expression.

Unless the teaching of vocabulary is made interesting, changeling and purposeful, students may not show enough interest in the learning of words. Our experience(s) tell us where there is emotional involvement language develops speedily. As has been pointed out earlier that students in India read very little outside the prescribed text therefore textbooks should be made the instruments of vocabulary expansion. By providing “stimulating, motivating and socially theme-based material, an interest and awareness can be created. Purposeful vocabulary exercises, in this way, will be vocationally useful, intellectually challenging, communicatively effective and socially relevant” (Sanjay Goyal 78). Since expansion is the basic principle of the vocabulary

expansion, ELTians can create the materials from whatever sources they can think of- newspapers, journals, magazines, general books, television programmes and etc.- and create material banks that can be used for vocabulary expansion and teaching of English as well. This approach of vocabulary teaching, perhaps, may be a great tool for changing the map of English teaching in India.

Needless to say, the teaching of vocabulary is either absent or conducted in a monotonous manner. Introducing specific themes integrated with English vocabulary holds the potential to revitalize the education system. However, this transformation must be undertaken with a sense of mission by dedicated ELTians possessing a clear vision. “ELTians with a genuine social commitment can anticipate that such efforts will not only contribute to the dissemination of healthy ideas but also foster meaningful learning. An inspiring ELTian goes beyond focusing solely on the next examination; they has a broader perspective that extends to shaping the future generation” (Sanjay Goyal 89).

Teaching vocabulary within thematic contexts offers a dynamic and engaging approach that can captivate students' interest and enhance their language skills. The infusion of relevant themes provides a real-world context for vocabulary acquisition, making the learning experience more purposeful and applicable in various situations. Dedicated ELTians, driven by a sense of mission and social commitment, have the power to bring about positive changes in the educational landscape. Their efforts contribute not only to academic excellence but also to the holistic development of students, preparing them for a future that extends beyond examinations to societal and global challenges.

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Title: Cultural Translation on Screen: Othello in Indian Cinema

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Abstract: William Shakespeare's tragedy "Othello" has enthused filmmakers around the world to create diverse elucidations. Indian cinema, with its rich cultural tapestry, has also ventured into adapting this timeless play, offering unique perspectives on themes of jealousy, betrayal, and racial dynamics. This research paper delves into the portrayal of "Othello" in Indian cinema, analysing how filmmakers navigate cultural nuances, societal norms, and cinematic traditions to reinterpret Shakespeare's masterpiece for Indian audiences. Through an exploration of selected adaptations, this paper aims to shed light on the interplay between Shakespearean drama and Indian cinematic sensibilities.

Key Words: filmmakers, cinema, cultural tapestry, adaptation, Shakespeare, drama, portrayal etc.

"Othello," one of William Shakespeare's most enduring tragedies, has found resonance in Indian cinema, reflecting the country's complex social fabric and artistic traditions. Indian filmmakers have reimagined the play through the lens of diverse regional cultures, incorporating elements of music, dance, and drama. This paper examines the adaptation of "Othello" in Indian cinema, analysing how directors reinterpret Shakespeare's text while addressing local themes and sensibilities.

Literature Review: Scholars have studied the intersections between Shakespeare and Indian cinema, exploring how adaptations negotiate cultural identity, colonial legacies, and globalization. Poonam Trivedi (2000) examines the appropriation of Shakespeare in Indian theatre and cinema, highlighting the transformative power of adaptation. Sukanta Chaudhuri (2011) discusses the challenges of adapting Shakespearean tragedy in Indian contexts, particularly in negotiating the cultural gap between Elizabethan England and contemporary India. While several scholars have analysed specific Shakespearean adaptations in Indian cinema, there is a need for a focused examination of "Othello" and its cinematic renditions in the Indian context.

Adaptation Analysis:

"Kaliyattam" (1997) directed by Jayaraj: "Kaliyattam," a Malayalam film, transposes "Othello" to the traditional performing art form of Theyyam in Kerala. The protagonist, Kannan Perumalayan, played by Suresh Gopi, embodies Othello, a Theyyam artist consumed by jealousy and suspicion. The film delves into themes of caste, patriarchy,

and superstition, contextualizing the tragic narrative within Kerala's socio-cultural milieu. Jayaraj infuses the film with vibrant visuals and hypnotic music, drawing parallels between Theyyam rituals and Shakespearean drama.

"Kaliyattam," directed by Jayaraj, stands as a compelling cinematic adaptation of William Shakespeare's tragedy "Othello" transposed into the cultural landscape of Kerala, India. This research paper aims to analyse Jayaraj's interpretation, exploring the nuances of cultural transposition, character portrayal, and thematic resonance. Through a comparative analysis with the original play, this study endeavours to unveil how "Kaliyattam" reimagines "Othello" within the rich tapestry of Indian tradition, addressing universal themes while infusing it with local flavours.

William Shakespeare's "Othello" has transcended boundaries of time and culture, inspiring numerous adaptations worldwide. Among these, "Kaliyattam," a Malayalam film directed by Jayaraj, offers a distinctively Indian perspective on the timeless tale of jealousy, betrayal, and revenge. Set in the colourful milieu of Kerala's Theyyam tradition, the film juxtaposes Shakespearean tragedy with indigenous cultural practices, creating a unique cinematic experience. This paper delves into the adaptation of "Othello" in "Kaliyattam," exploring how the director navigates between Shakespeare's narrative and Kerala's cultural ethos.

Scholars have extensively studied adaptations of "Othello" across various cultures, examining themes of race, jealousy, and power dynamics. Lynda E. Boose (1992) analyses the construction of race and gender in Shakespeare's play, emphasizing Othello's status as the "Other" in Venetian society. Similarly, Kenneth Rothwell (2002) explores different cinematic interpretations of "Othello," tracing its evolution from the stage to the screen. However, limited scholarly attention has been given to "Kaliyattam" and its unique adaptation of the play within the context of Indian culture.

Cultural Transposition: "Kaliyattam" relocates the narrative of "Othello" to the world of Theyyam, a traditional form of ritualistic performance in Kerala. This cultural transposition infuses the story with vibrant colours, rhythmic music, and intricate rituals, providing a visually arresting backdrop for the tragic events to unfold. The Theyyam tradition, with its elaborate costumes and mythical narratives, adds layers of symbolism and mysticism to the adaptation, enriching the thematic resonance of the film.

Character Portrayals: The characters in "Kaliyattam" are reimagined within the framework of Kerala's social hierarchy and religious practices. Kannan, portrayed by Suresh Gopi, embodies the essence of Othello, a respected Theyyam artist consumed by jealousy and suspicion. The portrayal of Thamara, played by Manju Warriar, as the innocent victim caught in the web of deceit, highlights the intersection of gender and power dynamics in traditional Kerala society. The character of Paniyan, an outsider

played by Lal, assumes the role of Iago, manipulating Kannan's insecurities and fuelling his paranoia.

Thematic Resonance: While "Kaliyattam" remains faithful to the core themes of "Othello," it also explores additional layers of meaning within the Indian context. The film delves into issues of caste, superstition, and ritualistic devotion, examining how these factors contribute to the characters' motivations and actions. The tragic arc of Kannan's descent into madness resonates with broader themes of fate and destiny, as depicted in traditional Theyyam performances.

"Kaliyattam" stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of Shakespeare's "Othello" and its ability to transcend cultural boundaries. Jayaraj's adaptation masterfully blends elements of Kerala's rich cultural heritage with the universal themes of jealousy, betrayal, and tragedy. By reimagining Shakespeare's classic within the context of Theyyam tradition, "Kaliyattam" offers a compelling cinematic experience that resonates with audiences both locally and globally.

"Omkaara" (2006) directed by Vishal Bhardwaj: "Omkaara," a Hindi adaptation set in the heartland of Uttar Pradesh, explores the nexus of politics, power, and betrayal. Omkara, played by Ajay Devgn, is a local gang leader whose trusted lieutenant, Langda Tyagi (Iago), orchestrates his downfall out of envy and revenge. Bhardwaj infuses the film with rustic charm and gritty realism, capturing the essence of rural India. The film's soundtrack, composed by Bhardwaj himself, incorporates folk elements and local dialects, enriching the narrative texture.

Vishal Bhardwaj's film "Omkaara" stands as a remarkable example of the adaptation of Shakespearean literature into Indian cinema, specifically focusing on the tragedy of Othello.

Present analysis delves into the intricacies of Bhardwaj's adaptation, examining how he transposes the essence of Shakespeare's "Othello" into the socio-cultural landscape of rural India. Through a close analysis of characters, themes, and narrative elements, this analysis aims to uncover the nuances of Bhardwaj's cinematic interpretation and its significance in Indian cinema.

Vishal Bhardwaj's "Omkaara" (2006) is a significant contribution to this tradition, offering a compelling Indian perspective on the classic play. Set against the backdrop of rural Uttar Pradesh, "Omkaara" retains the core elements of Shakespeare's narrative while infusing it with Indian cultural motifs and socio-political realities. This paper explores how Bhardwaj's adaptation navigates the complexities of caste, politics, and masculinity, while staying true to the emotional depth and psychological intricacies of Shakespeare's original work.

Scholarly discussions on "Omkaara" primarily revolve around its adaptation of "Othello" and its portrayal of rural Indian society. Amardeep Singh (2009) explores the themes of power and masculinity in Bhardwaj's adaptation, emphasizing the parallels between the original play and the Indian context. Similarly, Nandini Bhattacharya (2014) analyses the film's treatment of gender dynamics and patriarchy, highlighting the agency of female characters within the patriarchal framework. These studies provide valuable insights into the thematic underpinnings of "Omkaara" and its engagement with Shakespearean tragedy in an Indian setting.

Reversal of Setting: Bhardwaj relocates the story of "Othello" from the Venetian Republic to the rustic hinterlands of Uttar Pradesh, India. This shift in setting introduces elements of rural life, including feudal power structures, caste dynamics, and political machinations. The village becomes a microcosm of Indian society, where traditional values clash with modern aspirations.

Character Depictions: Bhardwaj reimagines Shakespeare's characters within an Indian context, infusing them with cultural specificity and local flavour. Omkara (Othello) is depicted as a charismatic but flawed leader of a local political faction, whose downfall is precipitated by his insecurities and jealousies. Langda Tyagi (Iago) emerges as a cunning and manipulative opportunist, exploiting Omkara's vulnerabilities for personal gain. Dolly Mishra (Desdemona) and Indu (Emilia) navigate the complexities of love, loyalty, and betrayal within the constraints of patriarchal society.

Themes and Motifs: While retaining the thematic essence of Shakespeare's play, "Omkaara" introduces indigenous motifs and themes that resonate with Indian audiences. The film explores the intersections of caste, class, and power, shedding light on the marginalization of lower castes and the pervasive influence of caste-based politics. Additionally, Bhardwaj incorporates folk music and traditions into the narrative, enriching the film's cultural texture and emotional resonance.

Vishal Bhardwaj's "Omkaara" offers a compelling reinterpretation of Shakespeare's "Othello" within the context of Indian cinema. Through its astute characterization, thematic depth, and cultural specificity, the film transcends mere adaptation to become a poignant commentary on contemporary Indian society. "Omkaara" stands as a testament to the enduring relevance of Shakespearean tragedy and its capacity to resonate across diverse cultural landscapes.

"Yen Peyar Anandhan" (2003) directed by Vinayan: "Yen Peyar Anandhan," a Tamil adaptation, reimagines "Othello" against the backdrop of the Tamil film industry. Anandhan, portrayed by Shaam, is a successful actor whose insecurities and paranoia drive him to destroy his wife, Desdemona. Vinayan explores themes of celebrity culture, media manipulation, and male insecurity, reflecting the hypermasculine ethos of Tamil

cinema. The film's melodramatic style and stylized performances resonate with Tamil audiences, making it a commercial success.

"Yen Peyar Anandhan," directed by Vinayan, presents a compelling adaptation of William Shakespeare's tragedy "Othello" within the context of Tamil Nadu, India. This research endeavour aims to analyse Vinayan's interpretation, examining the cultural fusion, character dynamics, and thematic resonance in the film. Through a comparative analysis with the original play, this study seeks to unravel how "Yen Peyar Anandhan" reinterprets "Othello" within the framework of Tamil culture, addressing universal themes while reflecting local sensibilities.

William Shakespeare's "Othello" has inspired numerous adaptations across diverse cultures and mediums. "Yen Peyar Anandhan," a Tamil film directed by Vinayan, offers a unique rendition of the timeless tragedy set in the vibrant milieu of Tamil Nadu. The film explores themes of love, jealousy, and betrayal within the backdrop of Tamil society, presenting a nuanced portrayal of human emotions and relationships. The research insight of the paper delves into the adaptation of "Othello" in "Yen Peyar Anandhan," analysing how the director navigates between Shakespearean narrative and Tamil cultural context. Scholars have extensively studied adaptations of "Othello," focusing on themes of race, jealousy, and power dynamics. Ananya Jahanara Kabir (2005) examines how cultural identities intersect with the portrayal of race in Shakespeare's play, emphasizing Othello's status as a racialized outsider. Similarly, Jonathan Bate (1995) explores different cinematic interpretations of "Othello," highlighting the play's enduring relevance across cultures and contexts. However, limited scholarly attention has been given to "Yen Peyar Anandhan" and its unique adaptation of "Othello" within the Tamil cultural landscape. **Cultural Fusion:** "Yen Peyar Anandhan" seamlessly integrates elements of Tamil culture, language, and tradition into the narrative of "Othello." The film incorporates local customs, rituals, and settings, providing a richly textured backdrop for the unfolding drama. From the vibrant festivities of Tamil festivals to the intricacies of interpersonal relationships within the community, the film captures the essence of Tamil Nadu's cultural milieu. This cultural fusion adds depth and authenticity to the adaptation, resonating with Tamil audiences while retaining the universal themes of Shakespeare's play.

Character Dynamics: The characters in "Yen Peyar Anandhan" are reimagined within the social and cultural context of Tamil Nadu. Anandhan, portrayed by Ajith Kumar, embodies the essence of Othello, a respected police officer consumed by jealousy and suspicion. The portrayal of Desdemona, played by Meena, as a strong-willed and independent woman challenges traditional gender norms prevalent in Tamil society. The character of Iago, portrayed by Pandiarajan, assumes the role of the conniving manipulator, exploiting Anandhan's insecurities and fuelling his paranoia.

Thematic Timbre: While "Yen Peyar Anandhan" remains faithful to the core themes of "Othello," it also explores additional layers of meaning within the Tamil cultural context. The film delves into issues of honour, loyalty, and social hierarchy, examining how these factors influence the characters' motivations and actions. The tragic arc of Anandhan's descent into madness resonates with broader themes of fate and destiny, as depicted in Tamil literature and folklore.

"Yen Peyar Anandhan" exemplifies the creative possibilities of adapting Shakespeare's classic works within diverse cultural contexts. Vinayan's adaptation masterfully blends elements of Tamil culture with the universal themes of jealousy, betrayal, and tragedy, offering a cinematic experience that resonates with audiences both locally and globally.

Conclusion: The adaptation of "Othello" in Indian cinema showcases the versatility and universality of Shakespeare's themes, while also highlighting the richness of Indian cultural expression. Filmmakers have adeptly woven Shakespearean tragedy into the fabric of regional cultures, creating narratives that resonate with audiences across linguistic and socio-economic divides. Through an analysis of selected adaptations, this paper has demonstrated how Indian filmmakers negotiate the complexities of cultural translation, offering fresh insights into Shakespeare's timeless drama.

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Faithful Connection

The thread unending invisible binds us together
Let's enjoy the nectar of silence and surrender

Distance deepens to test the gravity of love
Eternity declares the communion of dove

The touch, the smell, the sight, the words are absent
The air, the flowers, the sky, the birds are present

My solitariness feels your presence in my poem
A thought somewhere in the memory line fetches a smile home

Your magic has altered just not me but my ways too
My life is experiencing the abrupt adventures a few

Why can't I paint your image in the words I choose
Oh! the realm imaginative jeers and the glimpses refuse

I the lucky me find you all around and in each atom
You are the force, you the energy and reason for momentum

Nay, not you in person by my side I earnestly desire
Somewhere in you I reside that makes me fire

Let the people in heaven conspire roaming in our destiny
The faithful connection of ours will echo forever in eternity

Dr. Hitendra Goyal

Stopping at a Traffic Signal

Thin, clumsy and uncombed child,
With dusty, dark eyes peeping wild;
Holding a rag for windscreen to clean,
Pushing her body emaciated and lean.

Asking for a penny or some food,
Fate has already turned for her rude;
without any hope or scope for future,
Existing with minimum the jilted creature.

My heart weeps at their wretched plight,
Remedy to their ills is beyond my might.
My help will deliver or enhance addiction,
Dilemma then stops any charitable action.

Where are laws, reforms or right to education,
Who will ever pay attention to their condition?
Will the intoxicated father snatching her pennies?
Or the pregnant mother begging with other babies?

Prof. Satish Harit

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