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~Editor's Note~

Dear Readers & Contributors,

Welcome to the January 2023 issue of IJELLS.

Officially IJELLS is eleven years old. These years have been filled with new ideas and an unimaginable learning curve. As we forge into our twelfth year of publishing, we take a minute to acknowledge all that has been achieved. 56 issues have been brought together, presenting an opportunity for emerging areas of research, young and seasoned writers and creative writing. The Chief Editor confesses that there was a special joy in designing the creative writing and cover pages for every issue.

Like the earlier issues, this issue too has many exciting ideas, and we at IJELLS hope that this issue is a step forward in our endeavour to bridge the gap between research and publishing.

On the cover page is a photograph of a ritual of bonfire celebrated during the South Indian festival of Sankranti called 'Bhogi Manta', symbolising the end of harvest and a new beginning. Deeksha Lakkaraju clicked the Image on 13-01-23.

If you have a suggestion for improvement, kindly mail it to dr.mrudulalakkaraju@gmail.com.

International Journal of English: Literature, Language and Skills - IJELLS extends its service into publishing books. We have started the enterprise IJELLS Publishing. This is a platform where we help authors self-publish their work. Check out our webpage at <https://www.ijells.com/ijells-publishing/> to understand more.

Happy Reading and Happy Sharing!

Dr Mrudula Lakkaraju
Chief Editor

~ Chief Editor~

Dr Mrudula Lakkaraju, Department of English, Osmania University is trained from EFLU and a Doctorate from Osmania University. She prefers the designation of a trainer and a writer. She has presented several academic articles to international and national seminars, conferences, journals, and magazines. Casual and creative writing is also her forte. She is a prolific reader and writer. Her areas of interest are Post colonial Literature, Gender Studies, Film Studies, English Language Teaching, Contemporary Literature and Communication Skills. Find her analysis on Film and other media at Facebook page '@thevisualcritique'.

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<https://www.microbilt.com/news/article/top-5-identity-verification-methods>

<https://imgbin.com/png/j525cncK/holding-hands-drawing-png>

~English Creative Section~

Identity

Soumee Bhaumik



Except the acceptance I craved for,
What was it that I asked?
From you and your tainted fingernails
Which keep denying my skin under them?
Amidst the whispers, I have tried to find my name;
Your lips would never utter the filth,
That drew in your wounds
And took you in.
Now my ears ring with everything but my name.
Have I forgotten it?
Did I leave it somewhere,
In between the books you pretend to read?
It has slipped away from the veil
You pretended to cherish.
My conscience has failed my mind,
So I've dug my hands in trying to label
The void, the vice,
The covered misogynistic ravines.
And if you stole who I was,
What could I offer myself?

Touch-Starved

Soumee Bhaumik

The obsolete human touch
And the proximity, the vintage stores
With their dusted collection
Of fingertips dragging along skin,
And more of the skin against skin,
Against flesh which moulds till it carves itself
To be neither mine nor yours,
Just a clump of who we are
As one.

To feel pulse by the latent touch on the same coin,
When you sell a soul for glory,
Buy another for legitimacy;
The decency has slipped past
Like a faltering father
And we are too grown,
To leave a grudge.

In isolation we spend the nickels of our lives,
Unaware of the confusion
Of recognizing heartbeats,
Unaware of the awkwardness
In beading our breaths together
On a string of compassion.
We rest ignorant
In our caskets
Which lie hollow with us.



~English Literature~

Ethnic Discrimination in Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss*

Bhanu Bhakta Sharma Kandel

Abstract

Ethnicity is often confused with 'race', the group of people who are often from the same ancestry. However, an ethnic group is, primarily, the connectivity of the people because of their kinship, culture, commensality, religion, nationality, physical features, linguistic and dress distinctiveness to other people. It strengthens the feeling of being related to others as brothers, sisters, parents, sons and daughters that one of the most powerful motivations of human kind. Ethnicity promotes the feeling of belongingness among the people because of similarities among themselves but it has been, in many cases, the main cause of differentiation and discrimination in different parts of the world. Ethnic groups, in fact, are the ones which are deprived of power.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Ancestry, Kinship, Culture, Commensality, Religion, Nationality, Language, Belongingness, Discrimination

Introduction

An ethnic group is a group of people that has a distinct culture of its own. It tends to be a group that shares an ancestral heritage even though it is not true in all the cases. Ethnicity refers to the common characteristics of a group of people that distinguish them from most other people of the same society. Ethnicity is based on commonality of ancestry, culture, language, nationality, or religion, or a combination of these things.

Ethnicity is “a shared racial, linguistic or national identity of a social group”. It can incorporate several forms of collective identity, including cultural, religious, national and sub cultural forms (Jary and Jary 191). However, Fredrik Barth argues that ethnicity represents the social organization of culture difference [...] that ethnic groups are not groups formed on the basis of shared culture, but rather the formation of groups on the basis of differences of culture (1). In other words, the cultural differences from other groups makes a cultural group an ethnic group and the contrast between “us” and “others” is what is embedded in the organization of ethnicity.

An ethnic group derives its identity from its distinctive customs, language, ancestry, place of origin, or style of dress etc. among others. *Encyclopedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite 2013* defines ethnicity as the identification of a group of people based on a perceived cultural distinctiveness. Ethnicity is often confused with 'race', the group of people who are often from the same ancestry. However, an ethnic group is, primarily, the connectivity of the people because of their culture, linguistic and dress distinctiveness to other people. Fishman says that ethnicity is experienced as being 'bone of their bones, flesh of their flesh, and blood of their blood' that is ethnicity is felt to be in the blood, bones and flesh (63).

The first primary marker of ethnicity is kinship, i.e. the presumed biological and descent unity of the group. Commensality, the similarity and/or sameness in feeding habit, eating together indicating a kind of equality is the second primary marker of ethnicity. The third primary marker of ethnicity is a common religious cult, implicating a value system, religious beliefs. These are the cultural markers of blood, substance and cult that separate an ethnic group from the others. The secondary ethnicity markers, according to Nash, are dress, language and physical features and (25); race and nationality also are the ethnicity markers among others. Geertz says that people's sense of self remains in actualities of blood, race, language, locality, religion or tradition (41). The feeling of being related to others as brothers, sisters, parents, sons and daughters is one of the most powerful motivations of human kind. Moreover, for Fishman ethnicity in the modern era is a consciously manipulated, massive and dynamic social factor (64) within the realm of belongingness which has been the major cause of discrimination of one ethnic group by the other.

Nepalis in India and their Issues

Nepalis, in India, are linguistic and cultural group because they have distinct cultural paradigms- customs, language, religious practices etc. They have spread all over India, and its north-east part is densely populated by them. Despite their majority in population, they have been the victim of different kinds of discrimination from all the corners- the government, non-Nepali population and, in the novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, author Kiran Desai herself in many instances.

India is a multi-cultural and multi-lingual country whose several states have been divided on this basis, where they can enjoy their political and cultural rights, like Nagaland, Tamil Nadu, Bengal etc. But there are several ethnic groups which are discriminated or whose demands are unheard from long time even if they have comfortable majority in the

region. This is true to Nepali ethnic group there in north-east India. Nepali people are in comfortable majority there and they have been living there for several centuries. In fact, historically, those parts of India were once part of Greater Nepal before Sugauli treaty.

Nepalis there share very unique cultural and linguistic commonalities. But, as an ethnic group, they have neither political right authority nor cultural recognition. So, they have initiated a movement- Gorkhaland movement- with a goal to shake the central government to woo their demands. They are ruled under the state of West Bengal that exercises political and cultural supremacy over the Nepalis. Their common sentiment is "we are constitutionally tortured. Return our land from Bengal" (Desai 139). They want a separate state based on their cultural identity and manage their own affairs themselves. To quote Desai "It was the Indian-Nepalis time, fed up with being treated like the minority in a place where they were the majority. They wanted their own country, or at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs."(10) The experience of the Nepali ethnic group living in India as presented by Kiran Desai is really frustrating and it can be observed and discussed differently.

Cultural Discrimination

Lolita's conflict with Nepali characters does not confine with Budhoo alone; she has got problem with other Nepali characters, Kesang- her maid. She does not have any other issue with her but she has very low opinion about her because she is from different cultural ethnicity. She describes her less than human race or has no human emotions though she did nothing wrong for her. She '...always professed that servants didn't experience love in the same manner as people like themselves' (76). But '...she actually felt jealous of Kesang' (76) when she tells her adventurous and joyous love affair and the event of eloping with her husband who pursued their love despite their cast difference. After hearing such adventurous love story she '...was forced to wonder now if it was she who had never experienced the real thing; never had she and Joydeep had such a conversation of faith' (76).

She also comments on Englishmen for whom she says "Very unskilled at drawing borders, those bloody Brits" (143). She also condemns Nehru for allowing several states to form. She takes state making as biggest mistake by Nehru. She says:

This state-making biggest mistake that fool Nehru made. Under his rules any group of idiots can stand up demanding a new state and get it too. How many new ones keep appearing? From fifteen we went to sixteen, sixteen to seventeen, seventeen to twenty-two.... (142)

Sai, one of the major female characters of the novel, is a sixteen-year-old girl. She is a granddaughter to Jamubhai Patel who is living his retired life on pension. He cannot afford standard convent school for her nor is he ready to send her to the municipality school for his prestige. So, he has managed home tuition for her which was being carried by Lolita when Sai was seven-years old. Lolita takes tuition class to her because "They lived on his pension, but still they need more money, what with endless repairs being done to the house, the price of everything rising in the bazaar, and the wages of their maid, sweeper, watchman, and gardener"(47). But when Sai's grade increases she finds it difficult to teach her Mathematics to her. So, she advises Jamubhai Patel to take another tutor for her. She is "...westernized Indian brought up by English nun, an estranged English living in India. The journey had started so long ago he continued in his descendants" (230). She has less idea about the Indian culture so it is far cry for her about the cultural minorities. Here '...she had no idea how to properly make tea this way, Indian way. She only knew the English way' (7). She has been kept in a missionary convent school from her early age till seven when their parents demised in a road mishap and could not deposit the fee. So, she has learned the missionary creeds from her early age: "And on top a flat creed: cake was better than laddoos, fork spook knife better than hands, sipping the blood of Christ and consuming a water of his body was more civilized than garlanding a phallic symbol with marigolds. English was better than Hindi" (33).

Gyan, the hero, a Nepali young man of his early twenties, comes as Sai's Mathematics tutor. His ancestors are from Nepal who "in 1800s his ancestors had left their village in Nepal and arrived in Darjeeling, lured by promises of work on a tea plantation" (158). He, in the novel, goes through the journey from cultural ignorance to awareness. He shows the cultural belongingness with people from the same cultural values. This awakening pushes him to pursue cultural movement. He, at first, does not know about the value of his cultural and political movement. He is a college graduate from a poor family. He has part time jobs for his survival. Coincidentally, he has to teach Mathematics to Sai. But their teaching turns into a romance.

Gyan enjoys the fancy relationship for a short time. But he starts to see the cultural and conceptual gap between them as time progresses. The gap starts to widen when Gyan gets inspiration and value about his culture and language from the movement. He gets himself involved to the movement, when he gets his old friends are going for it:

It was after the new year when Gyan happened to be buying rice in the market that he heard people shouting as his rice was being weighted. When he emerged from the shop, he was gathered up by a procession coming panting up Mantri Road led by young man holding their kukris aloft and shouting "Jai Gorkha." In the mess of faces he saw college friends whom he'd ignored since he started romance with Sai. Padam, Jungi, Dawa. Dilip. (172)

After this he starts to feel sorry about his past engagement with Sai with whom he has hardly any common ground besides the infatuation. He certainly starts to feel masculine about himself:

It was a masculine atmosphere and Gyan felt a moment of shame remembering his tea parties with Sai on the veranda, the cheese toast, queen cakes from the baker, and even worse, the small warm space they inhabited together, the nursery talk. (177)

Gyan makes joke over them and their accent with his friends. He is bored by the job and, most importantly, the people. He is looking for better job so he could leave the job and people.

How glad he would be if he could get a proper job and leave that fussy pair, Sai and her grandfather with the fake English accent and the face powdered pink and white over dark brown. Everyone in the canteen laughed as he mimicked the accent: "What poets are they reading these days, young man?" (193)

He always is very uncomfortable to be with culturally different people. "Eating together they had always felt embarrassed-he, unsettled by her finickiness and her curbed enjoyment, and she, revolted by his energy and his fingers working the dal, his slurps and smacks. The judge ate even his chapattis, his puris and parathas, with knife and fork" (194). He is surrounded by the culturally different people who have degraded feeling about his culture; starts to feel sense of exile. He is exiled in own homeland. About exile, Edward Said remarks:

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unbearable rift forced between a human being and native place, between the self and its true home, its essential sadness an never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exiles life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exiles

are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever.
(173)

He gets himself involved in the movement spontaneously as 'mystical experience of collective' described by Nietzsche. He cannot help to go with the rally and shout slogans along with the people of his own type culturally who share common sensation. He views it as the history in the process of making and replication of great movement of the world history. He cannot pull out himself out of this phenomenon:

As he floated through the market, Gyan had a feeling of history being wrought, its wheels churning under him, for the men were behaving as if they were being featured in a documentary of war, and Gyan could not help but look on the scene already from the angle of nostalgia, the position of a revolutionary....There he shouted along with the crowd, and the very mingling of his voice with affirmation he'd never felt before, and he was pulled back into the making of history. (173)

After the marching along the people '...he felt out to the experience again. How can the ordinary be changed?' (173). He has started to understand own cultural identity emotionally as Barker opines, "Identity is best understood not as a fixed entity but as an emotionally changed description of ourselves" (166).

Now Gyan has changed mentally about his essence and identity. He is no more a fancy romantic boy at all. He has got a path which way he has to proceed, which right one. For Gyan the fancy relationship is hard to resist. He does not go beyond the study. The cultural outlook of Gyan and Sai is the major cause for the gap in their relationship. As we know, Sai is a culturally hybrid girl who knows very little or does not know at all about the taste of unique cultural identity. Now, he starts to analyze her culturally.

She who could not eat with her hands; could not squat down on the ground on her haunches to wait for a bus; who had never been to a temple but for a architectural interest; never chewed a *paan* and had not tried most sweets in the *mithaishop*, for they made her wretch; she who left a Bollywood film so exhausted from emotional wear and tear that she walked home like a sick person and lay in pieces on the sofa; she who thought it vulgar to put oil in your hair and used paper to clean her bottom; felt happier with so-called English vegetables, snap peas, French beans, spring onions, and feared-

fread-loki, tinda, kathal, kaddu, parel, and the local saag in the market.
(194)

The couple's taking is not as sweet as previous dates. Gyan has started to condemn Sai for her blind following of western culture and religion where she has her own cultural values if she wants to celebrate. She likes Christmas and English New Year more than Durga Puja and Dussehra. Here, he complains about her interest in foreigner's culture. Gyan says "why do you celebrate Christmas? You're Hindus and you don't celebrate Id or Guru Nanak's birthday or even Durga Puja or Dussehra or Tibetan New Year" (179). He condemns her for being slave to west blindly running after them when she herself culturally as reach as or more than westerners. He says her "like slaves, that's what you are, running after the West, embarrassing yourself. It's because of people like you we never get anywhere" (179).

As she is not culturally fit for him, he decides to break the relationship. He slowly stops to go for the tuition. But, Sai still obsessed with him on the very day of gun robbery of her grandfather, she eagerly waits for his way but he does not come but the Gorkhland activists. She supposes that he is responsible about the incident as he knows about the bungalow and does not come on that specific day. She chases him to his hill house which is so pathetic. The final confrontation to each other ends up in the fight and there the novel ends. In other words, the Nepalis people and Gyan become culturally aware or awaken.

What is common about these non-Nepali Indians is that they are obsessed with western lifestyle and mannerism disrespecting their own cultural values. They suppose their way is absolute. They are culturally hybrid, probably so, they cannot endorse the sentiment of cultural value of minorities. They neither exactly follow the west nor enjoy their own culture. They are just nostalgic about English life. About the dominance of such characters in the novel a critic, Tom Wilhelmus, remarks:

All this is the substrate of Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* which documents the collapse of one kind of civility based nostalgically on English life, and the emergence of another rash, uncivil, chaotic, and violent at large in India today. In the wake of 9/11, it is an attempt to grapple with the human dimension of our current dilemmas by doing what novels have always done best, delineate the lives of a small caste of characters in reaction to the historic forces around them. (345)

This shows how much obsessed they are with the western living despite the violent experiences in the west with the western people. In fact, there is a big chunk of Indian

population that has not been independent culturally even after the independence of the nation from British Empire politically. One of the famous critics, Mandira Sen in *Women's Review of Books*, maintains:

The two elderly women who take up Sai – Lola, a widow and her sister Noni, who tutors Sai – live such a life. Their little rose – covered cottage is called Mon Ami, and its extensive landhouse perhaps the country is first broccoli path. At night, they listen to the BBC on the radio, drinking smuggled cherry brandy. They are conscious of their class; their superiority to Mrs Sen their Anglophonic neighbour, who is not quite as gentle as they are; their fellowship with Father Booty of the Swiss dairy, which makes real cheese, not the processed version that most Indians eat, and their relationship to Uncle Potty, a wealthy old Indian who is living off his inheritance. (27)

This is one of the best examples how much of hypocrisy these characters practice to make a mimicry of the western living and life style.

Linguistic Discrimination

Nepali people living in India have made an ethnic group on the basis of common language rather than common descent. Nepalis there are called 'Neps' because they have a common language- Nepali. Noni takes the very serious political issue of the linguistic right of the Nepalis people who are deprived of their linguistic opportunity because their language has not been included in the schools. They have to read some others' language- Bengali. She says "Obviously the Nepalis are worried,... "They've been here, most of them, several generations. Why shouldn't Nepali be taught in schools?" (143). Very obviously language is the part of cultural identity, and more importantly Nepali community in India is largely tied together because of their linguistic commonality.

She becomes sympathetic and supportive to Nepali community in the regard that how they are being suffered in neighboring states or countries. She argues with her sister that "...you have to take it from their point of view," said Noni. "First the Neps were thrown out of Assam and then Meghalaya, then there's the king of Bhutan growling against" (142).

Discrimination on the Basis of Commensality

Another character Jamubhai Patel also has derogatory approach for Nepali people and culture, though less than that of Lolita. He always complains about Nepali food- 'dhido' (porridge made of millet flour) which, he supposes, does stop Nepali people from being brilliant and intelligent but physical labourers. He believes "Costal people are more intelligent than inland people" (Desai 81) because of their feeding habit. He further describes:

Costal people eat fish and see how much clever they are, Bengalis, Malaylis, Tamils. Inland they eat too much grain, and it slows the digestion-especially millet- forms a big heavy ball. The blood goes to the stomach and not to the head. Napalis make good soldiers, collies, but they are not so bright at their studies. (Desai 82)

It is not based on the fact, rather attitude. He just plainly remarks about 'inlanders' and Nepalis as physical labourers who are not good in their studies to support. He puts forth an awkward reasoning which is unscientific. He needs to go through the dossiers where he can find several 'inlanders' and Nepali people have achieved in the sector of study or intelligence. So, it is entirely biased perception against Nepalis there.

Other minor Non-Nepalis characters also have similar sort of outlook for Nepali people. The cook of Jamubhai Patel also has low opinion for Nepali people. In this incident, the judge's cook also exhibits his attitude toward the Nepali ethnicity remarking "It is strange the tutor is Nepali" (Desai 81). It is because his impression about Nepalis that they just can be coolies and soldiers but they can never teach or do any higher level professions.

Discrimination on the Basis on Nationality

Nepalis there are not only discriminated on other excuses but also their nationality is highly suspected. Nonita suspects about the nationality of the army man, Budhoo, who fought for the country. She suspects he may rob her house and skip into Nepal.

Budhoo? But he's Nepali. Who can trust him now? It's always the watchman in a case of robbery. They pass on the information and share the spoils....Remember Mrs. Thondup? She used to have that Nepali fellow, returned from Calcutta one year to find the house wiped clean....Quick across the border, he'd disappeared back into Nepal. (50)

But ironically she is hugely dependent on servants who are Nepalis. She has very low view for Budhoo but she has "...trusted Budhoo for no reason whatsoever. He might murder them

in their nighties" (Desai 51) but she could sleep in nights because of Budhoo. Moreover, the name 'Budhoo' itself is a derogatory word to name someone that means 'not having common sense or wisdom'. Another minor character, Mr. Iyre, also remarks same in the novel. He thinks "Nepalis making trouble ...very troublesome people" (Desai 250). He, further, says "They should kick the bastards back to Nepal" (Desai 250). This shows the average perception of the Non-Nepalis Indians in the region towards Nepali people. On the other side, non-Nepalis are also live in a worried mentality after the Gorkhaland movement reaches at its height. They are so concerned about the possible consequences of the movement. Lolita, who is always negative about the people and their movement, has her own speculation about the possible outcome of the movement: "Those Neps will be after all outsiders now, but especially us Bongs. They've been plotting this a long while. Dream come true. All kinds of atrocities will go on- then they can skip merrily over the border to hide in Nepal. Very convenient" (Desai 141).

The writer makes us travel from India to America through Europe to show that there is cultural unrest in India because of Nepali ethnic people, which is not in other European or American countries. She has put all her effort to show that Nepali people are the ones who can't stand stability. In this respect, Wilhelmus has maintained: "Moving swiftly between New York, Europe, and India during the Indian-Nepali insurgency of twenty years ago, the novel is alive and luminous, compelling, and gorgeously written despite the ideological shrillness of our times" (Desai 345).

Nepali people have no permission to enter in the big bungalow of the retired judge that has made the bungalow a matter of curiosity for them. When the incident of gun robbery takes place, police searches the bungalow and Nepalis have an opportunity to have a glance of bungalow which was always restricted for other times. The mob collected "because like most of the towns' residents, they rarely had the opportunity to see themselves from top to bottom" (Desai 231).

Social Discrimination

The attitude of most of non-Nepali characters is far too biased and derogatory in the novel. They often look them as 'robbers', 'murderers' and the people 'without principle' who 'will kill for fifty rupees' etc. (Desai 49). This clearly shows the social position of Nepali people in the region where they '.... are eighty percent of population' (Desai 175). And eventually, the

government has also shown partiality and has unequal standard for Nepalis people, in terms of socio-political rights.

Kalimpong is a very panoramic hill station, chosen by the Britons, where people from the different parts of India and world would like to spend their retired life. Bengalis and Gujaratis are the dominant outsiders there. But most of them carry negative attitude towards the Nepalis people, culture and language. In the novel, the retired judge Jamubhai Patel, a Gujarati, his cook, a Bihari, Lolita and Nonita, Bengalis, are the some such characters who have such perceptions for them.

Nonita is such typical character "who lived with her sister Lola (Lalita) in a rose-covered cottage named Mon Ami. When Lola's husband had died of a heart attack, Noni, the spinster, had moved in with her sister, the widow" (Desai 47). She often uses the derogatory term 'Neps' for Nepali people, time and again in her conversation throughout the novel. She often expresses her hatred toward Nepalis describing them as 'robbers' and 'murderers'. She projects Nepalis as the headless, malicious and barbaric people who '...will kill for fifty rupees' (Desai 49). She often advises other characters not to believe in Nepalis because she thinks they are untrustworthy. She advises others about Nepali people as "These Neps can't be trusted. And they don't just rob. They think absolutely nothing of murdering, as well" (Desai 51).

She projects Nepalis that they just run after money, not for the faith or the principle. They can be bought as mercenaries; they served for British Empire for money. Without knowing the exact historical facts about Gurkha soldier recruitment politics she says:

"Cock and bull," she said crudely. "These people aren't good people. Gurkhas are mercenaries, that's what they are. Pay them and they are loyal to whatever. There's no principle involved, Noni. And what is this with the Gurkha? It was always Gurkha. And then there aren't even many Gurkhas here- some of course, and some newly retired ones coming in from Hong Kong, but otherwise they are only Sherpas, coolies." (Desai 271)

She has such a low view for Nepalis people but very ironically she has taken a Nepali watchman, Budhoo, who is '...a retired soldier who had been in action against guerilla factions in Assam and had a big gun and an equally fierce mustache' (Desai 51). She is skeptical about him because he is a Nepali but she is confident about him at the same time so that she could sleep fearlessly in her house because he fought bravely against Pakistani soldiers and terrorists.

Economic Discrimination

Nepalis are being discriminated and dominated in this region not only culturally but also economically. The region is famous for its high quality tea all over the globe which comes from the lavish green tea plantations but "here we are eighty percent of population, ninety tea plantations in the district, but is even one Nepali-owned?" (Desai 175). Nepali people do not own even a tea garden. Similarly the economic condition of Gyan is shown ultra poor. His hill house and whole village is described as the very poor village where people live in hut like houses. I think it is physically non-existent in that part; it is just writer's attitude that compels her to characterize like so.

Political Discrimination

The political issue of Nepalis in the novel is not so much directly discussed but it can be found as slogans that have been '...painted on the side of government offices and shops. "We are stateless," they read. "It is better to die than live as slaves," "We are constitutionally tortured. Return our land from Bengal" (Desai 139). A little more precise exposure of their despair has been spelled in the speech of a leader who addresses the rally. He blames British for not granting the freedom to Nepalis though the Communist Party of India strongly demanded that. He says:

In 1947, brothers and sisters, the British left granting India her freedom, granting the Muslim Pakistan, granting special provisions for scheduled castes and tribes, leaving everything taken care of....Except us. EXCEPT US. The Nepalis of India. At that time, in April of 1947, the Communist Party of India demanded a Gorkhastan, but the request was ignored....We are laborers on the tea plantations, coolies dragging heavy loads, soldiers.... (174)

He further lays details of Nepalis contribution for both India and British as the brave soldiers to save their national sovereignty. But they remained merciless to the issues of Nepalis. He digs two hundred years' history of Gorkha soldiers who fought bravely with complete loyalty for the British Empire in both the world wars, in Africa, Egypt, Persian Gulf, Europe, Syria, Persia, Malaya, and Burma (174).

He goes emotional when he speaks about Gorkhas had to fight against own once friend in the wars against Pakistan. Even after such contribution to the nation, Nepalis are not given any reward, compensation and respect from the government.

In the wars with Pakistan we fought our former comrades on the other side of the border. How our spirit cried. But we are Gorkhas. We are soldiers. Our character has never been in doubt. And have we been rewarded?? Have we been given compensation?? Are we given respect?? (174)

Noni (Nonita), a Non-Nepali character in the novel, also lays bare the linguistic and political issues of Nepalis. Most of the Non-Nepalis characters are negative about the issues of Nepalis but she is only the character who stands up for the issues of Nepalis. She utters her moral support for the political issues of Nepalis time and again which brings her in argument with her sister, Lola, who has most negative attitude for Nepalis. She argues "They have a point....maybe not their whole point, but I'd say half to three-quarters of their point" (141). She even tries to distort the historical facts. She says "When did Darjeeling and Kalimpong belong to Nepal? Darjeeling, in fact, was annexed from Sikkim and Kalimpong from Bhutan" (143) which is the biggest evidence of her foolishness, not only ignorance.

Authorial Discrimination

The writer herself seems to have negative attitude towards Nepali people there. The character analysis of Nepali characters gives impression the writer is culturally biased. She has characterized Nepali characters too negatively. In this issue, a Nepali critic, Surya Prasad Khanal puts series of questions for the ugly portrayal of Nepali characters in the novel. To quote him:

My question is: Why Desai should create such ugly portrayal of Kalimpong and its residents, mostly Nepalis (not to mention anything about the Buddhists, Christians or Muslim communities) through the non-Nepali characters like Lola, Noni and Mr. Sen? The text intentionally and blatantly attacks on the sentiments and dignity of the Nepali community. (4)

The acquisition from the critic, Surya Prasad Khanal, is true, in a sense, as she has portrayed Nepalis characters, like Budhoo, Kesang and Gyan. Kesang is described as extra lousy maid whose teeth are yellow, probably does not brush.

Moreover, she has tried to show the Gorkhaland movement in extra violent manner that it is exactly that has taken place. The activities that take place in the rally or in the conference are magnified. The way she has opened up the novel with chapter one portraying Gorkhaland activists as the cruel villains like in movies also is very significant. Is that necessary to project such activities there in place of just showing gun robbery? It would have

been the compulsion of the activists to rob the fire arms to strengthen their armory to keep themselves aware about possible confrontation with governmental forces but what does it mean Nepali people have no humanitarian feelings and they disrespect senior people like the judge or poor people like the cook?

She has handled the issues of cultural minority group very immaturely. Critics blame her inadequate knowledge of cultural identity probably because she was brought up in a different cultural environment. D.B Gurung, condemns her cultural ignorance behind her insensitive handling of the issue of minorities and their sensitivity. The writer was brought up in a mix culture so she seriously lacks the exact sense of cultural identity. Here Mr. Gurung says: "*The Inheritance of Loss* is the result of living a bastardized life inside and out of India that Desai seems unable to acclimatize herself either in the western milieu or her home. The outcome is the dissemble evolution of cynicism, apathy and misanthropic tendencies" (4).

The writer has just not undermined the sensitivity of the cultural minorities; she even lacks the respect for her own Indian culture. She has internalized the western outlook for everything. This is why she cannot see beauty in Indian girls. Jamubhai Patel has been made to return from England with an indorsed impression that "An Indian girl could never be as beautiful as an English one" (185).

Conclusion

The negative perception of non-Nepali people has created the ethnic and cultural antagonism in either side. Nepali characters (people) are little skeptical about them as they have been living for such a long time under their hatred and cultural dominance. The study of attitude of all these characters simply exemplifies about how Nepalis have culturally been prejudiced and forced to live with low social status, even though it is their land and they are in comfortable majority. It is also a cause behind the Gorkhaland movement because they want to be as equal as other ethnic groups and want to enjoy the political authority, economic sovereignty and social status. On a positive note the act of acute discrimination there has brought the Nepalis of different descent, religious cults, socio-economic status and political beliefs together and it has been the only cause of unity and strength among the Nepali speaking people there in North-east India.

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Resisting Tradition, Asserting Agency: a study with reference to Aparna Sen's Directorial Film *Goynar Baksho*

Bithika Gorai & Phani Bhusan Gorai

Abstract

The article examines the film Aparna Sen directed *Goynar Baksho* (2013) and tries to trace the gradual progression and emerging agency of women belonging to three generations, spanning a period of pre-partitioned Bengal (1940s) and post-independent India (1970s). The first part of the article introduces Aparna Sen as a director of Bengali movies which has come to be known as 'new wave' or 'parallel cinema' or 'alternative cinema', popularized in the late 70s and 80s. The second part of the paper will elucidate on how the characters in her film *Goynar Baksho* has asserted their agency and self reliance and strive to achieve fulfillment with gradual resistance against the patriarchal norms of the time. The agency, these characters demonstrate is self motivated which is a feminist trait; however, the action and decisions they undertake are engendered by the desperate need for a dignified existence and survival. The three women characters Pishima, Somlata and Chaitali exhibit their agency in their decision and actions, resisting traditional norms of confinement and asserted themselves through their voices and choices. While Pishima's liberating agency is symbolically associated with her box of jewellery, Somlata's is in her entrepreneur skill and Chaitali's is in her education and empowering decision to be an empathizer in a political movement, the jewelry box physically and symbolically acts as a catalyst in their lives.

Keywords: Agency, Resistance, Bangla cinema, Alternative cinema, Patriarchy, Feminine Sensibility, Empowering, *Goynar Baksho*,

Introduction:

Indian cinema, as one of the most prominent and popular medium of communication with the masses, has been a male dominated space and very few women are there directing or producing films. Therefore, it seems to be natural that women's issues, perspectives and subjective realities as experienced by women have not been portrayed sufficiently with a practical lens by film industry. However, Aparna Sen, who started her career as an actor in Bengali films, has become a prominent name as a director since she started her directorial debut in 1981 with *36 Chowringhee Lane* (1981) which depicts the lonely existence of an

Anglo Indian teacher Ms Stoneham. With the film *Paroma* (1985) which was believed to be ahead of time, she invited a floodgate of controversy from the critics and in social circles. Since then, a host of internationally recognized and critically acclaimed movies have been directed by her like *Sati* (1989), *Paromitar Ek Din / House of Memories*(2000), *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer* (2002), *15 Park Avenue* (2005), *The Japanese Wife* (2010), *Iti Mrinalini: An Unfinished Letter...* (2010), *Goynar Baksho / The Jewellery Box* (2013), *Ghawre Bairey Aaj / The Home & The World Today* (2019) and most recently *The Rapist* in 2021. In all her films, women's issues and their concerns, conflicts and constraints are depicted without diluting it by the lens of morality. The way women in our society negotiate with Indian patriarchal system evoking a strong 'feminine sensibility' is reflected in her movies (Chatterji 14). A comprehensive analysis of the central characters in the film *Goynar Baksho* would enable us to trace the gradual growth and emerging agency of three generations of women and how they have asserted resistance against patriarchal norms in a very subtle but strong manner.

Without venturing into Aparna Sen's acting career which was unquestionable a very commercially successful phases, it would be better to discuss her stint as a director which will illuminate the time and context of Bangla cinema. In the pre-independence era itself, Bangla cinema had established its name for its New Theatres, under B.N. Sircar for its well developed stories, psychological exploration of characters and social realism. After partition of Bengal, it started losing its national aura, however with the arrival of Satyajit Ray in 1950s with *Pather Panchali* (1955) Bengali film industry revived its falling grace and it continued its upward transition and transformation since then for next several decades (Gooptu 11–127). This new glorious phase of Bangla cinema continued with Mrinal Sen, Ritwik Ghatak who have made cinema a space for realistic depiction of politically conscious Bengali middle class whose lives were affected and afflicted by Naxalite movement, Bengal Famine of 1953 and Partition of India. These three directors are often called the pillars of New Wave Cinema or Parallel or Alternative cinemas. The terms, used for cinemas depicting realistic social issues, were used nationally for movies made in different regional languages like Hindi, Marathi and Tamil and the movies were mostly funded by Governments. Despite national and international recognition, these cinemas could not appeal to the common populace because of its intellectualism and artistic symbolism. Aparna Sen's arrival as a director marked the second phase of parallel cinema, often known as 'Middle Cinema' which continues depicting social and familial issues realistically, but in a more simpler style and form, and also taking a wide range of characters into account across region, religion, ethnicity and gender. Her

protagonists, mostly women have exhibited agency within a patriarchal Bengali or Indian society at large. Her films are not confined to Bengali audience; the multiplicity of her characters depicted in the films, have managed a wider viewership outside Bengal. Her films are marked by realistic portrayal of socio-political situation, psychological complexities of characters, real life dilemmas and most importantly the simplicity of storytelling, which are the essential characteristics of Bengali cinema, as observed by Gooptu.

Women in Aparna Sen's Cinema:

The space of Indian Cinema has always been dominated by male directors and their stereotypical depiction of women without digging deeper into the psyche of women. Aparna Sen's movies bring a fresh air in cinema for capturing women's real life experience at the backdrop of socio-political and cultural scene. It is due to her unfailing interest in portraying the multiple faces of women and their resistance, negotiation and self motivated agency, her films are often labeled in the category of 'women's cinema' and assumed to be propagating feminist ideology. However, Sen resists the idea of leveling her films as 'feminist'. After the release of *Parama*, and the flood gate of criticism it opened, she wrote in a piece 'About "Parama"', as quoted by Brinda Bose, "I am a film director, not a social reformer. God forbid that any of my films should ever be a platform for spelling out social messages" (Bose 319). In an interview, she said emphatically, "I was hailed as a kind of feminist messiah after *Parama*. I kept objecting and kept saying that feminism to me is a part of humanism. (Sen "If I'd Made More Compromises"). Sen's strong reluctance to get identified with a specific ideology and hiding behind broad definition of being 'humanist' has been criticized by critics like Brinda Bose who thinks that "explore(ing) human relationships through a certain ideological lens (even if termed 'humanist') is certainly to wage a 'cultural struggle' through cinema...which cannot but be a serious political act, conscious or otherwise" (Bose 321). However, it must be noted that Sen's films do not explicitly deals with feminist issues like sexual harassment or violence against women, rather her focus is more on individual growth of her characters through realization and acceptance of strength and weaknesses.

Without going into the debate of political or apolitical, it is important to emphasize that Sen's female protagonists are situated in their time; they may not be directly participating in women's movements per se, but they are often aware of social and political changes happening in the country and their lives are shaped by these changes. The complex relations to the society around them, coupled with factors like caste, class, family backgrounds have

been instrumental in granting them personal agency which is unique, and over and above the agency granted to them by social movements (Roy & Sengupta 56). The personal agency, they demonstrate through their actions and choices are not always to counter the hostility of patriarchy and its norms but asserting the need for individual fulfillment and dignified survival in a gendered society. I will explore the gradual evolving of women's roles and assertion of agency in a changing society with reference to Sen's directorial film *Goynar Baksho* (2013), which is inspired by Bengali novel of the same name by Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay. The film depicting three generations of women traces a clear growth and mobility towards mature choices and self-fulfillment.

A Discussion on the Film *Goynar Baksho*: Women Characters, Agency and Resistance

The plot of the movie revolves around three generations of women, Rashmoni (Pishima), Somlata (daughter in law) and Chaitali (granddaughter), spanning roughly around a time from pre-partitioned Bengal of 1940 to 1970 when Bangladesh was fighting for its independence. Sen has portrayed them as women who try to redefine their positions within the power structures of family and society. Their action and choices determine their agency in breaking away from their traditionally defined roles. Magic realism, employed in the film in the form of Pishima's ghost has been used as a unique trope to work around the acts of women's negotiations with patriarchy while curving a clear progress towards sexual liberation, economic freedom leading to political freedom. The film centers around Somlata's life in her in laws house in 1950s giving glimpses of waning aristocracy of the zamindar Bengali family after partition; the false sense of ego and class consciousness of the male members with no intention of hard work to revive the dwindling fortune of the family are beautifully shown in the film. The witty comic elements in the film have beautifully managed to reveal and criticize the misogyny, hypocrisy and double standard of our society without making it preachy. I will take up these three characters separately to analyze their agency, possible negotiation and subtle resistance to the familial rules and their motivation or effort to make the life liberating, meaningful and relevant in their own individual way.

Pishima's character reflects the socio-political and cultural history of her time which practiced injunctions and restrictions of various kinds on a widow. Her marriage at the age of eleven, followed by widowhood and coming back to the parental home with a box of jewelry is shown as a moment of her nostalgia in the film. As a widow, she also had to lead an austere, unhappy lonely life which is reflected in her continuous grumble. Her loveless

colorless life suffocated her and made her resentful and jealous against other family members. She could not ignore her sexuality and acknowledged her sexual desire for Ramkhilaon, a young servant. However, this advancement ended in a tragic death of the poor servant. She complains to Somlata about her discontented desires and married male members' license of debauchery: "Do you think the men in this house are all saints? All rascals, scoundrels all. Do you think your father-in-law, brother-in-law stay behind? Every one of them has one or two kept women . . . They make merry themselves and leave me in the house to play with the "jewelry box" toy." (Goynar Baksho 1:8:10-1:11:50)

Voice has always been considered as an empowering aspect in women. With the figure of the widowed Pishima and later, with the spirit of Pishima, Sen has used a trope to subvert patriarchy expressing female anger, patriarchal injustices, hardships etc. Pishima has a strong voice in the family. Her possession of the entire top floor, with 'a room of her own' gives an impression of her being a strong and powerful position and voice in the family both literally and metaphorically. However, she believes that her authority or voice is tolerated by the family members because of her box of jewelry. Drawing from Marx's theory of money's function in measuring value, a means of purchase/exchange/payment, it can be said that Pishima's jewelry box as a hoarded wealth purchased her a position of security, space and comfort in the household. The box of jewelry entails value and security to Pishima and she uses it in the sense of 'property' to retain her authoritative position in the family. Petra Ahde-Deal discusses in her book *Women and Jewelry* that women are the keepers of jewelry as the ownership of it is retained and transferred from generation to generation (136-138). The possession of jewelry and the authority to give away to daughter in laws can be considered as a masculine act. Rashmoni's possession of the box entails her that masculine authority over the others. The act of welcoming Somlata in the family with a pair of lightweight kangans, weighing them like an experienced goldsmith, maintaining a list of all the pieces clearly reflect her awareness of power and authority that it provides her. Her crude reference to Somlata being a bride from a lower status is also a reference of her authority over her. Her grudge against the family and the sense of value of her possession does not dwindle even after her death and she instructs Somlata to hide the box and never use it in exchange for liquid money to help solving the financial crisis of the family.

Sen calls her a 'modern' woman. In an interview, she says, referring to Pishima's character, "her zest for life, even after death, really moved me. In fact, after she died is when she really started living. She enjoyed being a businesswoman through Somlata and all the benefits of

modernity with her grandniece, [like] riding on her motorbike. She had come to a stage where she didn't care a fig for social customs. She thought all of it was made up and for the benefit of men" (Roy "Why do women have to be morally superior: Aparna Sen").

Somlata, a young bride of 18 years from a poor family, enters into the traditionally rich dynasty whose fortunes are declining and the family is forced to sell household items for survival. However, the pride associated with the class and status does not allow the male members to work or earn money. Somlata's mother in law is aware of this false sense of pride and caution Somlata to control the husband before it's late. Somlata, despite her poor and uneducated background and stammering speech, could manage to 'control' her husband by her timid demeanour and sweet and sacrificing temperament. Her association with Pishima is initially of fear, intimidation and domination but the relationship of association with the spirit of Pishima gets stronger and evolved into a relationship of trust. The jewellery box entrusted to her by the voice of the ghost widow, has an important motif in the movie. If the jewelry for Pishima is a source of her authority and security, 'for Somlata, it becomes capital' to be utilized in her entrepreneurial effort to start a sari shop. Her growth from a sweet intimidating young wife to a business woman could be possible by the capital, provided to her by the ghost of Pishima. Thus, if Somlata is provided economic independence by Pishima, in return she shows her respect by naming the shop 'Rashmani Saree Stores', after Pishima's name. It will be interesting to note that both the women through their association of togetherness without any external aid could fulfill their desire to be economically independent, a dream otherwise denied to women (Walia). Once the shop starts running, it jilted the male ego and their false sense of family honour temporarily, however, Somlata's silent resistance, standing against the wall is symbolically evocative as the spirit of Pishima was provoking her to challenge them. The entire episode is depicted with a witty rap song which reflects the truth of patriarchy and class consciousness in the guise of humour without making it look unreal. The association between the ghost widow and Somlata becomes stronger as Pishima sees a reflection of her own loneliness in Somlata. She continuously encourages her to transgress the boundaries of an ideal 'pativrata' woman because there is no sin or virtue and heaven or hell. She can emphatically ask "*Ei je aami shaara jeebon Sati hoye roiyloom, aamaar ki laabh holo?/ I spent my whole life as Sati, what did I gain from it?*" (Gonar Baksho 1:34:45-1:36:55). Pishima wants to relive her life by seeing fulfillment in Somlata's life and that is why she implores her to respond to the yearnings of the poet Rafique. Although, for a moment, she gives in to her desire and keeps the rose, brought by Rafique, inside her

bedroom, but soon, as her husband returns home, her guilt forces her to throw the rose outside the room. It will be interesting to note that Somlata despite her economic stability chooses not to be a transgressor and functions within the system by not responding in to Rafique's ardent love but her feelings for him never extinguished, as it is shown by the end of the story, when her daughter discovers Rafique's letters and presents them to her. Her decision to be committed to her husband and work for her economic freedom may be interpreted as a negotiated space within the patriarchal system, she creates for herself.

Somlata's daughter Chaitali's character has not been given enough space in the film but her life is a reflection of clear progression in every aspect in comparison to her mother or grandmother. She is an educated young rebellious girl who believes in Marxism and wants to fight against discrimination. Her quirky relationship with Pishima's spirit is marked by their mutual energy and restlessness, as if they are integrally related. Pishima's spirit seems to be living a life of her dream through Chaitali's vibrant life. Their mutual bond is reflected in the scene when they are smoking cigars on the terrace, discussing about their past, present and future while reflecting upon how women's position in society has changed over time. Chaitali is also against the idea of marriage as a bourgeois institution and wants to live a life of freedom and in her own terms. She loves a college senior who is associated with the Bangladeshi Liberation War. By contributing to the political cause with her service of nursing and also by donating Pishima's jewelry box to support the movement and help the freedom fighters, she clearly exhibits her agency of choice, decision and action. Chaitali's College education, bike riding, the act of smoking, expressing love before marriage, her lack of interest in jewelry for adornment and finally her decision to use it for a political cause reflect the gradual evolution of women's position over time. The jewelry box plays again a symbolic motif in creating a space for Chaitali in political movement and also to her alternative self in the form of Pishima's spirit; a political position which was hitherto inaccessible to the previous generations. The three women of three generations establishes their agency in demonstrating their sexual desire, economic freedom and political space- the three aspects which makes a woman, a human being.

To conclude, Aparna Sen's movies pen stories of ordinary women who made extraordinary choices through constant negotiations and subtle resistance against patriarchy. In this film, each of the characters, despite constraints and boundaries, has enacted their agency consciously or unconsciously. The gradual progression of their self motivated agency in the three women characters is reflected in the acknowledging of desires, initiating

economic freedom and ensuring political space. In realizing their dreams and progression, the 'jewelry box' played an important role both materially and symbolically. The film captures the evolving relationship of jewelry box with the three women while redefining its material value as well as in capturing the growth and maturing relationship of women with wealth in general. On being asked what does the jewelry box signify, Sen, responds that the box signifies the "economic transition of a woman from being a hoarder to an entrepreneur to having the wherewithal to give it away for a cause if she wanted to. It's a transition – the changing position of women in relation to wealth", which gets reflected in the changing hands of the jewelry box from Pishima to Somlata to the granddaughter Chaitali. Sen's women demonstrate feminist traits in their self realization and self fulfillment, as well as in working towards creating a space through negotiations. The space and agency created by the former, is utilized by the later as stairs towards the progress of women in the society. They neither get lost or confounded by their circumstances nor destroy the patriarchal fabric while asserting their identities; their nuanced progression in the depiction of Sen's film is subtle but steady.

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An Analysis of Adichie's Short Stories

Chandana John

Abstract

This paper would focus on relational conflicts between women and the society around them as portrayed in Adichie's collection of short stories *The Thing Around Your Neck*. In the African society, women are impacted in various ways which results in oppression and suppression of their value in the social setting. In this paper, I would like to explore the social issues depicted in her short stories like gender, identity, race, and other feministic concerns as she has depicted them. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a Nigerian woman writer, who has won many awards for her perspective on social, political and cultural aspects of Nigeria. Her realistic appraisal of the modern African milieu is admirable. Adichie follows in the footsteps of Chinua Achebe, a noted writer, who is known widely for his seminal novel *Things Fall Apart*. This research would help us to have a clearer view of the Africans as they navigate through their contemporary and ever-changing world.

Keywords: Adichie, conflict, contemporary, feministic, gender, oppression, suppression

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's collection of short stories called *The Thing around Your Neck* is an endeavor to establish a parallel narrative from the African point of view. Adichie, a Nigerian herself, writes from experience, subverting the stereotypical Africa and the way some of us may view black people and their society as an uncultured or backward one.

Since the end of the twentieth century, the Western literary scene has witnessed an increasing decentralization of traditional literary canons both in reading and writing as well as in the editorial industry. Indeed, while no African writer had won the Nobel Prize in Literature before the 1980s, at that point in time things began to change. From the 1980s onwards, African authors such as Wole Soyinka (1986), Nadine Gordimer (1991) and J.M. Coetzee (2003) have been Nobel laureates.

"Cell One" is the first story in the collection which depicts young boys in an academic village on a university campus resorting to stealing from their neighbors not only to get some money but as an expression of protest against their surroundings. This story depicts a young boy robbing his own house and his own mother of her jewelry. His parents and the sister who is narrating the story know who has done it but do not acknowledge the fact. The mother is

hurt only because he has sold her ancestral jewels at a much lesser value than their real worth. Adichie puts it this way:

The thieving boys were the popular ones. They drove their parents' cars in the evening, their seats pushed back and their arms stretched out to reach the steering wheel. Osita, the neighbor who had stolen our TV only weeks before the Nnamabia incident... When he stole from us, my parents did not go over to professor Ebube's house to ask him to ask his son to bring back our things. They said publicly it was riff-raff from town. But they knew it was Osita. Osita was two years older than Nnamabia, and perhaps that was why Nnamabia did not steal from another person's house. Perhaps he did not feel old enough, qualified enough, for anything bigger than my mother's jewelry.”
(6,7)

The University campus made up of the educated elite shows the falling apart of the cultural norms even as poverty engulfs them due to the changing hands of political power. Also, the moral laws are broken even as the law-and-order situation around them breaks down. Young people got into cult groups while the elders watched with concern and could do nothing. When there was a shootout at the university, Nnamabia was arrested as one of the cult boys involved in it.

The blatant corruption in the law-and-order system is exposed as Nnamabia is put into prison without trial and his family has to continuously bribe the policemen to allow them to meet and feed him. But Nnamabia suffers through his prison stay stoically until he sees an old man being paraded naked and abused by the jailers. Nnamabia protested and he was brutally punished for it. It is only by a stroke of luck that he could be saved from death. I think that a parallel can be drawn here between the African and the Indian societies and serves to blur our borders in favor of a global experience.

The second story in the collection is called “Imitation” and talks about the dual life of a rich African business man spending just two weeks with his wife and children in America and the rest of the year in his home town where he is revered as a big man. The emotions of a black woman when she faces up to her husband's possible unfaithfulness are vividly shown in the persona of Nkem, a mother of two children. Nkem's life in America is full of the ingredients of the American Dream come true. But,

She does miss home, though, her friends, the cadence of Yoruba and Igbo and pidgin English spoken around her. And when the snow covers the yellow fire

hydrant on the street, she misses the Lagos sun that glares down even when it rains...she goes to a Pilates class twice a week in Philadelphia with her neighbour, she bakes cookies for her children's classes and hers are always the favorites; she expects banks to have drive-ins. America has grown on her, has snaked its roots under her skin. (37)

Nkem is a woman who does not allow the poison to spread. She makes it clear to her husband that she would move back to Lagos so that she is in the know of things and the children can enjoy their father's presence as they grow up. With this decision, she shows herself as a strong woman willing to do what it takes for her own and also for her family's good. In Nkem, Adichie is portraying a modern woman who does adapt well to a new country but knows where to draw the line. Nkem fights alone using her knowledge of her husband to find a way out of the conflict.

The third story "A Private Experience" hammers out the notion of communal disparity and the resultant violence. When two communities are rioting and there is mass destruction and killings going on, two women belonging to the same warring communities hide from the mob in an abandoned store and share pieces of their lives even as they help each other as sisters throughout the night. Adichie brings in the innate humanity of these two-women remedy sympathizing with each other's plight. They come from different strata of society and follow different religions yet no one can miss the disinformation which makes one regard the other suspiciously.

Chika wants to ask the woman how many riots she has witnessed but she does not. She has read about the others in the past: Hausa Muslim zealots attacking Igbo Christians going on murderous missions of revenge. She does not want a conversation of naming names. (49)

The older unnamed woman in the story is more mature and open towards Chika and it is heartening to note that she is the one who acts as the Good Samaritan to Chika, even attending to her wound though previously she had asked Chika for a remedy for her cracked nipples. Even as she prays for her daughter's safety, she also prays for Chika's sister.

The riots are a public display of protest but when experienced privately, it can lead to much introspection. We, in Hyderabad, in the south of India can easily relate both to the communal riots which erupt at times and the private experience of communal harmony that most of us enjoy in this cosmopolitan culture.

The story “Ghosts” once again shows us the sorry condition of the academicians in the University as the retired ones are neither paid their pension nor any respect and the employed ones are also deprived of their livelihood as the university closes down often and the salaries are delayed due to the political situation prevailing in the country. The evacuation of Nsukka where the protagonist of the story worked is described vividly.

The local villagers, the same ones that would pick through lecturers’ dustbins for food after the war, were walking along, hundreds of them, women with boxes on their heads and babies tied to their backs, barefoot children carrying bundles, men dragging bicycles, holding yams.

The date is July 6th, 1967, as recalled by the professor as he revisits the memory of the event. He says:

But I was also full of a sense of invincibility, of the justness of the Biafran cause, and so I did not think much more of it until we heard that Nsukka fell on the very day we evacuated and the campus was occupied. The bearer of the news, a relative of professor Ezike’s, also told us that two lecturers had been killed. (62,63)

The Nigerian civil war came to be known as Biafran since it was fought between the government of Nigeria and the Republic of Biafra, a secessionist state which had declared its independence much like India had tried to do during the British rule. As we struggle with and operate in the framework of the colonial rule so also the protagonist of this story tries to grapple with the ghosts of his past.

The next story “Monday of Last Week” shows a couple who hires a colored house girl, to look after their son. The wife is African American and the husband is white, a Jew. The husband and father of the boy are described as a bundle of anxieties. Kamara, the hired caretaker:

...sensed a fragility in him, a collection of anxieties. He told her that he was worried that Josh was having a hard time being different from the other children in his school, that Josh might be unhappy, that Josh didn’t see enough of him, that Josh was an only child, that Josh would have issues about his childhood when he was older, that Josh would be depressed. (77)

These fatherly concerns, valid as they are, also showcase the problems that a growing child of mixed parentage may face in America.

The story shifts to another level as the shapely African American wife, Tracy meets Kamara, the house girl, for the first time. Kamara is attracted to Tracy and when Tracy, a painter, asks her to be a nude model for her painting one of the days, she thinks about it and finds herself willing to take her clothes off for Tracy. But when she offers to do so. She is rejected and soon after she finds Tracy inviting another person in the same way she was invited to model for her and the same kind of reactions that she had given earlier.

“Jumping Monkey Hill” is the next story is about a writer’s workshop where the myths surrounding Africa are the ones which are promoted regarding it as a dark continent desultorily just as some people still think of India as a land of elephants and snake charmers and nothing more. Edward Campbell, the organiser of the African Writers Workshop is himself a lecherous old man more interested in the bodies of women writers than their writings. The protagonist is a struggling black woman writer, writing her own experiences of the exploitations she has faced as a woman.

Even as she searches for a job, she is treated as a sex object and finally when she manages to secure a job at her father’s recommendation, she is expected to generate accounts with sexual favours which she refuses and walks out. When she puts this experience into her writing, the story is judged inauthentic and unreal. “The whole thing is implausible,” Edward said. “This is agenda writing, it isn’t a story of real people.” When a writer speaks about lesbianism in her story, it is considered nonsense. But

The Senegalese said her story was really *her* story about how she mourned her girlfriend and how her grieving had emboldened her to come out to her parents although they now treated her being a lesbian as a mild joke and continued to speak of the families of suitable young men.(102)

The Thing Round Your Neck is the next story about the dream of America as a land of riches as is prevalent even in India. With this story, we come to the beliefs that we have about certain places which inform our decisions.

As analyzed by Stuart Hall, the western regimes of representation based on power differences not only construct people of colour’s experiences as other but they also have the power to make them experience themselves as such (Hall, 2003). Writing about her own migration to the US, Adichie recognized that she felt the disappointment in the north American people when they realized she was not the exotic creature they were expecting (Adichie, 2008, p. 43).

When people think of Africa and India as a land of beautiful landscapes but inhabited by childlike or beastly people, it is due mostly to the stories that we either read or tell each other. Countries who have suffered through colonialism usually bear the brunt of this mental image created by the western world.

In a TED talk, Adichie says that a single story about anything is dangerous. Coming from a tradition of story tellers, she knows that we make sense of our surroundings through the narratives found alive in our environment. And so, we see these stories of Adichie show the black people as living, breathing human beings with feelings, emotions and struggles comparable to any other human being in any part of the world.

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Ecological Crisis in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*

Darshan Lal

Abstract

Man and environment are an integral part of Nature. Both are inseparable and their union is everlasting. Man, for his own benefits and profits, has been destroying Nature. By doing this he has been degrading environment and creating imbalance in eco-system. Many modern creative writers have raised the issues of eco-criticism in their works. For example Arundhati Roy in her maiden novel titled *The God of Small Things* has described her concern for Nature. In this novel she has portrayed how human beings have been exploiting Nature in the names of urbanization, civilization and modernization without knowing its consequences that may be very serious and dangerous in future for future generations. Amitav Ghosh is one of the remarkable Indian novelists, has written many famous novels and raised various sociological and ecological issues in his novels. In his famous Man Booker Prize shortlisted novel titled *Sea of Poppies* (2008) he has described how the 19th century colonialism and the cultivation of opium have destroyed the ecosystem of the country. He has shown the dangerous and harmful effects of opium trade both on human beings and Nature. In my paper I shall try to explore Amitav Ghosh's concern for ecology and the changes that happen due to the cultivation of opium and the addiction of opium that causes death and degradation to both human and environment.

Keywords: Ecology, Crisis, Man, Nature, Poppies, Colonisation, Migration, Degradation

Ecocriticism

Man and environment are an integral part of Nature. Both are inseparable and their union is everlasting. Regarding this Frank Stewart in his book titled *A Natural History of Natural Writing* has very rightly observed: "Nature writing in its most thoughtful responsible expression, is an exploration of neither these important ideas about nature, including the assumption that nature is separate from us neither biologically nor culturally---an idea reinforced by such academic disciplines as behavioural ecology. Indeed as these disciplines would strongly aver, nature writing, as a part of human culture, is itself one of these natural forms. It is up to our nature writers, with their vivifying gifts for narrations to clarify and personalize the moral implications of this notion."(Stewart, 229)

The environment dawned in 1960 with the publication of Rachel Carson's environmental science book *Silent Spring* (1962). Regarding Rachel Carson's book titled *Silent Spring*, Lousie Westling in the "Introduction" to *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Environment* has very rightly remarked: "Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* dramatized the devastating ecological effects of pesticides."(Westling, 5)

Ecocritical theory looks into the relationship between man and nature especially in terms of their influences on each other. It implores for a natural world in a far better way. In this context Cheryll Glotfelty, a pioneer of Ecocriticism, has very rightly said about ecocriticism. He says that it, "is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment." "Ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies."(Glotfelty, xviii) Further Greg Garrad in his book titled *Ecocriticism* has opined: "Ecocriticism is unique among contemporary literary and cultural theories because of its close relationship with the science of ecology." "He goes on saying that "the widest definitions of the subject of ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human itself'."(Garrad, 5) Further Greg Garrad in the "Introduction" to *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* has observed: "Ecocriticism has given literary scholars ... a meaningful role to play in addressing the most pressing issue of our...environment degradation."(Garrad, xii) Noise, air, water, and soil pollutions have increased with the passing of every year. Pollutions have caused serious and irreversible loss to the earth. Various fictional writers have reflected society and have dealt with social problems in their works. Writers like Arundhati Roy and Amitav Ghosh have written about ecological imbalance and environmental degradation and its harmful effects both on man and Nature. Human beings have been improving their standard of living at the cost of environment degradation. Modern creative writers like Ghosh and Roy have written novels and have shown the impact of human activities on nature and environment. They have been writing such works to create awareness among people regarding the impending dangers of environment degradation.

Amitav Ghosh

Amitav Ghosh is one of the most remarkable modern Indian novelists. He has written many famous novels. His novels are mainly concerned with various issues like politics, socialism, history, colonialism, humanity, gender and caste discrimination, Zamindari system, caste-

hierarchy, exploitation of slaves, social problems and ecological crisis and environmental degradation.

Sea of Poppies, 2008

Sea of Poppies, Man Booker Prize shortlisted novel by Ghosh was published in 2008. The novel is a historical one. The novel is dealt with the cultivation of opium and its harmful and dangerous effects on humanity and Nature. Regarding the novel Mrs J Jesintha in her paper titled Ecological Aspects in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* has remarked: “

Sea of Poppies is a long tale about ‘girmityas’ or ‘bonded labourers’ the marginalized and dispossessed labourers who quit their homes and go to a remote place at Mauritius. This novel expands from North India and Bay of Bengal in 1838 on the eve of the British East India Company's colonial designs. The story is set at the onset of the three-year Opium Wars between the British and the Chinese, and on the banks of the holy river the Ganges and in Calcutta... *Sea of Poppies* explains Nineteenth-Century colonization, the cultivation of opium as a cash crop in Bengal, Bihar is for Chinese market and the transporting Indian indentured workers to cut sugar canes for the British on islands as Mauritius, Fiji and Trinidad. The novel vividly portrays the historical background of colonialism, cultivation of opium in India to fulfill the demand of opium in China and migration of indentured labours to Mauritius for working in plantations.”(Jesintha, 494)

Ecological Crisis

Man has been exploiting and polluting the environment for his own benefits and profits. For economic growth, new industries have been set up all over the country by sweeping away forests and agricultural lands. By doing this environment resources have been depleted. The novel is a tale of forced opium trade in Bihar and Calcutta for the Chinese market. For the Chinese market the environment and native population have been enforced to face the consequences and harmful effects of opium trade. The cultivation of opium has reduced at a large scale the cultivation of food crops in Bihar. The setting of the novel is Ghazipur, a village in Bihar where poppies were produced at a large scale during colonial period. The writer remarks: “the Gunga seemed to be flowing between twin glaciers, both its banks blanked by thick drifts of white-petalled flowers.”(Ghosh, 1) This clearly shows that the fertile land of Gunga plains has been blooming with the beautiful ‘petalled flowers’ of poppies. These beautiful flowers have destroyed the farmers’ practice of growing traditional

crops. These flowers have also imbalanced the environment and affected the ecology of the colonized land.

India is a land of rich reservoirs. Earth is called mother and cow. It gives milk and other products to its inhabitants for nourishment. The life of the villagers is dependent upon Nature and environment. The writer has given an example of Deeti and her family. Deeti with her daughter Kabutri visit the Gunga to take bathe in it. The water of the Gunga is a source of life and spirituality for Deeti. Ghosh remarks: "...Now, her mind turned to shrine room again: with the hour of the noontime puja drawing close, it was time to go to the river for a bath. After massaging poppy-seed oil into Kabutri's hair and her own, Deeti draped her spare sari over her shoulder and led her daughter towards the water, across the field."(Ghosh, 7) This shows that Deeti makes a living from Nature. She uses poppy-seed oil to massage on their hair. She also uses poppy seeds in the cooking also: "a dish of stale alu-posth potatoes cooked in poppy-seed paste. (Ghosh, 7) Deeti offers her gratitude and respect to Nature for providing her food and water: "...Turning in the direction of Benares, in the west, Deeti hoisted her daughter aloft, to pour out a handful of water as a tribute to the holy city. Along with the offering, a leaf flowed out of the child's cupped palms. They turned to watch as the river carried it downstream towards the Ghats of Ghazipur."(Ghosh, 7) This clearly shows that Deeti is deeply attached to Nature because it is a source of her living.

Deeti's daily needs are fulfilled by Nature. It is Nature that proves a sight about Ibis ship to Deeti and it has changed her life forever. The sight of the Ibis at Gunga gives her a vision of her future with her sacred contacts with holy river Gunga: "In time, among the legions who came to regard the ibis as their ancestor, it was accepted that it was the river itself that had granted Deeti the vision: that the image of the *Ibis* had been transported upstream, like an electric current, the moment the vessel made contact with the sacred waters. This would mean that it happened in the second week of March 1838, for that was when the *Ibis* dropped anchor off Gunga-Sagar Island, where the holy river debouches into Bay of Bengal."(Ghosh, 10)

Sea of Poppies shows how the Colonialism in India affected the lives of natives and Nature. The natives of Bihar were forced to do opium trade. This trade has changed the life style and cycle of environment at a large scale. For gaining more profits, British forced to the natives to plant poppy and fulfilled their demand of opium. Crops cultivation was replaced with poppy cultivation. Deeti was forced to accept the changes and it changed her daily routine of life. The writer remarks:

When Deeti was her daughter's age, things were different: "poppies had been a luxury then, grown in small clusters between fields that bore the main winter crops...wheat, masoor dal and vegetables. Her mother would send some of her poppy seeds to the oil-press, and the rest she would keep for the house, some for replanting, and some to cook with meat and vegetables. As for the sap, it was sieved of impurities and left to dry, until the sun turned it into hard abkari afeem; at that time, no one thought of producing the wet, treacly chandu opium that was made and packaged in the English factory, to be sent across these in boats."(Ghosh, 29) This clearly shows that in the beginning poppies are planted with crops like wheat, masoor dal and vegetables but now farmers are forced to plant only poppy crop.

To fulfill the demands of the British, poppies were planted at a large scale across India. This kind of massive poppy cultivation was a threat to land and environment. To grow massive opium on land was the exploitation of land. It was very difficult to find other crops anywhere other than poppy: "It happened at the end of the winter, in a year when the poppies were strangely slow to shed their petals: for mile after mile, from Benares onwards, the Gunga seemed to be following between twin glaciers, both its banks being blanketed by thick drifts of white petalled flowers. It was as if the snows of the Himalayas had descended on the plains to await the arrival of Holi and its springtime profusion of colour."(Ghosh, 3) This clearly shows that opium has descended everywhere. It has surrounded the outskirts of town of Ghazipur and Deeti's childhood hometown near the Karamnasa River.

British colonialism took away the greenery of the landscape through opium trade. Deeti faced this loss of greenery in her surroundings and she longed for grain and vegetables in the middle of the opium flowers. The writer opines: "...The landscape on the rivers' shores had changed a great deal since Deeti's childhood and looking around now, it seemed to her that the Karamnasa's influence had spilled over its banks, spreading its blight far beyond the lands that drew upon its waters: the opium harvest having been recently completed, the plants had been left to winter in the fields, so that the countryside was blanketed with parched remnants. Except for the foliage of a few mango and jackfruit trees, nowhere was anything green to relieve the eye. This, she knew, was what her own fields looked like, and were she at home today, she would have been asking herself what she would eat in the months ahead: where the vegetables? The grains?" (Ghosh, 188) This shows that through the excessive use of opium, environment has lost its fertility and its green colour. Winter seasonal crops like vegetables and grains are hardly to be seen. Excessive use of opium has imbalanced the Nature's biodiversity.

Similarly Arundhati Roy in her novel *The God of Small Things* has observed: “Years later, when Rahel returned to the river, it greeted her a ghastly skull’s smile, with holes where teeth had been and a limp land rose from a hospital bed.”(Roy, 124) Further she says that “It had shrunk.”(Roy, 124) Further Roy says that “It had had the power to evoke fear”, is now “slow, sliding green ribbon lawn that ferried fetid garbage to the sea.” “Bright plastic bags blew across its viscous, weedy surface like subtropical flying flowers.”(Roy, 124) This clearly shows that this is the condition of almost every river of India.

Ghosh has described how this opium trade has spoiled the life of Deeti and the environment around her. Deeti, wife of opium addict Hukum Chand and mother of Kabutri, was cursed by opium trade. Deeti after the death of her husband ran after life as an agricultural. But during the colonial period Indian farmers were forced in Bihar to cultivate opium in the large areas. This massive scale opium cultivation became the main cause of environment degradation and unhealthy life style of people. Poppy cultivation needed extra care and extra labour that proved to be an extra burden to the native farmers when they were not getting much profit from opium cultivation.

Opium monoculture spoiled the valuable soil nutrients and Deeti and other farmers expected late harvest that was the result of lack of nutrients in the soil. The monoculture of opium not only affected the human, but animals became its victims. It affected the animals in various ways: “As her steps lengthened, she saw that on some nearby fields, the crop was well in advance of her own: some of her neighbours had already nicked their pods and the white ooze of the sap could be seen congealing around the parallel incisions of the nukha. The sweet, heady odour of the bleeding pods had drawn swarms of insects, and the air was buzzing with bees, grasshoppers and wasps; many would get struck in the ooze and tomorrow, when the sap turned colour, their bodies would merge into black gum, becoming a welcome addition to the weight of the harvest. The sap seemed to have a pacifying effect even on the butterflies, which flapped their wings in oddly erratic patterns, as though they could not remember how to fly. One of these landed on the back of Kabutri’s hand and would not take wing until it was thrown up in the air.”(Ghosh, 28)

This clearly shows how the effect of opium has changed the course of life of butterflies bees, grasshoppers, butterflies and wasps. Poppies are very beautiful and bright flowers in colour that attract butterflies towards them and as soon as they drink the nectar from poppies they get intoxicated in no time. Poppy flowers are a rich source of food for many plant-eaters. The smell of the poppy doesn’t not only pacify them but it has killed them.

There is an example of the smell of poppy in the air. The opium-dust choked the fresh air in the city. When Deeti, Kalua and Kabutri were on their way in Kalua's oxen cart, they suffered a lot because of the opium-filled air. The poisonous air affected humans as well animals. Deeti, Kabutri, Kalua and his oxen could not breathe properly but were sneezing because of pollution in the air due to opium. Ghosh remarks: "As Kalua's cart rolled on, towards the factory's main compound, Deeti and Kabutri began to sneeze; soon, Kalua and the oxen were sniffing too, for they had now drawn abreast of the godowns, where farmers came to dispose of their 'poppy trash'---- leaves, stalks, and roots, all of which were used in the packaging of the drug. Ground up for storage, these remains produced a fine dust that hung in the air like a fog of snuff. Rare was the passer-by who could brave this mist without exploding into a paroxysm of sneezers and sniffles---and yet it was a miracle, plain to behold, that the coolies pounding the trash were no more affected by the dust than were their young English overseas."(Ghosh, 91) This shows that the smell of the opium has filled the environment of the factory. And it has choked the air and the environment.

When Deeti visited the factory she could breathe properly and found herself faint: "... The air inside was hot and fetid, like that of a closed kitchen, except that the smell was not of spices and oil, but of liquid opium, mixed with the dull stench of sweat---a reek so powerful that she had to pinch her nose to keep herself from giggling...not till she was through the door did she allow herself to breathe freely again: now as she was trying to cleanse her lungs of the odour of raw, churned opium, she heard someone say: Bhauji? Are you alright? The voice proved to be that of their relative and it was all she could do not to collapse on him."(Ghosh, 92)

The wastage of opium factory contaminated the water of the Gunga and it affected the animals in the environment. After consuming the contaminated water of the Gunga the monkeys seemed to mimic an opium addict. These monkeys lost their excitements: "...he monkeys that lived around it, for instance: Deeti pointed out a few of these out to Kabutri as the ox-cart trundled towards the walls. Unlike others of their kind they never chattered or fought or stole from passer-by; when came down from the trees it was to lap at the open sewers that drained the factory's effluents; after having sated their cravings, they would climb back into the branches to resume their stupefied scrutiny of the Gunga and its currents." (Ghosh, 91) This shows that the monkeys which live near the opium factory have forgotten their daily routine activities. They have lost their temper due to poisonous opium water. Now they behave silently and abnormally. Fish could be caught easily from the bank of the river:

“The belief was widespread that fish were more easily caught after they had nibbled at the shards, and as a result the bank was always crowded with fishermen.”(Ghosh, 92) This is obvious that like monkeys, fish have also forgotten their daily routine of life. Similarly Roy has remarked in her novel *The God of Small Things* that due to polluted and contaminated water, most of the fish in the river had died. She remarks: “... the banks of the river...smelled of shit, and pesticides brought with World Bank Loan. Most of the fish had died the ones that survived from tin-rot and had broken out in boils.”(Roy, 13) This clearly shows from this quotation that due to filthy and contaminated water fish in the rivers had died. The polluted water in the river has become the cause of many diseases for man and animals.

Conclusion

In this novel Ghosh has very rightly presented the harmful effects of colonialism in India during 19th century. He has described the harmful and dangerous effects of opium cultivation and ecological crisis in nature. Opium trade has ceased the cultivation of seasonal crops that leads to migration, hunger and starvation. Through this novel Ghosh shows the importance of every crop and changes that happen due to opium cultivation. The addiction of opium leads to the degradation of environment and death of human and species.

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Psychological Thriller Fiction of Stephen King

E Justin Ruben

Abstract

Psychology is mostly an analytical and sometimes experimental study of the internal workings of the human mind and resultant behaviour. Psychology has indeed been a fascinating yet enigmatic calling over the years. Many a time psychology has been dismissed as a fruitless voyage pursuing the clueless meanderings of the human mind's inner conflicts and quirky thoughts by scientists. Psychological fiction is a genre of imaginative writing that focuses on highlighting the grand delusions and gory acts of the human mind. It tries to present as well as understand the abnormal level on which psychopaths and sociopaths work along with normal persons in the society. When Mary Gordon Shelley sketched a physically and psychologically deformed character Frankenstein, many critics tried to underrated the morbid work by labeling it as Gothic fiction where only the unthinkable ghastly ideas and actions found limelight. After the advent of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung who propagated their respective theories on Psychoanalysis, the world started to take a deep look at the intriguing ways that the human mind functioned. The 'Jack the Ripper' serial murders that disturbed the social fabric of London in the early 1900s were studied and analysed by Psychoanalysts not just to understand the deviant ways that the human mind operated but also to provide closure to the grieving families of the victims. The rise of psychological fiction has been a slow and long winding process but now it has found its rightful place in literary as well as social spheres. Psychological fiction has been for long under the shadow of popular fiction and not part of serious literature. This type of fiction is basically an offshoot of the crime and macabre or horror genre that has blossomed abundantly in the recent decades. In recent years psychological fiction has made a strong impact on the reading public. The immense popularity enjoyed by contemporary writers like Ray Bradbury, Stephen King, Thomas Harris, Jonathan Kellerman, Patricia Cornwell, Jeffery Deaver, Ian Rankin, Michael Connelly and Val Mac Dermid has proved that psychological fiction is a genre that has arrived to stay and make meaningful splashes in the literary arena. The article aims to analyze and interpret two select novels namely 'Carrie' and 'The Green Mile' by Stephen King, a prominent American horror, crime and fantasy writer under the aegis of psychological thriller fiction.

Keywords: Fiction, Macabre, Human Mind, Inner Thoughts, Psychology, Conflict, Scope

Introduction

Psychology is a unique form of science that deals with the study and analysis of the human mind and behaviour. Psychology is branched into many forms based on its functionality namely Clinical Psychology, Theoretical Psychology, Applied Psychology, Forensic Psychology, Educational Psychology, Child Psychology, Occupational Psychology, Sports Psychology and Medicinal Psychology. For the purposes of this research paper the author limits the focus of psychology to English Fiction especially to the genre of psychological thriller writing. Psychological fiction has a long standing history in English Literature with the earliest example of the genre being traced to Samuel Richardson's 'Pamela or Virtue Rewarded' published in 1740. The plot of the novel was based on the struggles of a lower-class maid lady who resists the advances of an upper class aristocratic man and eventually marries him only to face the uphill task of acclimatizing herself to the prudish practices of the upper class society. Though the work cannot be out-rightly classified as a psychological thriller it marked the beginning of a distinct form of realistic writing that focused on assessing human behaviour and interpreting thoughts along with actions of a certain section of people in the society.

Mary Gordon Shelley sketched a physically and psychologically deformed character Frankenstein only to be categorized by many critics under the label of Gothic fiction where only the unthinkable ghastly ideas and actions of the lead characters found limelight. Other early and noteworthy proponents of the thriller subgenre of psychological fiction include Edgar Allan Poe, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Henry James, Patrick McGrath and Edith Wharton. The author wishes to place Arthur Conan Doyle too under the canopy of psychological thriller writers as his creation Sherlock Holmes is one of the best examples of psychological complexity. Holmes was portrayed as a recluse with a serious drug problem. He is an introvert who shuns the company of people with the only exception being his trusted associate Dr. Watson. Holmes is a classic example for embarking on the assessment and evaluation of the deviant human mind and its intricate working patterns. Sherlock Holmes presents a fascinating study to psychoanalysts about an antisocial personality that shrouds inside a brilliantly convoluted mind. The impairments in his personality make Holmes to be labelled as a sociopath instead of a psychopath.

Psychological thrillers encompass elements of the macabre, occult, magical realism and suspense because of the complexity in plot narration and characterisation. The characters in psychological fiction are characterised mainly based on the inner conflicts of the individual and the triggers that warrant disturbing behaviour from socially inept human beings. This

genre uses riveting narrative techniques to allure the readers and keep them engaged in the plot. Most of the popular fiction writers stop with just presenting the horrendous nature of the deviant personalities in their stories. Only some writers have ventured to penetrate into the dark minds of these psychopathic individuals and understand the mechanisms that push them into committing grievous crimes. Seeking answers to the deviant human behaviour is a pursuit that not many psychologists and sociologists would willingly indulge in. Exceptions to this fact are contemporary writers like Stephen King, Thomas Harris, Jonathan Kellerman and Gillian Flynn.

Present Study

In the present study the focus is on American writer Stephen Edwin King (b1947 -) who is renowned for his horror and supernatural fiction. He is fondly referred to as ‘King of Horror’ by the American public. His voluminous contribution to thriller fiction includes 63 novels, 200 short-stories, 5 non-fiction books along with notable film scripts and screenplays. King has been honoured with many prestigious awards in America and Europe. He is prolific writer of stories that gaze into the myriad operations of the mysterious human mind and its emotional implications. He started his career in 1967 immediately after his graduation from the University of Maine by publishing short stories to supplement his meager income as a school teacher. In 1974 he got a big break with the publication of his first novel ‘Carrie’. ‘Carrie’ was a startlingly gruesome revenge story of an introvert girl who is bullied by her peers at school. Popular books like ‘Salem’s Lot’, ‘The Shining’, ‘Pet Sematary’, ‘Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption’, and ‘It’, followed in the ensuing years. King continues to publish riveting novels gaining popularity and warranting critical attention. The author wishes to disregard many of his stellar works and consider only two of King’s best novels namely ‘Carrie’ and ‘The Green Mile’.

Carrie

‘Carrie’ is a story that focuses on the life of demure girl from the cold town of ‘Maine’ who comes from a dysfunctional family. Her mother is a religious freak who forces her daughter into a grueling regime of work and worship without enlightening about basic hygiene or needs. Carrie is an introvert who is constantly wary of people around her. She gets bullied by her classmates at school when she gets her first menstruation period. The humiliations of the vicious insults bring out her latent talent of telekinesis – an extraordinary power to move

things by just staring at them. The bullying culture that is prevalent in American schools is extravagantly highlighted in the narrative by Stephen King. The elements of horror and fantasy support the narrative and push the plot forward at a much quicker rate. King attributes Carrie's actions to the incessant torments meted out to her by her classmates at the Gym and the Prom Ceremony. Carrie's raw narrative, violent events and base diction has led to the book being banned in many high schools across America even today.

Carrie's narrative leans on the fantasy or magical realism more to enable the disturbed soul to vent out her bound feelings of vengeance. The main reason for the destruction of the entire town of Chamberlain is attributed to the anger of Carrie without any justification of her actions by King. Bare facts are laid out as they are for the readers to form their interpretations of Carrie's frame of mind. The dance of flames burning down the entire city was authentically pictured in the first Carrie film by noted Hollywood film maker Brian de Palma. The 2013 film too exposed the shortcomings of the American School system underlining the horrors of bullying. The exploration of the actions of Carrie will provide definite if not convincing answers to the wrath of a specially talented person. When pushed to the limits of decency any living being will react in an explosive way to escape the fear and pain.

Carrie is pictured as a nonconformist not by choice but by compulsion. She is ostracized by her school mates and looked down as inferior by her own mother. The final insult of being drenched with pig's blood forces her to exact revenge on not just her school mates but the entire town. All the years of pent up rage bursts out like a volcano on fire and engulfs the city. Carrie provides psychoanalysts an intriguing study of the limits of human endurance and heights of revenge motives. Stephen King has stated in interviews that he threw away the first manuscript but was encouraged by his wife Tabitha King to finish the story. As a tribute to his wife's inspiration King embroils Carrie's character with a sprinkle of liberal feminism and ends her story with her undue demise after the hellish carnage. In the author's evaluation, Carrie is an attempt to recognize the pain of ostracized people who live on the fringes of this society. The book is written in epistolary style where King uses newspaper clippings, magazine articles and official letters. Linda J Holland deftly remarks that "Carrie is disaffirmative because society makes the human monster, cannot control the monster and still denies the possibility of actual monsterdom while simultaneously defining human as monsters".

King offers a warning to people with religious fanaticism, sadistic temperament and apathy that they will be eventually held accountable to their belief system in a violent way.

Carrie's mother Margaret often locks Carrie in a dark closet as punishment for meandering from the ways of God. She is the main reason for Carrie to be an introvert and sociopath. Whenever Margaret feels Carrie wanders into the ways of worldly sins she locks up Carrie in the dark closet and forces her to pray till she is cleansed of her sins. This fanaticism manifests itself as a strong form of reclusiveness in Carrie. Carrie is suspicious of even her well-wishers like her teacher Rita Desjardin and foe turned friend Sue Snell. In the end Carrie punishes Margaret by making her heart stop violently. Carrie too is stabbed by her own mother who accuses her of a reincarnation of Satan. The author opines that the paranormal abilities of Carrie are only a conceited cover used by King to provide her a respite from the constant torment and abuse she endures patiently.

The Green Mile

The Green Mile published as a serialized set of 6 books in 1998 is a more mature work of fond reminiscence by a retired prison block supervisor Paul Edgecombe about a Black convict he met in 1932 at the death row of the Cold Mountain Penitentiary. Paul is now almost 104 years old spending his time at the Georgia Pines Care Centre recalling his youth. The term Green Mile in the title refers to the green linoleum floor mat that covered the entire death row block. Paul encounters a heavily built Black prisoner at the death row named John Coffey who has extraordinary powers of healing and is awaiting death as he is convicted for raping and murdering two little White girls. The plot chronicles themes like Racism, Nepotism and the failure of the judicial reform system in USA. Paul understands that John Coffey is wrongly accused and is facing death just because he is a Blackman who doesn't have access to legal counsel and social justice. Paul's narrative is characterised with some colourful characters like Eduard 'Del' Delacroix, a Cajun arsonist, rapist, and murderer; and William Wharton who calls himself 'Billy the kid' but is labelled as 'Wild Billy' by the prison guards. Billy is a serious trouble maker as he is determined to create as much as ruckus before he serves his capital punishment. There is also a mouse that features in the cells of the death row named Mr. Jingles which is cared by Del.

Percy Wetmore is a sadistic guard employed in the death row as he is the nephew of the wife of the Governor. He is gleeful in persecuting the prisoners in the row and even deliberately messes up the execution of Del by not soaking the cloth with saltwater which fries Del. The violence in the plot is part of the uncivilized life style of the American pioneers who prided in boasting to the world that they were the beacons of progress. Percy is a classic

example of a deranged psychopath who moves along freely with the society and is not afraid of projecting his visceral rage on innocent victims. He preys on the fear of people around him and feeds on their fear. Percy is so morally bent that even when he is offered an administrative job at a nearby Psychiatric Hospital he refuses to leave the prison till he witnesses an execution first hand. John Coffey ensures that he meets a deserving end for all the pain he had caused people. In a classic case of Karma, Percy is left in a catatonic coma and is committed as a patient at the same Briar Ridge hospital where he was offered a job.

Paul slowly grasps that John Coffey is innocent of the accused crimes but he is unable to help Coffey escape the impending doom. John Coffey was actually trying to heal the dying girls before the enraged White settlers come and disrupt his healing act. Coffey accepts his punishment with tranquil composure as he is very tired of the cruelty meted out to him by the world. During his stay in the death row, Coffey cures the urinary tract infection of Paul and the terminal illness of the Warden's wife. He also breathes life into the dead Mr. Jingles who is crushed to pulp by Percy. The incompetence of Paul in proving the innocence John Coffey, the sadism of Percy, the paranormal healing powers of John Coffey all present fascinating case studies in psychology. The author is of the well-founded opinion that Stephen King's works present a stack of such fascinating case studies in psychology making him one of the most effective psychological thriller writers of this modern era.

The intriguing contrast in the physical form of John Coffey who is built like a giant but is soft and even tempered is an indication of his purity and innocence. King juxtaposes the colossal physical form with a fragile emotional state of mind to make the readers understand that everything is not black and white as seen by the eyes. Coffey's character is also a stark reminder to the new generation of readers about the gloomy historical faults committed by the White settlers against their own fellowmen. The failure of the American Justice System in reforming criminal is also another highpoint of the novel. The penitentiary is supposed to be an abode to reform and transform the lives of criminals but in reality is actually a corrupt place that encourages violence and corruption. The psychological analysis of 'Carrie' and 'The Green Mile' categorically prove that Stephen King is a master of portraying the stark realities of the denigration of not just the social institutions and legal framework but also of the individual human psyche.

Conclusion

Psychology helps us to understand not just ourselves but others too. It helps us to communicate better with people around us. Psychology refines one's critical thinking and enhances interpersonal skills. Psychology is found in all spheres of our lives. Most deviant people lack clarity in thinking and thereby suffer from a lack of social engineering skills that makes one successful. In stark contrast some of them excel in manipulating people around them to ensure their success. Documenting disturbed individuals helps us to understand the complex nature of people around us in the society. The answer to comprehending human behaviour however crude is one of the main objectives of psychology. As mentioned earlier Dr. Hannibal Lecter's (Thomas Harris' creation) advent into the American reading coterie paved way for the judiciary to understand the urges of disturbed individuals. In fact the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) went on to inaugurate a separate division named 'VICAP – Violent Criminals Apprehension Program' that trained their field agents to analyze the reasons behind the violent and sexual crimes perpetuated by unstable people. VICAP works closely in association with psychoanalysts and they create profiles of criminals using the clues left behind by criminals the crime scene.

When Stephen King was awarded the prestigious 'Medal of Distinguished Contribution to American Letters' by the National Book Foundation some critics like Harold Bloom and Richard Snyder were unsettled by the honour. They scathingly disapproved that King's writing is 'non-literature' and he can never be considered on par with Edgar Allan Poe. His writings were termed as mere pungent prose filled with contemptuous diction bordering on brutal frankness that didn't merit being part of serious literature. Orson Scott Card, a contemporary American science fiction writer brushed aside all negative criticism about King's writings by remarking that King's writing is no doubt part of American literature since it is read with admiration by millions of readers though it may not be in the style that literary and academic elite prefer.

Stephen King's plots are filled with the fantastical and paranormal to fill the void that is created by the lack of overt psychological outlets to release a person's cardinal feelings of rage and violence. King makes his characters as enthralling psychological case studies infusing them with super human powers just to understand the complex workings of the human mind. King also attempts to emotionally profile his lead characters which go beyond the parlance of the raw crudities associated with horror genre and gothic fiction. The author concludes the present study that there is immense research scope in psychological thriller

fiction as it provides a multidisciplinary and multidimensional approach to understanding human psychology with significant leanings into human anthropology, sociology and literature.

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Nationalism: Through the lens of Indira Goswami

Mamta Mishra

Abstract

The most significant aspect of European colonisation was the denigration of the colonised population to project them as strange, uncivilised and uncouth. The colonised were portrayed as the negative image of the coloniser. As a result, the native people, more specifically intellectuals created glorified vision of the past civilisation. This served to instil pride, unity and self-respect in the population motivating them to fight the imperial powers. In India this feeling of unity went beyond the class and caste inequalities and forged a strong alliance against the common enemy i.e. the European coloniser. This building up of the nationalistic fervour set up the tone for the setting up of a glorified independent state. The rising nationalist sentiments gave rise to a unified rebellion against the colonisers, who were finally driven out. Indira Goswami, the well-known Assamese writer in her novel *The Bronze Sword of Thengphakhri Tehsildar* writes about the rich history of Assam in which she has traced the rise of nationalism in the northern part of India. Moved by the nationalistic fervour the protagonist Thengphakhri resigns from her job in the British forces and joins the revolutionaries with a vow to uproot the colonisers. This paper will study the rising nationalism in Assam with special reference to life and works of Indira Goswami.

Key words: Colonised, Patriotism, Revolutionary, Nationalism, Rebellion, Independence

Nationalism is a feeling of love and devotion for one's own country. The identity of a country is reflected through the culture, tradition, beliefs and the unity of its population. There is a sense of patriotism where one aspires for national advancement and as in the case of colonised countries, independence. In India, as in many other countries, the growth of nationalism is directly connected with the anti-colonial movement. The rising feeling of nationalism in India led to a change in power equations between Britain and India. These sentiments gave rise to many agitations and revolts all around the country which made India ungovernable for them and thus compelled the British to leave India.

Colonialism manifested itself not only in financial matters but all the other spheres of life. The colonisers looked down with contempt on the natives and forced their way of life on them. This colonial look of authority manifested itself in motifs of research, scientific study,

fictional writings, documentation and surveys. Colonialist fiction acknowledged the authority which the European scrutiniser wielded by giving narrative form to anthropological findings. The narrations in those works were intended to make the colonial rule more effective by satisfying the listening Englishman's curiosity for local customs, traditions and way of life. In reply, the Indian intellectuals tried to bring forth their narratives in the form of literature that was in opposition to that written by the British writers. This literature dealt with varied themes from conflict of identity to self-identification, nationalism, anti-imperialist critique and protest. This protest expressed anger at the prevailing conditions and presented an agenda for social change.

Indira Goswami was the first to open a window for Assam by the instrument of her writings. Her writings are a means of protest against the prevailing social conditions. She provided a mouthpiece to those whose voices had never been heard before. *The Moth-eaten Howdah of the Tusker*, *The Blue-Necked God*, *The Man from Chhinamasta*, *The Stream of Chenab*, *The Rusted Sword* and many other novels and short stories are set in different parts of India and provide a taste of life, culture and tradition of those places. The myriad themes in her writing provide it the variety that makes her works interesting. The realistic portrayal of the labour unions won her the Sahitya Akademi award for *The Rusted Sword*. *An Unfinished Autobiography* is her autobiography which has been written in a very candid manner. She talks about the trials and tribulations of her life in a very forthright manner and displays her boldness of character, strength and charisma.

The Bronze Sword of Thengphakhri Tehsildar is regarded by many as the last novel of Goswami. It traces the life of a Bodo freedom fighter who was the first Revenue Collector in British India. Like most of Goswami's characters Thengphakhri is a widow and is characterised by her resilience and will power. At a time when social reformers were fighting social evils like Sati, purdah system and child marriage, she has been depicted as a native woman working shoulder to shoulder with the British officials, riding a horse with long hair set loose and covered with a hat. Thengphakhri stands out as a strong woman who the others looked up to. The bravery and expertise that she showed with the gun attracted the attention of the British officer Captain Hardy who offered her the job of a Revenue Collector for the company. She accepted the offer and worked in alliance with the forces of the company to collect taxes in the Bijni region of Assam. People were surprised to witness the beauty and bravery of a woman who was very different from their womenfolk who were meek and docile. Wherever she went to collect taxes, she saw utmost poverty and suffering of her

people who could not even garner two square meals a day. Children remained stunted due to lack of proper nutrition as most of them were starving. Farmers became poorer by the day due to high rate of taxes being levied on them. The taxes on commodities of daily use, agricultural land and grazing fields left the farmers with almost nothing to spare for themselves. The pathetic condition moved her and forced her to think about the deteriorating condition of the natives.

Feeling of disillusionment started growing among the oppressed population of the country and incidents of revolts against the company started increasing. Revolutionaries garnered support from the people as they saw them as their only ray of hope in that situation. They sent feelers to all the people they possibly could including. Thengphakhri was loyal to the British and worked honestly for them. Her grandfather was an old loyalist of the British as he had worked for them earlier and motivated Thengphakhri to be loyal to her masters at all cost. He always told her about the development brought about by the company and motivated her to see the brighter side of the British rule by claiming that, "Don't forget British are our masters, they are divine." The pain and suffering around her forced Thengphakhri to think otherwise. The rebels like Romochondro and Khorgeshwar made her see the hard realities of the situation. She herself got the first-hand account of the widespread exploitation of her people when she saw their pathetic condition on her visit to collect taxes. On one such incident when she went with the soldiers to collect taxes from Bhola Kachari she witnessed a terrible scenario. The man had no yield in his field for two consecutive years; as one year there was a severe drought and the other year locusts destroyed the crops. The soldiers of the company, in order to recover their dues took away all his belongings including his clothes, furniture, pots and pans and asked for more as the taxes were still pending; frustrated he offered his starving slave who was reduced to a tiny skeleton. On seeing the boy who could hardly stand due to hunger and starvation, Thengphakhri was hit hard by the reality. Her 'mind was dark with melancholy' and she realised that he was not a boy but a man stunted due to hunger and starvation.

Romochondro and Khorgeshwar Sutradhar apprised her of the worsening condition of the region. Exploitation and injustice meted out to the natives gave rise to the growing feeling of nationalism in the region. Historically, nationalism has functioned as one of the most powerful weapons for resisting colonialism and for establishing postcolonial identity. Nationalism has nurtured much of the movement towards woman emancipation in the so called 'Third World' countries but still the relationship between nationalism and feminism is

a complex one due to the conflicting nature of their social and political goals. On one hand feminism transcends cultural characteristics and geographical boundaries to empower women and on the other hand nationalism exaggerates such characteristics and boundaries in order to resist hegemony. Nationalistic discourses are primarily male-dominated and control women by capturing them in traditional stereotypes; but Goswami's Thengphakhri succeeds in breaking these stereotypes by leading an armed rebellion against the British forces.

In the aftermath of colonisation, the natives were forced to accept the supremacy of the colonisers and equated the advance of European colonisation with the triumph of science and reason over the forces of superstition. In the novel *The Bronze Sword of Thengphakhri Tehsildar* the author presents this view of the natives when the protagonist's grandfather Tribhuban Bahadur vehemently argues in favour of the British rule with Khorgeshwar Sutradhar and says that British might have taken away a lot from their land but in return had saved their people from man-eaters and wild elephants. They gave employment to their people and made sincere efforts to prevent evil practices like sati and spread education. Ania Loomba makes the same point in her book as:

Many nineteenth and twentieth century writers equated the advance of European colonisation with the triumph of science and reason over the forces of superstition, and indeed many colonised peoples took the same view. An Education Despatch of 1854 explicitly connected 'the advance of European knowledge' in India to the economic development of the subcontinent. English education would 'teach the natives of India marvellous results of the employment of labour and capital', and 'rouse them to emulate us in the development of the vast resources of the country' (21).

Khorgeshwar countered this by saying that the Europeans took away more than they gave back. Mental slavery to them was helping them grow stronger. They thrived by displaying their superiority and highlighted the inferiority of the natives and thus tightened their hold over them by showing that they were underdeveloped and lacked scientific outlook. They were judged and scrutinised on various counts like – cultural practises, customs, language and beliefs. It became habitual of Europe to approach other cultures as objects of study, bodies of knowledge to assemble and to bring into shape. The result was European self-projection and representation of the people who inhabited the lands they claimed as uncivilised and uncouth. They were represented by way of stereotypic reproduction as less civilised, savage, wild or headless mass. Their hegemony was marked by a strong belief in

the potential for universalisation of its knowledge in the fields of science, politics and religion. They were overcome by the conviction that the rest of the world could be understood in their terms. They justified the violence, exploitation, invasion and occupation of the native territories by time and again derogating their cultures. This fact is supported by M. S. Nagarajan in his book *English Literary Criticism and Theory*, in the following words:

There is an inherent clash between the native, indigenous precolonial cultures, and the culture imposed on the natives by the imperial forces. Cultural colonisation still exists, and there has been no complete decolonisation. . . . Colonist discourse represents the language in which colonisers expressed their superiority over the natives. . . . The colonisers were the centre, 'the self', and the colonised were the margins, 'the other'. This is the practice of 'othering' going by names such as 'the demonic other', or the 'exotic other'. It is the result of the long-held arrogant and supercilious belief in the racial superiority of the Caucasian over Asiatic. This attitude, of raising the European culture as the ultimate standard by which to measure the other cultures, is designated Eurocentrism which employs what is called the philosophy of 'universalism'. European ideas and experiences were universal, the standards for all to follow (185-86).

Thengphakhri was a brave woman with sound thinking and reasoning ability. She was shown the progressive and humanitarian face of the British empire and worked for them with the belief that their rule was ushering in an era of peace, progress, prosperity and development for the people. This belief changed when she saw the poor farmers suffering and struggling due to crop failure and drought and further reeling under the pressure of sky-high taxes. The soldiers resorted to cruelty in order to recover their dues. This plight of her fellow countrymen moved her to rebel against the British for whom she was working loyally. This act of rebellion was not a stray incident in those times as the unrest in the whole country was increasing. There were myriad reasons behind this rise of nationalism; the first and the foremost being the repressive policies and racial arrogance of the colonisers. Laws were framed to put the natives at a disadvantage which created a widespread discontent and disillusionment throughout the country.

The economic exploitation of the country resulted in increased poverty and backwardness everywhere. By importing raw material from India and then creating extensive markets for their finished goods by resorting to unfair trade practices led to agitation and

aggression. These reasons augmented with the growth of education, modern knowledge and development of communication and emergence of a number of national and vernacular newspapers helped in awakening the national consciousness which finally paved way for Indian independence.

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Petite Histoires of a Postmodern Narrative: Filming Hamlet to Haider

Mukundeshwari A

Abstract

Adaptation is change in reaction to a novel stimulus. The term "adaptation" is used in reference to the cinematic practise of incorporating a pre-existing story, concept, topic, or other element into a new work. Since the industry's inception in India in 1938, adaptations of Shakespearean plays have frequently been included. Vishal Bhardwaj has won a flock of awards for his work as a writer and director on three Indian adaptations of Shakespearean tragedies: *Maqbool* (2003) based on *Macbeth*; *Omkara* (2006) based on *Othello*; and *Haider* (2014) based on *Hamlet*. Comparing literature and cinema, it is clear that each has its own strengths and weaknesses. Many things must be cut, many must be added, and many tests must be done when adapting a source to the intended media depending on the restrictions and characteristics of the targeted medium. Any film based on a Shakespeare play should be viewed without preconceived notions. The present paper throws light on Vishal Bhardwaj's movie *Haider*, an adaptation of the novel *Hamlet* while focusing most importantly on Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation*.

Key words: Film Adaptation, Indian Film Industry, Vishal Bhardwaj, Shakespearean Literature

Since the beginning of civilizations, authors, playwrights, directors, musicians, choreographers, and designers have been altering novels. However, this does not imply that taking into account this behaviour in our own contemporary culture would not yield novel insights. How an adaptation becomes relevant in the present is likely one of the most important questions surrounding them. Are there certain things that cannot be modified, and who makes that decision?

A Theory of Adaptation, written by Linda Hutcheon in 2006, theorises the adaptation process in order to investigate these issues. Hutcheon contends that all media share a fundamental similarity with regard to their function in the adaptation process, and all genres offer insight into how adaptation works. This presumption sets up her technique, which entails choosing a text-based problem that affects a range of media, devising comparative

research methods, and then deriving the theoretical implications from several textual instances.

In the book's introduction, she makes it clear that the book is not a series of case studies, but rather a comparison of adaptations in different types of media, such as literature, film, theatre, opera, TV, video games, and interactive websites. Her open-minded approach leads to a basic and in-depth discussion of the complicated idea of adaptation.

Hutcheon talks about three ways to interact: by narrating orally, by portraying, and by doing something new together. These three ways are the basis for most of what she says. Then, she talks about how "forms" like opera, musical theatre, film, video games, and so on represent and transfer expression from one mode to another. Adaptive expectations are met because each genre has its own set of rules that make it stand out. So, each genre deals with things like point of view, interiority/exteriority, time and tense, ambiguity, irony, symbols, and silence in different ways.

She argues for Postmodernism by calling attention to Lyotard's 'incredulity towards metanarratives' (Lyotard 1984: xxiv) Hutcheon states that there are countless 'little narratives (*petite histoires*) as against grand narratives (*grand histoires*) claiming for attention.' There is no single Truth; there are instead multiple truths demanding legitimation.

The crisis in Kashmir was filmed by Vishal Bhardwaj as a little narrative (*petite histoires*) from a postmodern perspective. Vishal Bhardwaj has won acclaim for his adaptations of Shakespeare's tragedies and for his narrative style. His *Maqbool* (2014) is an adaption of *Macbeth*, and *Omkaara* (2016) a retelling of *Othello*. That Bhardwaj can "appropriate the films in an altogether other cultural setting" is a key part of his excellence. The initial setting of *Haider* was the 16th century in Denmark, but like *Maqbool* and *Omkaara*, it has been completely changed to the 1990s in Kashmir. In the same way that Hamlet is set in rotten Denmark, this one is in the violent state of Kashmir. It is worth noting that before *Haider*, Bollywood had already made several films portraying the religious and political divisions in Kashmir, like *Mission Kashmir*, *Lakshya*, *Tango Charlie*, etc. None of these movies, however, did as good a job of depicting Kashmir as Bhardwaj's version did.

Haider's modern interpretations of Shakespeare's characters have baffled Bhardwaj, who would not believe that he managed to bring together characters from the 16th century with the current reality in Kashmir. As the film opens, we see the sympathetic expert Hilaal Meer (Narendra Jha) tending to a helpless aggressor. As a loyal supporter who doesn't care about his patients as people, he unfortunately pays a terrible price for his devotion. The next

morning, the Indian Army accuses him of being a fear seller and removes him from the scene of the crime during a crackdown. His son Haider, a student at Aligarh Muslim University, is studying for a test on Modern Revolutionary Poets, thus his leaving is very abrupt. Haider, played by Bhardwaj, is a Kashmiri who goes back to his hometown when his father disappears without a trace.

By the time the film gets to its deeper scenes, it is clear why Haider was shipped off to college: he's missing in action. While Shakespeare's Hamlet was sent to school, Bhardwaj's Haider was exiled to Aligarh so that he may escape the hardships of being a Kashmiri and live in peace. He began organising with the assailants at school and eventually brought a gun home with him. Given this, she sends him out into the world to better himself. In this movie, we see the predicament faced by Kashmiri parents who wish to give their children exposure to the outdoors while also protecting them from the ever-present but often-concealed danger of armed extremists. She tells Haider, "Tumhare ghar mei ghar jaisa kuch bacha nahi hai Haider," when he arrives in Kashmir and asks where he will be staying.

Both his father and his home had mysteriously vanished. What he once called home and the Kashmir he grew up in no longer stand. Unfortunately, his mother's friendship with his uncle is only the beginning of his problems. When her husband had disappeared and no leads had been found, it was difficult to see her dance and sing. Shocked by his mother's betrayal, he enlists the aid of his girlfriend and writer, Arshia, as he visits police stations and jail centres looking for his father. When he was on the verge of giving up, a mysterious sender named Roohdaar contacted him, promising details on his absent father, Dr Hilaal Meer. During Haider's visit, Roohdaar tells him everything that happened during their time in captivity, including the fact that his father has died and that his dying wish was for Haider to exact revenge against his uncle Khurram and abandon his mother Ghazala to God's justice.

Bhardwaj has breathed new life into the female Shakespearean characters, most notably Gertrude. In *Hamlet*, Gertrude is able to keep her voice buried behind the male black tar, making her a sort of underclass figure. No divine spark or Promethean energy has ever shone into Ghazala's heart. However, she breaks free from traditional masculine roles by using the same tools of patriarchy, such as trick, delegation, and diplomacy. She learns over time that Khurram used her as a political pawn and a sexual object.

No one can forget Khurram (Kay Menon), who portrayed Claudius. Kay looks every bit the part of the ruthless pacification leader with his caracal cap, white sherwani, clipped beard, and poisonous glare. He puts up a false front of helping the poor, but in reality, he

takes advantage of and misleads those who are most vulnerable. He should have been fighting for justice as a lawyer, but instead he recruited young men into the Ikhwani gang through shady means. The character of Arshia, played by Shraddha Kapoor, is a cross between Ophelia and Horatio. Both romantically and platonically, she is always there to help Haider out. As with Ophelia, she was limited by "familial obligation," but unlike Ophelia, she never lied to Haider. Until her dying breath, she fought him. The most important aspect of *Roohdaar* is his character. The story's climax occurs when he unexpectedly enters it. The ghost from the original *Hamlet* text has been replaced with Irrfan Khan's brilliant performance as *Roohdaar*. Due to the fact that *Rooh* means "soul" and *Roohdaar* is Hilaal Meer's soul, the name *Roohdaar* is laden with symbolism.

It has been said before that *Haider* stands out from other Bollywood movies because of how accurately it portrays life in Kashmir. This is the first mainstream Bollywood film to depict the tragic facts of the conflict in Kashmir, and it was adapted by Vishal Bhardwaj. The film was widely panned and debated because of its weighty social and political topics. *Haider* is much more than a 'Hamlet' adaptation for those who know about the terrible history of Kashmir. In their view, the film's political content is more important than its artistic or cinematic merits. Bhardwaj seems to have intended to reveal the 'geo political discourse' rather than recreate Shakespeare's story. The film's political message is unquestionably powerful. Putting *Haider* in Kashmir in 1995, Bhardwaj dissects the problems of armed insurgency, the standing of the Indian army, and its cruelty and power over the local community. Many scenes in the film show army imprisonment centres where civilians are kept and tortured horribly on the off chance that they are rebels.

Haider is a genuine Kashmiri tale, despite its Shakespearean origins. The horrors of the crackdown, the abuse of being treated as an alien in one's own country, the obsession with identity cards, the torture, and the deaths in custody, the half-widows, and the constant struggle of the parents of the disappeared. It is like going back in time to the Kashmir of the '90s, a place everyone would rather not remember. Bhardwaj's use of visuals in *Haider* is highly effective and serves to bolster the film's narrative and moral. Kashmir's tragic and traumatic state is supported by vivid depictions of blood and destruction. Scene 15 of the film features some of Bhardwaj's most graphic depictions of blood, as Hilaal operate on an injured militant. While Hilaal is working, Ghazala waits on the balcony below the attic. The noise seems to be coming from the drain. The water comes out a crimson tint. A young man carrying bloodstained napkins and tools and a large dish makes his way down the stairs. The

bowl holds a large quantity of blood. He hands the plate of blood over to Ghazala and then allows her to deal with it on her own.

Bhardwaj's frequent usage of the word "blood" conveys a sense of sadness among violence and devastation. As the movie progresses, there are numerous graphic depictions of violence and blood. Several people die in the movie's second act. The presence of gravediggers heightens the sense of desolation and decay. A mountain of shattered photographs greets Haider upon his long-awaited return to his childhood home. The visual images of his house being torn down after it were set on fire. In the film's final scene, Khurram is shown dragging himself down the ground, blood gushing from his severed legs, while Haider leaves him to die in a pool of his own blood.

Unlike Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in which all of the main characters—including Hamlet—die at the end, Bhardwaj's Haider ends without a clear resolution. Unlike Queen Gertrude, who drinks the poison accidentally, Ghazala takes her own life. In the aftermath, Haider runs off into the haze, leaving Khurram bleeding in a pool of blood. Bhardwaj offers two different solutions in this case. After a few steps, he either passes out or Roohdaar materialises from the haze, and Haider immediately flings himself into his arms. The manner of Haider's death is less certain than that of Prince Hamlet. In order to illustrate Kashmir's final emancipation from the chains of death, devastation, and pain, Bhardwaj has sacrificed a crucial trait of a tragedy, namely the death of the protagonist at the conclusion. With the exception of Haider, the central idea of a tragedy is never betrayed because every character dies at the end.

Vishal Bhardwaj moves Haider to Kashmir in the mid-nineties, from sixteenth-century Denmark. Bhardwaj's decision to set his adaption in Kashmir may be traced back to Basharat Peer's memoir *Curfewed Night*, as has already been mentioned: "...I began reading Basharat's book with Hamlet in mind, and by the time I had finished it, I had opted to partner with him on my version of Hamlet..."

Vishal Bhardwaj used a passage from the original book as the basis for his film *Haider (Hamlet)*. He makes comparisons to pivotal moments in the original play, but the differences are much more striking. When it comes to the essence of Shakespeare's work, Bhardwaj's adaptation of Haider is spot-on. There are several connections between Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider*.

There are parallels in terms of both subject matter and plot. Bhardwaj's adaptation, like *Hamlet*, is preoccupied with revenge, deceit, betrayal, and murder. To a same extent, all

of *Hamlet's* principal characters have made a solid impression on Haider. Bhardwaj's skill is in his ability to give his characters names that are both original and indicative of his Shakespearean inspiration. Therefore, Hamlet is now called Haider, Gertrude is now Ghazala, Claudius is now Khurram, Polonius is now Pervez, Learthes is now Liyaqat, and Ophelia is now Arshia. Hamlet's most famous scenes—the prayer scene, the nunnery scene, the closet scene, the mouse trap scene, and the grave diggers scene—are all present in Bhardwaj's interpretation, though with his own twists and colours. As an example, in scene 168 of the adapted version, Haider and Ghazala have a conversation that heavily relates to the famous closet scene from Hamlet, in which Prince Hamlet accuses his mother Gertrude of infidelity. This one shines with the repeated marriage vows to Khurram, while the other repeats the prayers during my father's funeral. Ghazala says, "I am not to blame for the death of your father." In an audible chuckle, Haider expressed his humour. Oh!" —Haider. That was very sad to see mom lie... You sprinted into Khurram's marriage bed as fresh flowers were being placed on my father's grave.

The film is set in present-day Kashmir rather than sixteenth-century Denmark. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was driven solely by vengeance, while Bhardwaj's *Haider* also attempts to convey the realities of Kashmir with the vengeance tragedy. As a result, the name "Kashmir" can make the character of "Haider" seem like the main character. The ghost appears early on in Hamlet, whereas Roohdaar doesn't show up in Haider until the movie's second act. Horatio is equally important to Hamlet's plot. In the original, he was Hamlet's trusted confidant and companion; in the new version, Arshia plays both roles. Whereas Claudius, Gertrude, and Hamlet all meet their ends in Hamlet, Bhardwaj's *Haider* is left open-ended. Unlike Queen Gertrude, who accidentally drinks the cup of poison, Ghazala takes her own life, Khurram begs for his life while lying in a pool of blood, and Haider simply disappears. Importantly, while Haider is in many ways a Shakespearean play, Bhardwaj's adaption places Kashmir at the play's centre and uses her to propel the plot forward in a way that would not be possible with Shakespeare's original characters.

When comparing *Hamlet* to the film's adaption, Haider, it becomes clear that the film makes use of appropriation rather than being a literal reproduction. Bhardwaj does a great job of comparing his version to the source material, but the changes are what really stand out. It is worth noting that the film doesn't deconstruct the idea of Shakespeare's tragedy, while changing the situation, language, location, and finale. Bhardwaj's attempt to portray the difficulties of living in Kashmir by way of Shakespeare is both serious and bold. Vishal

Bhardwaj was hence lauded all over the world for his originality in combining a revenge tragedy with the tragedy of Kashmir.

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Sense of Place in Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang*

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Abstract

The novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975) gave a fictional treatment to Place which hitherto remained as a background for presenting human drama. It explores the relationship between humans and place and how human-centric attitude impede the natural bonding between them. Industrial revolution and rapid mechanisation hastened the destruction of places. Capitalist forces erased ecosystems of the Deserts of Arizona and Utah. The members of the monkey wrench gang engage in a war with the machines to express their protest in this eco-fictional novel which draws a comparison between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism.

Keywords: Humans, Place, Mechanisation, Anthropocentrism, Ecocentric

Edward Abbey, occupies a prominent place along with Henry Thoreau, Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold and John Muir. His nonfictional work *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness* (1968), a record of his experiences of nature he documented in his journals, contributed in establishing the canon of environmental studies. His novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, published in 1975, received wide acclamation from the readers and it had a far reaching impact on the environmental activism of the time.

The story depicts the industrial invasion carried out by the capitalist forces in the desert regions of the American Southwest. It details the activities of the monkey wrench gang, a group of four rebels, who sabotage the machinery of the industries as a mark of protest against obliteration of place and the environment. It is said that the novel had inspired The Earth First! Movement. The activists, inspired by the monkey wrench gang, indulged in radical activities such as tree climbing, and destroying machines of industries responsible for environmental pollution. The name “monkey wrenching” has been used to mean sabotage ever since. Though *The Monkey Wrench Gang* is a humorous story that depicts a series of mischievous activities of sabotage, often called ecotage, it foregrounds the theme, erasure of place. This paper aims to study the fictional treatment received by Place in the novel and analyse the conflict emerging from the discord of human-place relationship.

Ecocriticism draws on the science of ecology. It studies the literary treatment of the relationship between humans and other constituents of the ecosystem, based on the premise

that any discord in the relationship will affect the balance of the ecosystem. In literature, Place always remained as a backdrop or a setting to present the human drama. Contrary to the tradition, the place plays a prominent role in *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. Abbey describes the glory and the grandeur of the landscapes that support life — animals, plants and native Americans: “ The Colorado, third longest river in America, murmurs past its sandy shores, swirls around fallen rocks, streams seaward under the limestone walls of Marble Canyon. Upstream, beyond the bend, lies the site of Lee's Ferry... Downstream, fifty miles away by water, is the river entrance to the Grand Canyon. On his left, north and west, the Vermilion Cliffs shine pink as watermelon...” (29). Abbey’s deep association and experiences of the desert of the Southwest that he documented in *The Desert Solitaire* also found an expression in this novel. The novel is abundant with the descriptions of landscapes. It reveals the topographical knowledge of Abbey.

Phenomenological studies of place by eminent social geographers like Yi-Fu Tuan, Edward Relph, Buttimer and David Seamon make it evident that place is the experience of the world we live in. Edward Relph explains: “Places are fusions of human and natural order and are the significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world. They are defined less by unique locations, landscape, and communities than by the focusing of experiences and intentions onto particular settings” (Relph 141). Places give identity to individuals as well as communities. Place attachment is therefore common in all regions. We could observe this phenomenon even among primitive tribal communities. Theorists opine that place does not only give physical comfort but it also provides emotional and spiritual solace to the individuals or communities attached with the place. Simone Weil states that “ It is necessary,” to be rooted in place for an individual, “ to draw well-nigh the whole of his moral, intellectual and spiritual life by way of the environment of which he forms a part” (Simone Weil 38). Rootedness in place develops a commitment and responsibility for that place and thus motivates a person to take care of it. The members of the gang engaged in the battle against the corporate industries evince their strong commitment to the place. Doctor Sarvis joins the gang after witnessing the Native American “Young men and women in the flower of their youth, like Hayduke there, or Bonnie, bleeding to death without a wound. Acute leukemia on the rise. Lung cancer. I think the evil in the food, in the noise, in the crowding, in the stress, in the water, in the air” (180). Hayduke, the anarchist, decides to fight against the anthropocentric forces bent on desecrating the wilderness of the place which gives him comfort. Smith is grieved at the loss of his place that is submerged under the waters of

the Glen Canyon Dam. Bonnie Abzug, the nurse and attendant of the doctor, develops a bond with the place after living there for many years. The gang is aggravated by the systemic eruption of the landscapes in the desert regions of Utah and Arizona. The perception of land in the West differs from the perceptions held by the Oriental and the primitive cultures. Land for the western mind is a resource and this attitude towards land intensified with technical advancement after the industrial revolution. But in Buddhism and in all primitive cultures land is regarded as the source of life, the mother Earth. Primitive cultures believe their place sacred for they are guarded by the spirit— *genius loci*. This novel is a fine display of a conflict between two opposing ethical viewpoints— anthropocentrism and ecocentrism.

Anthropocentrism or human-centric attitude is an ethical perspective that gives value to humans and considers other living and nonliving things as means to serve the human purpose. Ecocriticism on the other hand, views that all constituents of an ecosystem—living and nonliving— possess intrinsic worth, therefore as moral agents humans should consider their value in their moral interactions with them. If the capitalist forces supported by the governments represent the anthropocentric ideology, the members of the monkey wrench gang represent the ecocentric ideology. The deserts of the Southwest are invaded by a “consortium of companies and government agencies to open more strip mines and build even more coal-burning power plants in the same four-corners area...” (51). These capitalists are outsiders unlike the members of the gang. Therefore they have no sentimental longing for the region. Place attachment is possible when individuals live in a place for a longer period of time or when, according to Relph, the experience of a place is authentic and genuine. But the capitalists are neo colonial forces who regard the landscapes of the southwest as rich resources ready for exploitation. They regard only the instrumental value of it and attach no other priorities. They represent the western thought, which according to the ecocentrists, has its roots in the Judeo-Christian religious exegesis, Cartesian dualism and faith in reason. If the Great Chain of Being proclaims that humans occupy a place above the living and nonliving things in the hierarchy, humanism states that humans by virtue of possessing reason enjoy supremacy over the nonhumans. Ecocritics argue that anthropocentric attitude is founded on the premise of these western concepts. Capitalists who are establishing industries therefore have no ethical consideration for place. Placelessness is the bane of modernity. Marcel Proust laments that “sense of continuity with place” (Proust 288), is lost in modern times. Harvey Cox says that this is “one of the most deplorable characteristics of our time” (Cox 423). The monkey wrench gang decides to protest these neo colonial invasions by

waging a war against machines but not against humans. Doctor says, “We’re not dealing with human beings. We’re up against the megamachine. A megalomaniacal megamachine” (167). They indulge in monkey wrenching business: pouring Karo syrup in fuel tanks and pistons, cutting the billboards, removing the stakes fixed for road building, spoiling oil rigs, toppling tractors, damaging bulldozers, destroying railroads and road bridges. Anthropocentrism manifests in different forms in *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. The capitalist’s neo-colonialist attitude reflects the anthropocentric perspective. Anthropocentrism is so deeply rooted in society that economic priorities always supersede the ethical consideration of the environment. At the individual level Bishop Lovelace represents the anthropocentric greed for material gains. Bishop Lovelace, whose job is to lead the people in spiritual paths, is involved in different businesses. He works during free time as a vigilante to the sheriff’s in order to win their trust. He is involved in real estate business, oil, cattle and uranium business and wishes to run for state legislature. Anthropocentric forces are so strong and so invincible that the struggle of the monkey wrench gang appears insignificant and they face a defeat against the capitalists who had the support of the government. The police arrest the doctor, Bonnie and Smith on the charges of felony. However, on lack of evidence, they are punished for the misdemeanour of supporting Hayduke. The police declare that the uncompromising, nonconformist Hayduke is fired. Though the monkey wrench gang fails in their mission of halting the disruption of place and environmental pollution, they succeed in evoking the sense of place and the consciousness of environment in the readers. This humorous novel contains the thrill, and chase required by any Hollywood movie. The novel was a best seller and received huge popularity. Edward Abbey stated: “I write in a deliberately outrageous or provocative manner because I like to startle people. I hope to wake up people.... It’s hard for me to stay serious for more than half a page at a time” (Lensink 27). Abbey’s style of evoking environmental consciousness among readers differs from other writers. Scott Slovic stated that he shocks the readers by presenting the natural phenomenon in an unfamiliar way. He chose to alarm the minds and draw attention to the reality of the issues.

Abbey’s *The Monkey Wrenching Gang* successfully treated the impact of Anthropocentrism on human-place relationship. The novel explicates the systemic erasure of place due to industrialisation. The machines in this novel symbolise the invincible anthropocentrism.

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~English Language Teaching~

Emerging Trends in Digital Learning with Specific Focus on Acquiring Soft Skills

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Abstract

The importance of soft skills and the need to acquire them is universally accepted across the globe, irrespective of the industry. Over the last couple of years the Indian education system has been experiencing a huge transformation in the context of the changing labour markets, technological advancements, increasing demand for quality education, and the implementation of the National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic created a hitherto witnessed turbulence and upheaval in the education system worldwide, with academic institutions forced to shut down. One of the positive outcomes of the pandemic is the shift towards online learning and increased willingness to consider e-learning as an effective solution for lack of in-person and face-to-face instruction. Usage of digital inputs for imparting soft skills training also makes it possible to give the learners assignments that need to be submitted online, which are later evaluated automatically through the use of technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning. Unlike offline training sessions, online sessions on soft skills also provide the possibility of interaction and peer-to-peer learning amongst learners present in various geographical locations. It is an opportunity to increase the effectiveness of learning through diverse cultures and countries too.

Key Words: Soft Skills, Virtual Classrooms, Video-Conferencing Tools, Blended Learning, Emerging Technologies, Digitization

Introduction

The importance of soft skills and the need to acquire them is universally accepted across the globe, irrespective of the industry. Soft skills are a mix of competencies that determine how the individual becomes aware of self as well as others, and how the individual manages interactions and relationships with others. Every individual needs soft skills not only for fulfilling the job responsibilities, but also for the general wellbeing and personal growth.

One of the results of COVID-19 is that organizations now see an increased need for training their workforce on essential soft skills like communication skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and leadership skills. The changed scenario of 'Work from Home' now puts newer demands on the employees, forcing them to look for ways to acquire and strengthen appropriate skills that can help them continue to be competitive. Schools, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions had to adapt to the stringent conditions of lockdowns and social distancing. All academic institutions had to make the shift from traditional classroom-based instruction to online teaching and instructional methodologies.

Emerging technologies like cloud computing, machine learning, artificial intelligence, internet of things, augmented reality and virtual reality are now paving ways to innovative channels of teaching, which could never be imagined a couple of years ago. Along with other skills, soft skills to follow suit by being offered online through various formats include self-paced video courses and live interactive online teaching sessions. Blended learning is quickly becoming the staple approach towards imparting soft skills by leveraging the digital technologies.

Impact of COVID on Teaching and Learning

Over the last couple of years the Indian education system has been experiencing a huge transformation in the context of the changing labour markets, technological advancements, increasing demand for quality education, and the implementation of the National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a hitherto witnessed turbulence and upheaval in the education system worldwide, with academic institutions forced to shut down. Students and teachers were left with no other option but to engage in online classes through the use of virtual classrooms and videoconferencing tools. Over 260 million students are known to have been affected due to these changes, during the pandemic. Both public as well as private schools faced challenges in terms of increased student dropouts, teacher attrition, and learning processes reduced to a turtle pace. The pandemic brought to the fore the lack of readiness of the educational ecosystem in managing such unforeseen circumstances. Sustainability of the traditional teaching systems is now clearly questionable, which paves way to an approach that primarily revolves around digitization and leveraging emerging digital technologies.

A report published by KPMG says, “Experts estimate that the number of out of school children in India will double from 32.2 million in the aftermath of the pandemic, with children from marginalised communities disproportionately affected.” Students from affluent families had the benefit of access to online classes through computers, tablets, and other mobile devices. While at the same time those from the marginalised communities had to be distanced from any form of formal instruction due to lack of access to such devices. Majority of such learners suffered learning losses due to the absence of continuous engagement and ongoing learning practice. Evidence gathered during the study also indicates that, “students are now facing more complex learning losses without the attainment of the prerequisite foundational abilities. Socio-emotional development of children is also affected due to limited social interactions during the school closure period.”

Prior to the pandemic students used to engage in various forms of intrapersonal and extracurricular activities – both in formal and informal formats. Interactions with other students, teachers, educators, as well as counsellors used to facilitate the learning process. Peer-to-peer learning also used to be an important component of the learning acquisition process for many students. However, due to the lockdowns and shutting down of educational institutions students had to rely only on the virtual interactions. In fact, a vast majority of students are known to have just whiled away the entire duration of almost 18 months. Increased time that some children spent before the televisions and mobile screens resulted in many side effects including vision problems. Being locked down at home also meant lack of physical activity for many learners, which further aggravated the psychological stress caused due to the sudden changes.

Due to the pandemic and lockdowns many families lost their livelihoods in income earning potential. A number of children stopped going to schools even after the lockdowns were lifted, due to the inability of their families to pay the school fees. In many instances such families started involving their children in income-generation activities and other domestic chores. An estimate by UNESCO indicates that worldwide almost 23.8 million students may not get back to attending formal education through schools, colleges and other educational institutions.

Though many educational institutions have been able to shift the instruction into online mode, the inability of many families to provide their children with devices to access those online classes further increased the learning inequalities and created a vast digital divide.

Paradigm Shift: Demand for Online Learning

One of the positive outcomes of the pandemic is the shift towards online learning and increased willingness to consider e-learning as an effective solution for lack of in-person and face-to-face instruction. Left with no other option, many schools, colleges and universities were able to facilitate academic sessions through the use of virtual meeting and virtual classroom tools like Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Whatsapp, and Facebook Live as well as YouTube Live, etc.

Teachers, lecturers, and other academicians had to embrace digital technologies to deliver instruction to the learners. The concept of blended mode of learning is now universally accepted. Both the teachers and students had to enhance their digital skills, helping them cultivate a digital-savvy approach in the field of education and learning. Innovate and creative ways of delivering instruction including carrying out learning assessments, curriculum development, and pedagogy have emerged. Enhanced usage of Learning Management Systems (LMS) is now being witnessed in many academic institutions. Another interesting shift observed is the usage of study material in soft copy form and the willingness to acquire digital literacy skills.

A large number of teachers launched their own Youtube channels, offering educational videos on a wide variety of topics. Many private organizations also have started offering e-learning courses for almost every subject for every curricula right from the primary level to the post graduate level. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) also offers many digital resources for academicians and also for learners at the secondary and higher secondary level. Some of them are summarized below.

Resources offered at the Secondary Level

- **Diksha Portal:** Accessible through mobile apps on both the Android and iOS platforms, it provides a huge collection of ebooks in various languages for Class 1 to Class 12, offered by the CBSE and NCERT. It also offers e-learning content in the form of video lessons, text books, learner assessments, and practice sheets designed and developed by over 250 teachers as per the curriculum stipulated by CBSE and NCERT.
- **e-Pathashala:** Accessible through mobile apps it is created by NCERT offering content for all curricula right from Class 1 to Class 12 in the form of ebooks and audio as well as video tutorials in English, Hindi and Urdu.

- National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER): It offers a huge resource of books, video tutorials and interactive components like audios, documents, as well as images which are very useful for teachers as well as students. The content is aligned with the curriculum stipulated for Class 1 to Class 12 and also contains an excellent collection of STEM-based games.

Online education resources for Higher Education

- SWAYAM: It is a widely used online education platform offering almost 2000 courses related to subjects taught in engineering, humanities, social sciences, law, and management areas at the school level as well as at the higher education level comprising undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
- SWAYAM PRABHA: Another interesting initiative of the MHRD comprising almost 32 Direct-To-Home channels offering academic courses round the clock throughout the week. Students across the country can access these channels absolutely free through Doordarshan's Set Top Box. In addition to offering learning instruction for the primary and secondary school as well as for the higher education level focussed on undergraduate, and postgraduate and professional programs, these channels also cater to the learning requirements of out-of-school learners. Learning content related to vocational courses and teacher training modules are also offered in various domains including arts & agriculture, commerce, engineering, humanities, law, medicine, performing arts, social sciences, and technology.
- e-PG Pathshala: It is an online portal that offers content exclusively for subjects at the postgraduate level in the form of ebooks, video courses, and study material.

Soft Skills through Digital Learning inputs

Before COVID-19 pandemic, the efforts towards teaching soft skills through digital learning inputs were quite scattered and not widely spread. Due to the lockdowns and social distancing norms implemented in all countries, the need to innovate on modes and channels to impart soft skills through online mode resulted in concerted efforts.

Though there is now wider acceptance and keen interest to engage learners in soft skills related online sessions, there are many hurdles that need to be crossed. For instance, the sensory inputs that were possible through offline instructional sessions like body language, facial expressions, and emotional displays through non-verbal gestures are no longer

available through digital learning inputs. This drawback and many other concerns like poor quality of hardware and software, lack of strong bandwidth, etc., can be addressed by putting in place appropriate systems and processes. For instance, in the last 18 months the quality of internet connections in terms of the speed, strength, and accessibility has been improved manifold by the service providers. The launch of 5G spectrum in the country is now adding more fuel to accelerate the growth of soft skills instruction through digital media and online sessions.

Organizations that offer soft skills online are able to ensure effectiveness of the instruction by splitting up the soft skills training programs into smaller-duration sessions that are conducted over multiple interactions. Platforms that offer the facility to conduct online classes have introduced many interesting, innovative and effective tools to increase the impact of the instruction for learners. For example, the feature of ‘break-out rooms’ lets the instructor organize all learners into smaller groups and conduct small group discussions, just like the way it used to be done in the face-to-face mode. Participants of one break-out room cannot see or hear the discussions happening in other break-out rooms. The instructor has the facility of joining any break-out room with just the click of the mouse, and is also able to move from one room to another. Other online tools like polls, interactive chats, whiteboards, online quizzes and tests, animated graphics, on-screen annotations, live collaboration tools, audio and video features, are further adding more charm and effectiveness to the way soft skills can be imparted through online mode.

In addition, the usage of various training tools like handouts, slides, power point presentations, and questionnaires, audio and video props can now be used more effectively, as they can be displayed with higher resolution on the screen of every learner. Traditional training methodologies like lecturing, group discussion, roleplays, simulations, and games can now be more effectively conducted by leveraging animations, audio and video inputs. Carrying out learner assessments can also be streamlined through the usage of online exam tools that can generate random sequencing of the same question bank, including randomization of questions, answer options, and test sections. Adaptive testing is also another major advantage of online assessments, which facilitates customization of the questions based on the learner responses.

Of particular mention is the automation of psychometric assessments, which are the major component of every training session on soft skills. Not only can the psychometric assessments be administered online, but also the responses can be collated and analysed

easily for generating the psychometric reports. The data collected through such assessments can be analysed to make appropriate changes in the assessments themselves, to ensure higher levels of reliability and validity.

Usage of digital inputs for imparting soft skills training also makes it possible to give the learners assignments that need to be submitted online, which are later evaluated automatically through the use of technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning. Unlike offline training sessions, online sessions on soft skills also provide the possibility of interaction and peer-to-peer learning amongst learners present in various geographical locations. It is an opportunity to increase the effectiveness of learning through diverse cultures and countries too.

The drawbacks of imparting soft skills through digital mode include lack of in-person interaction, decreased sensitivity towards other learners (due to the absence of direct interaction), lesser participation and involvement from all learners, etc. These drawbacks can be addressed by ensuring that the teachers and trained on the different hardware and software tools as well as technologies needed to sustain the learner interest during the online classes and encourage them to be more interactive and participative.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has opened new doors for wider acceptance of e-learning not only for hard skills but also for soft skills. Online instruction is here to stay – the future is going to be more and more dependent on digital learning tools.

While there is an increased interest and curiosity to leverage the digital media and online tools for imparting soft skills online, unless the teachers and trainers who conduct the soft skills sessions online are adequately trained and equipped with the knowledge to use the plethora of digital tools available at their disposal, the effectiveness of instruction cannot be achieved.

Teachers and trainers who teach soft skills need to be trained so that they are able to develop and strengthen their own soft skills, with particular focus on areas like online / digital communication, planning and organizing skills, Patience and empathy, effective listening skills, cultural awareness, interpersonal and relationship building skills, creative thinking and problem solving skills, as well as teambuilding and leadership skills.

Instructors need to be trained on how to make the online classes more interesting, by including simulations, interactive exercises, polls, group activities, as well as animated

graphics. Teachers should be more approachable, and be willing to set an example in terms of best practices during online classes. Effective usage of various training tools and training methodologies combined with an intense desire to create future leaders through imparting soft skills should be the priority of the soft skills teachers.

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