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Dear Readers & Contributors,

Welcome to the October 2020 issue of IJELLS. Each issue is special to me as I embark on a new journey of learning with compiling the articles. This is the 9<sup>th</sup> year of publishing, 45<sup>th</sup> issue and I have undertaken this journey of reading, reviewing, editing, rewriting, compiling and learning that many times.

We have an interesting collection of Haiku, Short Story and research articles. Hope it is an enjoyable and learning experience reading this issue. I am introducing a young photographer, Bhargav Ram, whose work is on the cover page.

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 the authors self publish their work. Check out our website at [www.ijellspublishing.org](http://www.ijellspublishing.org) to understand more.

Happy Reading and Happy Sharing!

Dr. Mrudula Lakkaraju  
Chief Editor

## Founding & 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.

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**Life-ing through**

Jitendra Menghani

kingfisher dives  
fish darts, and . . .  
life goes on

dive through the drone  
of persistent noise, to find  
an oasis of calm

flow of ink  
colonizes white space, to create  
an empire of scribbles

energy from sun  
percolates my eyelids –  
inshining

crafty hands infuse  
in stone, brick and steel  
a desire to seduce

scavengers –  
on Discovery channel  
and prime time news

pack of dogs  
wake the night with a  
choral symphony

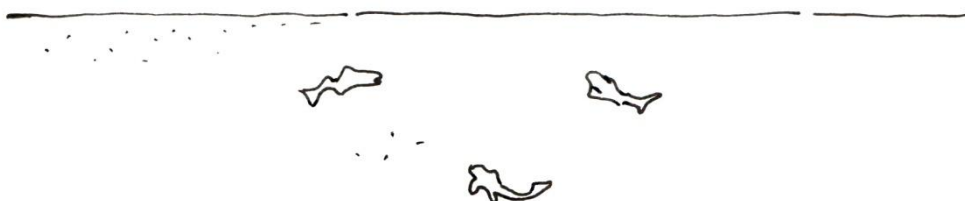
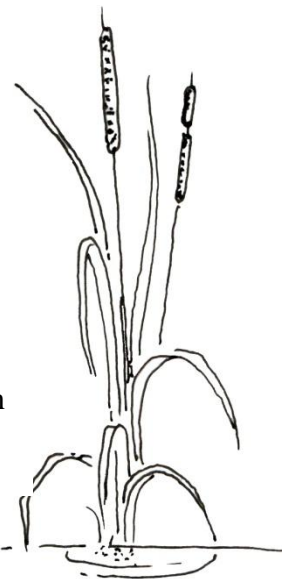
overtures of  
democratic traffic, make  
a loud republic

daily I toil  
shrink mountains and cross rivers  
oh . . . my Himalayan abode

my partner  
stabbed me today  
with a lie

wet your ideas  
and stories, in stream of  
reflected emotions

a distant mirage  
soothes my soul, when eyes open  
how my body burns



## Sunshine is not lost

Anita Konwar

“Deuta, are you fine?” Mr. Baruah did not know when he fell asleep while reading a book. He suddenly wakes up at the call of Jishnu. For the last eight years, Baruah has been living a solitary life in his ancestral house. Jishnu is his only helping hand. Jishnu is an unemployed educated youth of the village Heujpur. He has his own family with his old mother, his wife Kamala and two years old son, Kripa. He cleans the house, cooks food for Baruah and gives him medicines at scheduled times. Sometimes he stays with Baruah at night. “Deuta, will you take a cup of tea?” Jishnu asks Mr. Baruah. “Yes, give me a cup of tea” He replies, “How is your mother now?” “She is not well, Deuta. It’s such a difficult time. I took her to the local doctor. He advised me to take her to Dibrugarh for better treatment. But I have no money to hire a car to go to Dibrugarh,” Jishnu sighs. “Don’t worry Jishnu, I will try to find out a way,” Mr. Baruah says. Baruah helps Jishnu in his difficult times. So, he is always grateful to Baruah.

Three days have passed. There is no news from Jishnu’s side. These days, Baruah does not go out for a morning walk as lockdown was imposed. He has confined himself to the four walls of the house since the last two months. In these lonely hours, Baruah remembers Ila, his deceased wife. His son Rakesh is working in a multi-national company in USA and his daughter Bela lives in Bangalore. They are busy with their own lives. Since the death of Ila, Baruah is living a solitary life and is now accustomed to it. His only company was Jishnu but since last few days, Jishnu has been going through some difficulties. In the absence of Jishnu, Baruah does not feel like cooking for himself. He cooks his meal only once and uses it for his dinner too.

One day Mr. Baruah was found worriedly standing near the gate. He sees Nirvan, a boy from his neighbourhood riding a bicycle. Nirvan calls out, “Kaka, how are you?” “I am well, Nirvan. Will you do me a favour, if you don’t mind?” Baruah hesitantly asks. Nirvan stops and enquires what Baruah needs. Baruah wants some groceries from the nearby shop. Baruah asks Nirvan if he knew anything about

Jishnu's mother. He is shocked to hear the news about her. She was found Covid-19 positive and her condition was very critical. In spite of the treatment she passed away in Dibrugarh medical college hospital the day before yesterday. Jishnu does not have a mobile phone, so Baruah does not have any option of calling him. Nirvan continues, "Kaka, the disease is very fatal. Senior people should be very careful." The tragedy is that the mortal remains of Jishnu's mother were not even allowed to be brought back to the village. She was cremated in a particular place which was fixed by District administration in the presence of only two persons from the family.

After coming back from Dibrugarh, Jishnu and his family are now in quarantine. They are not allowed to mingle with their neighbours. Baruah is very sad to know this. He has been thinking about extending help to Jishnu in this hour of crisis. Jishnu's mother was a very kind-hearted woman and she used to work at his house when Ila was alive. Baruah decides to provide some groceries to Jishnu. Knowing about his plan, his daughter warns her father not to go out and take the risk. But Baruah could not stop himself. He cycles to Jishnu's house with some groceries. He has gone out of his house after two months. The street seems to be deserted and sad like the winter trees. The surrounding atmosphere too looks gloomy. He feels very tired while riding his bicycle after a long time. After reaching the hut, he calls out to Jishnu from the bamboo gate on which a big banner is displayed, "Containment Zone". On hearing the voice of Mr. Baruah, Jishnu rushes out, "Deuta, why have you come out? You should not have taken the risk. The situation is not good. I am very worried about you."

Baruah replies "Don't worry Jishnu. I am alright. Take these groceries." "Deuta, you should instantly go home. You should take care of your health. This disease is very fatal. I have lost my mother. I do not want to lose you" says Jishnu. At the request of Jishnu, Baruah returns home instantly. The neighbours of Jishnu stare at him. They have started talking to one other, "This old man is out of his wits. He is taking risk at this age. If he falls ill, there is no one to look after him." Baruah overhears the conversations and does not heed them. He is not worried about his own life. To him, "It's all God's wishes. If the Almighty wants to keep him alive, nothing will happen to him." For him, Jishnu means more to his biological son who



do not have time to think about his old father. If Jishnu is taking so much care of him, he also has the same responsibility to help him in his hour of need.

On his way back, Baruah meets Jiban who is a constable in the local police station. "Sir, this is not good for your health to come out of your house," Jiban says to Baruah. Baruah explains to Jiban why he had to come out. Jiban was once a student of Mr. Baruah. So he warns his teacher not to take any risk and offers to help him. He gives his contact number and asks Baruah to inform him if he needs any help. Feeling grateful, Baruah returns home. "Humanity is not lost. God is there for his help" Baruah thinks. In absence of Jishnu, at least Jiban will extend his helping hand to him and the sun keeps shining.



## Representation of Women in the Movies *Padman* and *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*

Anavisha Banerjee

### Abstract

The paper will explore the challenges associated with the Indian traditions and customs that lead to the stereotyping of women even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The analysis will look at the representation of women in two Bollywood movies, namely *Padman* (2018) and *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha* (*Toilet: A Love Story*) (2017), where the women's body and bodily functions are bound within strict patriarchal constructs. In *Padman*, Laxmikant Chauhan (role played by Akshay Kumar) attempts to create a machine for vending low-cost sanitary towels for rural women, to rid them of the unhygienic materials used during their menstrual cycle. Similarly, in *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*, we see an urban educated woman, Jaya (role played by Bhumi Pednekar), refusing to stay with her villager husband, Keshav (Akshay Kumar) because she challenges the lack of public and private toilets in her husband's village, which had made public defecation a part of tradition and a norm for the rural masses. Both the movies will be analysed with reference to the gendered idea of body and body politics. The concepts of French Feminism, public and private space and the notion of "male gaze," will question these stereotypical constructs.

**Key words** - Gender Constructs, Body and Body Politics, Public and Private, Gender Equality

### Introduction

The paper focuses on the representation of women in the two movies '*Padman*' and '*Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*' and how these movies challenge the patriarchal constructs in their own ways.

The body of women becomes the domain of body politics and gender stereotypes in the name of customs and traditions. Ironically, this too becomes a tool to question these gender constructs. This aspect becomes the main focus of my argument as it looks at the body and bodily functions of women especially with reference to menstrual cycle and open defecation (the major concerns of the two movies) which are also challenges faced by women even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (across the rural and urban divide).

Analysis of these arguments will be done using the background of French Feminism, especially Luce Irigaray's notion of "when the goods get together." It associates with the politics of gender equality and commodification. This can be analysed in *Padman* since the attempt of Pari Walia to help Laxmikant make low cost sanitary pads and in the process, bring the village women together, helps in exploring the notion of gender equality. Moreover, the attempt of women to come together and question this commodification reflects notions of gender subordination.

Similarly, in *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*, the attempt of Jaya to bring together the women of the village and spread awareness against open defecation shows the possibility of solidarity of women in questioning gender and customary constructs of ablution to take place outside the house. Like the representation of women in Irigary's essay, the women in these movies too, resist objectification and diktats of patriarchal constructs. In *Padman*, subsequently, women become an important player in the market economy by jointly producing sanitary napkins at subsidized rates.

American philosopher, Judith Butler's notion of "performativity," will also help in understanding gender constructs. In *Padman*, one can understand, the notion of taboo associated with menstrual cycle and Gayatri's refusal to allow her husband to improve this unhygienic option during that period. This situation forces us to rethink the close association of body and the gender norms. Similarly, in *Toilet*, the aspect of Hindu notion of cultural propriety and modesty imposed on women especially rural women, where they have to cover their face with "ghunghat," even if they are openly defecating in the field.

The concept of Laura Mulvey's "scopophilia" or "male gaze" explored in *Padman*, which represents the objectification of women because of their bodily functions, and forced to stay indoors, especially during menstrual cycles, to keep away from this "male gaze." In *Toilet*, ironically, when women should be indoors, the custom forces them outdoors especially during attending a nature's call. The notion of gender taboo has its own erroneous pattern at the hands of patriarchy and it challenges the dignity and identity of women in various ways.

Partha Chatterjee's colonial interpretation of "ghar" and "bahir" (public and private space) become important indicators in analyzing the challenges faced by women towards empowerment and independence. If *Toilet* looks at the breach in private sanctity of women during ablution, *Padman*, reflects the taboo that women face in putting forth their demand in a "public" forum for hygienic and sanitary provisions during menstrual cycles. Instead, they prefer to hide behind closed doors of their "private" home, thus further subjugating themselves to these gender constructs.

The above issues are further elaborated in detail during the course of the discussion. The article is divided into two sections, the first part will outline the theoretical aspects on which the arguments will be based and the second part will relate these ideas to the two movies where women's body and its functions become an area of contention and debate within the patriarchal structure.

## I

This section will begin with a brief history of French Feminism and contextualize Luce Irigary's ideas regarding women, their bodies and their position in the economic market.

French Feminism began during French Revolution in 1789 and women demanded equal rights to vote, education and other opportunities. It was the first phase of feminism. The second phase, the period between 1940-1990 women got the right to vote and access to abortion and birth control. The third phase is the period from the year 2000 onwards and focuses on many of the unresolved tensions of the

second wave of feminism and extending itself to the post-colonial issues of Third World Feminism.

French Feminism is defined by the writings of Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray. They base their theories on Simone de Beauvoir's concept of "woman as the other" and examine the binaries of men and women, mind and nature, which are the dominant literary representations of sexual difference. French feminists try to create a positive representation of the feminine in a new language, which is often referred to as "*écriture féminine*" or women's writing (Humm 23).

The basic premise of French Feminism is based on attacking Sigmund Freud's (20<sup>th</sup> century Austrian psychoanalyst) phallogocentric psychoanalytical theory of power based on the biological difference between men and women where the "phallus" seems to empower men and women "lack" it therefore leading to "penis envy." Moreover, the sexual act of active and passive participation also defines the superior status of men in the power structure and the subordination of women.

French Feminists like Luce Irigaray (Belgian born 1930) deduce, that based on these ideas culture is patriarchal and so is language, thus leaving no or very little scope for exertion of women's identity. To explain this, she uses the concept of Jacques Derrida (Algerian born French philosopher and post-structuralist), where he sees that language is not logocentric but a cultural production. Derrida uses the idea of *différance* (difference) relating it with signifier and signified. The prime focus is Irigaray's essay in a collected volume titled as *This Sex which is not One* (1977), (originally written) where she talks about women as commodity as they are treated like goods or currency in being transferred from one man to another. She views it as an incestuous and endogamous tie that would paralyse the economy and lead to a socio-cultural homosexuality. This homosexuality is in combat when women are assigned different economic roles in the society. For this, women need to come together as a homogeneous mass and exert their identity, thus she emphasizes on the notion of "when the goods get together," where women can challenge or reshape their commodification (to their advantage) by bending the boundaries of the system. Moreover, Irigaray's essays, "Women on the Market" and "Commodities among Themselves," (part of the collection in *This Sex which is not One*) also help clarify these ideas. Some quotes from her essays will make the ideas clearer.

Irigaray states, "...all the systems of exchange that organize patriarchal societies and all the modalities of productive work that are organized, valued and rewarded in these societies are men's business. The production of women, signs and commodities is always referred back to men (when a man buys a girl, he 'pays' the father or the brother, not the mother...), and they always pass from one man to another, from one group of men to another. The workforce is always assumed to be masculine, 'products' are objects to be used, objects of transaction among men alone" (Irigaray 171).

The above quote reflects Irigaray's concern for the incestuous or homosexual nature of commerce and she focuses on the alternative heterosexuality and to quote "Heterosexuality is nothing but the assignment of economic roles: there are producer subjects and agents of exchange (male) on the one hand, productive earth and commodities (female) on the other" (Irigaray 192). She looks for a different kind of market where women are not subordinated, since the earlier model is a "male"

structure where women work under male guardianship. She wants women to assert themselves for equality within a heterosexual matrix, thus destabilizing the masculine notion of market and economy. She states in the end "But what if these commodities refused to go to the 'market'? What if they maintained 'another' kind of commerce among themselves?" These are challenging questions, which seem to reassess the male dominance of market economy. However, the notion of women's body as an empowering tool is emphasized in her essay "When our Lips Speak Together," where the multiple erogenous zones of women's body counter the Freudian "lack" and enhance the bonding of women since it gives them the strength to question patriarchy, " You/I: we are always several at once. And how could one dominate the other? Impose her voice, her tone, her meaning?" (Irigary 209). In this manner, she questions the dominance of language as a patriarchal construct and the multiple ways in which women can assert themselves.

Now, to move on to Judith Butler (American philosopher, born 1956 and gender theorist), who challenges the social constructs through her notion of "gender performativity." She reworks the accepted distinction between sex and gender where the former is seen as biological and the latter is seen as a social construct. In her book *Gender Trouble* (1990, originally written), she states, "sex is culturally constructed as gender," since there are norms that define the biological body of men and women. If sex and gender are different then women need not be forced to fit in the cultural construction of "female body" and men need not be related to the "male body." Both the sexes are forced to fit into the normative gender constructs, thus performing their roles in the form of "gender performativity." Therefore, babies born with ambiguous genitalia are operated upon to be normalized into male or female. Butler's idea of performativity also discusses the "repetitiveness" of the acts as "ritualized production," for example; a small boy is forced to wear shirt or other clothing styles worn by boys of his age, which he will still follow as a man. He will not be allowed to wear frocks or dresses because it is expected to be for girls or women. In other words, "identity is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender and sexuality."

These aspects are related within the Indian society, with reference to gender constructs and how cinema (which is also seen as a reflection of society) captures these issues and allows women a liminal space in the expression of their identity, of Subjecthood.

The film critic, Laura Mulvey in her article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", effectively captures the gendered perception in cinema (originally written, 1989). She uses the psychoanalytical background and its fascination with the human form. She uses the term "male gaze" and relates it to the psychology of "scopophilia" (Mulvey 59). In feminist terminology, "male gaze" refers to the act of depicting women as sexualized objects of the pleasure of the male viewer. The male gaze has three perspectives: the man behind the camera, the male characters within the cinematic representation and the audience or spectator gazing at the image. Scopophilia refers to the sexual pleasure that one derives from looking at pornography or nude bodies. Laura Mulvey relates this concept with cinema where the women are objectified through item songs or representations where their body movements or clothes are designed to titillate the audience or the male actors in the

movies. In the selected movies, we will look at the aspect of “male gaze” or scopophilia, which leads to the objectification of women because of their bodily functions. Sometimes pushes women indoors and incapacitates them (especially during menstrual cycles) and ironically, at other times, when they should be indoors, the custom forces them outdoors especially during attending nature’s call. The notion of gender taboo has its own erroneous pattern at the hands of patriarchy and it challenges the dignity and subjectivity of women in various ways. Both the movies show that women resist and ultimately reclaim the space and dignity that belongs to them.

Now, to move on to the second part of the paper, the movies will be analysed in detail according to the theories that have been presented above.

## II

The movie *Padman* (released in February 2018) is directed by R Balki and produced by Twinkle Khanna, who is also a newspaper columnist, film actress and interior designer. The movie is based on her book, *The Legend of Laxmi Prasad*, which is an adaptation of the true story of a Coimbatore entrepreneur, Arunachalam Muruganatham (25 Nov 1961) who invented low-cost sanitary pad making machine. Hence, the movie takes inspiration from the story of this legendary man who decided to change the lives of thousands of women. It is commendable that Twinkle Khanna as a producer, decided to invest in this movie to spread awareness regarding the taboo of menstruation, which has led many rural women to live in unsanitary conditions, and even risking their lives at times. The movie spreads the message and awareness around this taboo subject by highlighting that sanitary pads should be easily available at affordable prices for every woman since she deserves a life of dignity. The movie has the star cast of Akshay Kumar (also the husband of Twinkle Khanna), who plays the role of Lakshmikant Chauhan. Radhika Apte plays the role of Laxmi’s wife, Gayatri and Sonam Kapoor acts Pari Wali, an urban woman.

The story has a rural setting and begins with Laxmi’s concern for his wife who uses a dirty rag of cloth during her menstruation. The unhygienic cloth and the lack of sanitary condition could be life threatening but she refuses to let go of it. The taboo of menstruation and social ostracization that women face during those days prevents her and many women of her village to discuss her problems with men. She is also disgusted at her husband’s attempt to make a cotton sanitary pad for her. Although it leaks every time adding to her humiliation, Laxmi refuses to give up because he loves and cares for her, so much so, that he buys a pack of sanitary pad from the market although it is quite expensive but Gayatri refuses to use it. Laxmi wants to create low-cost sanitary napkins and give dignity to the life of his wife, sisters and other women of the village but sadly, the taboo of the subject leads to his humiliation and rejection from his wife, sister, medical students and even the village authorities. Gayatri repeatedly cries with folded hands, saying that “yeh auroto wale baat hai, aap beech mein mat aiye” (“this is women’s topic, you don’t interfere”) Gayatri’s statement also reinforces the fact that biological sex is also a normative

construct where discussion of issues like menstruation is a taboo especially in front of male members.

The heteronormativity may be related to Judith Butler's idea of "performativity," where sex is also a gendered construct and segregates through the boundaries of male and female discussions. The ridicule and later anger of the family members and the villagers force Laxmi to believe that his efforts are unethical and insulting to women, therefore he should let them alone even if women suffer from incurable diseases in the later stages of their life. He can have an additional seat in his bicycle to make his wife comfortable, an acceptable public sight of marital conjugality but no right to make her life comfortable. This fact leads Laxmi to experiment with himself by playing the role of a woman during her menstrual cycle as he adds a balloon filled with goat blood to check the endurance of his created sanitary pad but it ends in a disastrous result and additional humiliation, forcing his wife to live separately and almost divorcing him. Ultimately, it also led to his ostracization from the village. This proves that the gender roles that are seen as "normative" through its "repetitiveness" cannot be questioned easily. Therefore, the cultural constructs are binding for men as well as for women, but the latter suffer more since they are bound to the private space and cannot even think of expressing themselves.

The public and private space becomes an important aspect for gender constructs in the Indian scenario and political scientists and anthropologists like Partha Chatterjee associate the private space with women since they are seen as the upholders of moral and ethical conventions whereas the public domain belongs to the men. It is the public space where men interact with the world, especially through their socio-economic participation. Chatterjee discusses this aspect in the colonial context (his essay "Nation and its Women" from *Nation and its Fragments*) but the stereotypes hold true even in today's age. In the context of the movie, Laxmi is able to move out of his family, house and village and shift into an urban location ("public" space), working in a professor's house in search for his entrepreneurial venture whereas Gayatri is taken back by her parents, thus shifting from one house to another ("private" space). She may also be related to Irigaray's representation of women as commodity in the market, handed over from father to husband and vice-versa, despite her unwillingness. However, later, through the efforts of liberated women like PariWalia, this commodification is questioned, as they become important producers in the market- "another kind of commerce" (as Irigaray stated). However, it begins with Laxmi, who learns about the market economics by finding out about the leak proof cellulose fiber, the cost involved in the import of pad making machine and finally inventing a machine of his own.

Laxmi faces different challenges and one of it is that he lacks a feedback about this woman's product (sanitary pad), without which his venture fails. It is at this point, that a liberal minded woman like Pari Walia, also a management student, accidentally lands up in his life. She certifies Laxmi's self-created pad as normal, like the one available in the market, "jaise pad hota hai" (Tr. just as a pad is supposed to be) and this statement gives Laxmi the stepping stone to success. However, it is Pari who plays an important role in helping him get the funds and set up low-cost pad manufacturing machines. Although, she was not an entrepreneur but her ideas and

skills acquired through education and with her father's support helped Laxmi achieve his goal. She did not become a commodity in the market (like some of Irigary's women) but helped deliver commodities (pads in this case) and jobs to underprivileged women and gave them a chance towards economic independence (like Irigary's "another kind of commerce"). She took this opportunity as her project (rejecting her job in the city) and came along with Laxmi. She went to different villages and convinced women to set-up small pad manufacturing machines and in turn, it provided jobs to other women, thus giving rise to a small number of women entrepreneurs who started to expand gradually. Pari was an exception among the women who defied gender constructs as she was raised by her father and shared everything with him. Maybe this allowed her to discuss Laxmi's experiment with her instead of shying away from it because of the taboo related with this subject. Although, her urban upbringing played an important role but many women still hesitated in giving a feedback as seen in the case of the medical students. Laxmi gets an award for the "Life Changing Innovation of the Year," gives a speech at UNICEF and is awarded a Padmashri, Pari does not come in the limelight and her brief romantic love with Laxmi is thwarted as he goes back to his wife and village. He is given a heroes' welcome after the national and international recognition.

The taboo of menstrual cycle represents the objectification of women's body (by binding them in the private quarters) and hence underlines an aspect of "male gaze" or scopophilia. However, the notion of love between the husband and the wife (Laxmi and Gayatri) and their physical interaction is hardly visible. The brief possibility of an unexpected romantic love between Laxmi and Pari (depicted by a kiss) is interrupted by a phone call from Gayatri, forcing Laxmi to think of his wife. The movie tries to depict that the mental understanding is far greater than the physical one. Moreover, the movie does not have any item songs but begins with a beautiful song depicting the conjugal love between Laxmi and Gayatri. His love for his wife also becomes the basis of his economic venture and the entrepreneurial skills of Pari help him empower his wife, Gayatri and other women in the market economy.

Now, to move on to the next movie, *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*, (*Toilet: A love story*), a 2017 production and based on the real life achievement of Mr Shivram Narre and Mrs Anita Narre who pioneered the cause of public and private toilets in rural areas. A brief outline of the movie will be given before moving on to its analysis. Although the movie has a comic sentiment, it underlines a very serious issue.

The movie is set in a small village of Mathura, known as Mandgaon (now Nandgaon). Keshav (Akshay Kumar) and his brother, Naru run a cycle shop under the guidance of his father, who is addressed as Pundit ji. Keshav falls in love with Jaya (Bhumi Pednekar) while delivering a cycle to her house, located at the village suburbs. They meet several times, sometimes in the local train since she commutes for her classes. Keshav comes across a hoarding of a coaching institute and realizes that Jaya is no ordinary girl but was a topper in her school. Subsequently, they fall in love and get married. However, she soon realizes that Keshav's house does not have any private toilet, nor does the village have any public toilets and the women are forced to travel long distances to defecate in the fields or by the river in the early hours of the morning to avoid the sight of general public. She is humiliated as she is



forced to become a part of women's gang to enjoy the "lota party" (because of the lota or utensil of water they carry) since it becomes a place of gossip. Keshav, who was adamant in the beginning, soon realized her woes because of her modern upbringing and does various "jugaads" (temporary arrangements) to pacify her. It included stealing portable toilets, visiting houses with toilets and finding train stops in the morning in the Mandgaon junction, so that Jaya can ease herself behind closed doors. All this is done because Pundit ji (a man believing in superstitions) refuses to have a "shauchalay" (toilet) within his home. However, when everything fails, Jaya leaves her marital home. Keshav runs from pillar to post persuading the administrative authorities for a permanent solution to this problem because neither his family, nor the village sarpanch are cooperative. Moreover, even the village women are quite happy with their "lota party" because they feel that they are following the customs and traditions as laid down by the religious texts and enforced by their patriarchal authority.

It is imperative to note that unconsciously, in defending the cause of tradition, women become agents of patriarchy and complacent in their own degraded status. They do not find it shameful to expose their posterior while defecating in fields because their faces are hidden with a "ghunghat," symbolic of an ideal and cultured "bahu." These reflect the notion of "gender normativity," which Butler had discussed; a "repetitive" act/performance becomes a part of cultural construct and in this case, a part of Hindu tradition of an ideal wife/daughter-in-law.

As Jaya left for her parental home, she tried her best to convince these women for the last time (since every time she used to get taunts about her educated status), she finally tells them "main to mushkil se bahar nikal gayi, tumko to pata bhi nahi hai ki tum mushkil mein ho." She was talking about women being exposed to predatory male eyes, instances of rape, molestation and the fear of snakes and scorpions apart from wild animals. She also elaborated these reasons in a news channel when she finally decided to divorce Keshav to fight for the rights of women. Even Keshav is liberal minded enough to understand Jaya's plight as she is pressurized by her father-in-law and village members to accept and adjust to the customs. Keshav tells Naru "woh kyu badlegi apne aapko, sanskriti ko badalna hoga" and later his oft repeated phrase is "hamari ladai soch se hai, shouchalay se nahi." He also appeals to the women to fight for their dignity since they do not find it obscene and humiliating to lift their saris for a private act, which he sees as "ang pradarshan." His views reflect the notion of "scopophilia" male gaze which derogates women. Sometimes it is in the form of tractor lights or torch lights used to pry on this private activity of women. However, Keshav's greatest battle is with his father who is blindly religious and got Keshav married to a cow because he is a manglik and wanted a woman with two thumbs as his daughter-in-law for the sake of Keshav's stars. Jaya had to fake an extra thumb to enter the house as a "bahu."

Pundit ji also believed that having a toilet in the house or within its premises is against the "shashtras." He and later even the sarpanch quote the Manusmriti by saying that any bodily activity should be away from home. Keshav is intelligent enough to give a complete interpretation of the shloka by saying that it also mentions that the river should not be dirtied and the hands should be clean. Ironically, it is the opposite that happens during the toilet sessions. However, Pundit

ji feels that he is an ideal Brahman because he follows these customs even though blindly. He sees the concept of covered toilets as a colonial concept and a product of the dirty minds of the "angrez." Ironically, the dignity of women being compromised in the public place for a private act does not seem shameful or untraditional to Pundit ji. Partha Chatterjee's notion of "ghar" being a private space for culture and sanctity of Hindu tradition and womanhood as against the "bahir" as a public place prone to westernization and hence derogatory, seem to be in sharp contrast to the hypocritical notion of "sanskar" (values), and respect for tradition, that Pundit ji and the villagers seem to believe in.

Pundit ji attacks his "topper bahu" (as he calls/taunts Jaya), based on what he thinks, is her shallow thinking of demanding a private toilet. If the topic arises, he leaves his meal midway and says, "jyada padai likhai fail kar deti hai, fail (emphasis)," thus emphasizing the failure in life due to questioning one's own tradition. She is also humiliated on the basis of her non-Brahmin background, since she is a Joshi and her father and Kaka are educated, therefore have a toilet in their home. He links it with their indirect support of their daughter/niece's demand for a toilet and ultimately her departure from the marital home. Ironically, Jaya's mother (who is named Vidya) refuses to support her daughter's cause, thus exposing her uneducated status and superficial beliefs. Again we see, women being agents of patriarchy, uneducated woman in this case even though she comes from an urban set up. However, the patriarchal constructs in terms of oppressors or supporters of gender equality differ irrespective of educated status.

Mr. Joshi and Kaka are from an urban and educated background. Kaka has a degree in Japanese but his taste in raunchy songs of Mallika Sherawat and Sunny Leone seems contradictory at times. However, he, along with his brother (that is, Jaya's father) supported Jaya in her education and bold outlook towards life and even allowed her to cycle alone to the places she desired, thus making her feel independent. On the other hand, Keshav, coming from a rural and uneducated background boasts of his superior general knowledge and he impresses Jaya when he is able to give an apt reply about safety paddles to protect the dresses of women from being entangled in the cycle chain, before the modification for ladies cycle was introduced. This topic arises when Jaya refuses to exchange Keshav's mistaken delivery of a gent's cycle instead of a ladies' one, Jaya refuses to exchange it by stating that women wearing dresses rode gent's bicycle with a rod in the middle, till the 1860's before the liberation movements really took over. Keshav's knowledgeable answer about safety pedals surprises her and seeing the surprised look on her face, he teases her by saying, "hum bhi aapke saath hi hai, madam." This initial episode highlights that even men (irrespective of their background) understand the challenges faced by women throughout history and are ready to challenge cultural constructs to support women.

Now, to further the analysis, if we look at Irigary's notion of commodification with the transfer of women from one man to another, in this case, the transfer of women from parental house to the marital house, we observe the helplessness of women. It is seen in the reply of one of the women who tells Jaya that if they resist this "lota" culture, they have nowhere to go since their parent's house also does not harbour a "sandaas" or toilet. However, they are also intrigued by the love

showered by Keshav for Jaya's dignity and the fight he is ready to take on with the administration to prevent his divorce. This shows that he loves his wife dearly as the subtitle of the movie *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*, also emphasizes this fact.

This realization of conjugal love and respect, bonds the women together to fight for Jaya as well as their dignity since their husbands and culture refuses to do so. It is another kind of commerce or market, which they form for themselves to fight for their subjecthood. It is a resistance against men as women refuse to do their homely duties such as cooking. They also throw away their *lota*, demanding public toilets, even though they are abused and beaten by their husbands. This bond of resistance grows strong as women challenge the "performative" aspects or "gender performativity" (to use Judith Butler's terms) which expects women to be docile, mute and follow "sanskar" without questioning it even though it compromises their dignity. The gender constructs do not bind men as securely as compared to women because men can ease themselves at any public place (even Pundit ji is seen doing it) at any time of the day, without covering their face. This freedom is denied to women because it will be a matter of shame if their identity is revealed, hence, women are allowed to venture out when it is dark. Partha Chatterjee's notion of "ghar" and "bahir," the public and private space demarcated for women, is challenged when women are forced out of home in the name of customary toilet and ablutions but not allowed to work. The patriarchal customs restricts their freedom to work and become economically independent. This shows the hypocrisy of the customs, which denies women equality with men.

The village women challenge these customs and constructs by finding inspiration in Jaya, who broke the villages' 70-year-old record where divorce was unheard of. These women wanted mass divorce and were ready to voice their opinion on media, thereby taking over the public platform and moving away from the private sanctity of their home. They were inspired by Jaya's earlier questioning regarding oppression and marginalization of women. To quote Jaya "mahina ho toh mandir ke bahar, chita jalti toh shamshan ke bahar, halka hona hota hai toh gaav ke bahar. Aakhir kyun? Aur sirf hamare liye kyun? (Tr. If we have menses, then we are outside the temple, if there is a funeral, then we are outside the demarcated area, if we have to attend nature's call, then we are at the outskirts of the village. But why? And why is it for us only?) This statement questioned the notion behind gender stereotyping for centuries. However, the story has a revolutionary ending with Jaya's victory and inauguration of Keshav's private toilet and everyone taking selfies in front of it. It ends with a tongue and cheek statement by Keshav (maybe targeting the villagers and audience) (also sending an important message) "Biwi paas chahiye toh ghar mein sandaas chahiye, yaad hai na?" (Tr. If you want to keep your wife with you, you should have a toilet in your house, do you remember?)

### **Conclusion**

The representation of women in both the movies, *Padman* and *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*, underline the stereotypes associated with the regulation of women's bodies, whether is the taboo of menstrual cycle or the issue of denial of public toilets. In the former movie, a normal bodily function is arrested within the private space and in the latter movie, another bodily function is forced to occupy a public space, thus exhibiting the

hypocrisy of the patriarchal standards which try to justify itself in the name of preserving culture and modesty of women. In both the movies, we see that the husbands, despite being uneducated and coming from a rural background, want to fight for the dignity of their wives. Divorce becomes a mode of resistance for women. For Gayatri, it is a resistance towards change since her family is conservative but for Jaya, it is a fight for change since her family is supportive. The notion of urban-rural and educated-uneducated does play a significant role in both the movies.

The struggle towards women empowerment is seen in *Padman*, where women finally co-operate with Laxmi and Pari to become a part of the entrepreneurial venture is small scale, low cost sanitary pad making. In *Toilet*, the notion of mass divorce and media attention wakes the administrative authorities including the Chief Minister to cut out the bureaucratic hurdles and take instant action in construction of toilets in the villages. Whether it is Butler's notion of "performativity" which looks at the subordination of women based on gender constructs or Irigary's notion of commodification of women, the women in *Padman* and *Toilet*, challenge these constructs. Even their basic demands for sanitary pads or toilets are considered as revolutionary changes challenging the boundaries of public and the private space defined for women. This challenge also represents the assertion of their identity and a questioning of the patriarchal constructs.

Although, these movies exhibit the challenges faced by women during a particular time in the modern day history and some significant changes have happened over the years, we still see that even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the women become victims of stereotypes. The issue of menstruation is still a taboo subject and in some cases, women are given sanitary napkins in a black carry bag, as though it is a shameful or prohibited item. In some rural areas, sanitary napkins are still unheard of. In other places, sanitation facilities such as toilets are not encouraged and despite government's effort, they are converted into private property. Men can still be seen urinating in public places (especially by the roadside) despite the use of paid and unpaid public toilets. This also causes embarrassment to the women and public, thus questioning the notion of progress and liberal thinking.

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## Multidimensionality of Life in Vikas Swarup's Novel *Q & A*

Ashish Gupta

### Abstract

The film named 'Slumdog Millionaire' directed by Danny Boyle, made on "Q & A" won eight Oscar awards. The novel *Q & A*, written by Vikas Swarup, illustrates the lives of those in the slums of India and how those living there experience life. The novel *Q & A* describes multidimensionality of life. Throughout the rags to riches story of Ram Mohammed Thomas, he presents several catalysts which change his life. The novel reflects almost every national issue from slums to poverty, the world of glamour corruption, breakdown of law and order, abuse of women and children. The novel is replete with vivid descriptions of slums in Mumbai, servant quarters in Embassies, church, etc. Swarup has explored and highlighted corruption, brutality and venality. Swarup has also explored the rapidly developing Indian society and its abundant social problems in his narrative style.

**Key words** – Multidimensional, Slum, Dream, Journey, Crime, Violence, Exploitation, Society

Vikas Swarup started his career as a novelist with "Q & A" which was published in 2005. This debut novel of Swarup turned out global book seller selling more than half million copies. It established Swarup as the writer of undoubted skills and enormous talent. The film named 'Slumdog Millionaire' directed by Danny Boyle, made on "Q & A" won eight Oscar awards. "Q & A", set chiefly in contemporary Mumbai, is the life-story of eighteen year old Ram Mohammad Thomas, a penniless waiter from the slums of Dharavi, Mumbai, who becomes the biggest quiz show winner in history.

Our world is made of social objects and personal symbols. Inheritance, carvings, opportunities and remembrances are determined by class, wealth and culture and these in turn determine us. We make and take impressions in this world according to our taste, temperament and mind. It is a truism that a great writer speaks to the reader in the words that have universal meaning. Nevertheless, to comprehend fully the writer we must also behold his limited world of actuality and the writer himself as living in that world. Books are often as much the products of individual genius as of the circumstances of the time. Vikas Swarup and his writing is no exception to this. Many influences went into the making of Vikas Swarup, and these influences went hand in hand with the creative impulse of his art.

His novel "Q & A" is replete with elements of crime violence, exploitation, widening gap between rich and poor, competition and brutality. The story *Q & A*, written by Vikas Swarup, illustrates the lives of those in the slums of India and how those living there experience life. The novel recites the unimaginable journey of a slum dog who becomes a billionaire. Throughout the rags to riches story of Ram Mohammed Thomas, he is presented with several catalysts which change his life. In

third world countries, dreams represent a catalyst for the citizens living there. Although most dreams are infrequently achieved, the dreams motivate them to work towards achieving something significant in their lives. Throughout Ram's journey he repeatedly sets goals for himself and imagines himself one day being considerably wealthy.

The novel reflects almost every national issue - slums and poverty, the world of glamour corruption, breakdown of law and order, abuse of women and children. The novel is replete with vivid descriptions of slums in Mumbai, servant quarters in Embassies, church, etc. Swarup has explored and highlighted corruption, brutality and venality. Swarup has also explored the rapidly developing Indian society and its abundant social problems in his narrative style.

The protagonist Ram Mohamed Thomas also lives in Dharavi which has no natural light or ventilation. Even the houses can be demolished anytime because all are illegal construction. Like Ram, many children in the slums start work at early age with no prospect of getting any education. They make money by rag picking, selling newspapers in traffic jams, padding drugs or begging. They are at risk of exploitation as well as all the health problems. Ram, an orphan, grows up on the streets, fighting for survival. Abandoned at birth, Ram is brought up by Father Timothy Catholic priest in Delhi. The priest names him Ram Mohammad Thomas to appease local religious leaders. After he dies, eight year old Ram is sent to a Juvenile Home where he meets his best friend Salim Ilyasi, an eight year old from Bihar, orphaned by communal riots. Sold to a gang of beggar-masters, Ram and Salim reach Mumbai.

Dharavi, as such, is a small wasteland which provides shelter for over one million people. It provides a cheap and affordable option to those who move to Mumbai to earn their living. After escaping from the gang, Ram works for former Bollywood actress Neelima Kumari while Salim works as a Tiffin boy. Ram's thirst for knowledge and compassion is evident even in the hard life of the chawl. One day, he hurts a drunken neighbour who tries to molest his own daughter. Fearing arrest, he flees to Delhi. The thirteen year old Ram works for an Australian diplomat, who is later, caught for espionage. Ram is the spy who reports on him. On the way back to Mumbai, a train robbery takes away Ram's hard earned salary. He shoots one of the dacoits and escapes to Agra, where he works as a tourist guide at the Taj Mahal, meeting several fascinating characters. He deeply falls in love with Nita, a girl forced into prostitution. However, he fails to make enough money to free her and returns to Mumbai where he is reunited with Salim who is training to be an actor.

Ram's amazing journey culminates in his participation in a quiz show 'Who Will Win a Billion?' Working as a bartender in a cheap hotel, he sees the ad for the quiz show 'Who Will Win a Billion?' He participates not for money but to kill the host Prem Kumar, who had tortured two women dear to him - his late employer Neelima Kumari and his beloved Nita. Prem Kumar mocks and threatens him. Ram refuses to be cowed down by the rich and mighty. With his intelligence, phenomenal memory and incredible luck, Ram overturns the script and wins the jackpot. Soon after, he is arrested on charges of cheating. The novel offers deeper insights into today's Indian and the mentality of its people. Each incident in the life of the

protagonist Ram deals with varied facets of contemporary national life - social, political and economic. A young lawyer Smita Shah helps Ram. Ram tells her how the experiences of his life gave him the answers to each question. Giving up his plans of murder and revenge, he uses his prize money to help those in need.

The basis of the Oscar-winning film, offers deeper insights into today's India and the mentality of its billion people. In today's India, even the people at the very bottom of the social ladder are striving to make a better life for themselves, and that is why they cannot be sentimental. Through the protagonist and question and answer pattern Swarup wants to show how slum people face their routine problems and overcome these problems with minimum available facilities. Swarup, while dealing with some burning issues of contemporary Indian in the novel, is very conscious about the whole situation and condition in the slum areas. His description of slum is very much real. It is again obviously reflected when Ram describes the complete situation in the police station as well as the behavior of police. Especially, the condition of slum in Dharavi is not the breaking news and people are busy in their routine activities.

Swarup's describes the minute details courtship violence or intimate partner violence and its aftermath in the chapter entitled as "Tragedy Queen". In this chapter Ram M. Thomas narrates his life story as a servant to an ex-actress Neelima Kumari who is sobriquet 'Tragedy Queen' due to her mind-blowing performance in the silver screen. Neelima Kumari, a single woman who has achieved enough name, fame and money in lifetime, is portrayed as living alone. To avoid the boredom of life, she subsequently allows her lover in her living place. But it is surprisingly enough for Ram who discovers his employee Neelima in a terrible condition. 'She has bruises all over her face and a black eye' (Q&A 259). After the initial hazard of Neelima Kumari, Ram notices some subtle changes in her behavior. Within a short interval Ram again finds her with a black eye and a cigarette burn on her arm. The frequency of happenings makes her more traumatic in mind. The inner mutilation gradually shrouds her inwardly and outwardly. Her final meeting with the swine lover' is really a horrific one. Neelima takes the ultimate decision to break off the relation. In order to quell his personal grudge, he behaves more vehemently with her. 'She is in bed with a deep cut above her left eyebrow and her cheek is swollen' (Q&A 264). But the repercussion of physical violence upon her private parts like breasts is inexplicable as there are uncountable cigarette burn marks all over her chest. 'The violence reaches to its acme but there is nothing to do for her to stop such kind of bestiality as it is the destiny of a woman to suffer in silence'. (Q&A 265) She is at the edge of her life. In her utter desperation she commits suicide by gulping down the painkiller tablets.

The poor are always on the wrong side of the law and only wait to be arrested. The destiny of the apathetic slum-dwellers is too obvious. The brain is not an organ we are authorized to use; we are supposed to use only our hands and legs (Q&A 12). Such poor are being arrested and tortured by the police any time of the day. It is night when the police came to arrest Ram for cheating in quiz show at Dharavi. First Ram is mercilessly beaten and kicked by the police. He screams but no one comes to protest. No neighbour comes to help him. They look like it is a daily routine. Their consideration is that all slum dwellers are cheaters because such type

of activities happens every day and it is not new thing for them. His leaving from Dharavi will make no change to their lives and they are engaged in their daily activities. Through this incident Swarup wants to convey the perception of urban society towards slum dwellers. They must be accused or suspected and engaged in their bad activities. Here Swarup points out that richness and power plays very important roles for exploitation and every time poor and marginalized people become victim of exploitation.

Through the fifth question, asked to Ram in the quiz, Swarup exposes the corruption in India, the profligate life of the neo-colonial ruling elite and the murky dealings infesting the government machinery. He also exposes racism and mental slavery to the whites that existed in contemporary India. The question makes Ram recall his escapades in Delhi. Since he can speak English he becomes a servant for an Australian diplomat Colonel Taylor. Taylor declares that an Indian can do anything for a bribe. To prove them right, the postman, the electrician, the telephone repair man, and even the census man who leaves out the servants display a weakness for bribes. Ram is infuriated when the Taylors refer to 'bloody Indians' frequently. Yet, for food and shelter Ram learns to swallow his pride and smile whenever his masters smile. Ram busts Colonel Taylor's plans to ferret Indian defence secrets. His anonymous call leads to Taylor's arrest, his being declared 'persona non grata' and immediate deportation. When Ram is asked the meaning of the term 'persona non grata' during the quiz, he remembers the incident relating to Taylor and answers that 'the diplomat is not acceptable!'

Through the seventh question Swarup again exposes the common man's fear of both police and criminals, at the sorry state of civilian security in contemporary India. The question has its answer hidden in Ram's journey from Delhi to Bombay on the Western Express. In a robbery on the train, Ram loses his hard-earned wages. One of the dacoits attempts to molest a young girl. Incensed, Ram grabs the dacoit's gun and shoots him dead. He can clearly read the words 'Colt' inscribed on the gun. Stunned by his own actions and fearing arrest, he escapes to Agra. On the show, when Ram is asked to name the inventor of the revolver, he remembers the dacoit's gun, and guesses the option 'Samuel Colt' to win two Lakh rupees. Here, Swarup strongly criticizes through the protagonist to make this economic based system in which there is no equal importance to man at their intellectuality and hard work. The bright side of the country has been conspicuously ignored. The present novel describes two Indians - one is the rich, the other is the poor. Both the reflection of India is depressing The poverty stricken part is obviously bad and the rich portion is tainted with crimes, cheating, artificiality, slaughter of human values, corruption etc. The protagonist, Ram presents the gloomy picture of two-faced Mumbai: Amidst the modern skyscrapers and neon-lit shopping complexes of Mumbai, Dharavi sits like a cancerous lump in the heart of the city. And the city refuses to recognize it' (Q&A 157)

Through the eighth question Swarup exposes the Indian armed forces and the tragedy of war. Ram remembers the outbreak of a war between India and Pakistan when he was living in Mumbai chawl. Air raid sirens force citizens into underground bunkers. There is a surge of patriotism as people watch live television reportage. However, one of the residents of the chawl, Lance Naik Balwant Singh a



veteran of the 1971 Bangladesh war, exposes the ugliness of brutal warfare. Having lost a leg in battle, he recounts the horrors he has seen firsthand. He asserts that real war is a serious and fatal business, quite different from the sensational soap-operas of reporters. There is also a satire on war in the capitalist era:

First there are the advertisements. This war is sponsored by Mother India Toothpaste and Jolly Tea. Then we have a broadcast by the Prime Minister. Indian forces are winning the war, he tells us earnestly. There will be an end to terrorism, hunger and poverty. Contribute generously to the Soldiers' Benefit Fund, he urges us young actress comes on TV and says the same things, but in filmy style (Q&A 195)

Nuclear weapons have changed the entire equation of war on the subcontinent there is no real protection against the atom bomb the water will become air. The air will become fire. The sun will disappear. A huge mushroom cloud will rise in the sky. And we will all die. (Q&A 196)

The people of the chawl are so impressed to hear the exploits of soldier Balwant Singh in the 1971 Bangladesh war that they demand a gallantry medal for him. However, army officers reveal that he is a deserter who had led the battlefield to meet his wife and newborn son who also died in the war. Unable to bear the humiliation, Singh hangs himself. When Ram is asked to identify the highest gallantry award given to the Indian armed forces, he remembers Balwant Singh and answers - 'Param Vir Chakra', thus winning rupees five lakhs. The eleventh question, Ram is asked - 'In which play by Shakespeare do we find the character Costard?' (Q&A 337) Ram who has never heard of Shakespeare takes the English teacher help to get the right answer - 'Love's Labour's Lost' and win ten crore rupees.

Vikas Swarup's debut novel *Q & A* has multi- thematic concerns. In *Q & A* Vikas Swarup attracts the attention of the readers towards the beggar masters who buy children from these orphanages, paying hefty sums to government officials and then abuse children in order to make money. The orphans lured with the promise of a happy life in big cities are maimed and forced to beg. They blind the children to make them more effective when they beg on the streets. Ram and Salim are bought by one such beggar-master from Bombay - Mamman Pillai. When they reach Bombay, Salim with his Bollywood dreams goes into raptures. But Ram notes that Bombay houses both the sparkling residences of film stars and dirty slum colonies with pot-bellied half-naked children. Ram and Salim are housed amid maimed boys. Ram and Salim witnesses the crippled children at Babu Pillai's abode. Swarup has presented in Ram an unforgettable character with too much sensitivity. He is easily moved by the pathetic conditions of the suffering classes, particularly the innocent sufferers.

The author attempts to highlight the current position of Indian women in society. His hero Ram, the just turned adult, rather he appears as the protector of women. In order to protect the women's prestige, like a medieval gallant, he is ready to do anything. From his boyhood to teenage, he is the witness of various aspects of

women violence. Through his tale-telling behind every question, the readers are introduced with the female characters like Gudiya alias Smita, a slum girl later turned into an advocate, and her mother Mrs. Shantaram, an ex-actress Neelima Kumari, chiefly famous as Tragedy Queen of the silver screen and Nita, a professional call-girl. Being an orphan, he has always thirsts for the maternal affection and he involves himself with these characters. Unlike his patriarchal inheritors, he never supports any ill treatment of women; rather he always tries his best to protect them from any danger. He is not only a mere witness of savagery against women, but also a whole hearted protector and protestant of it. By employing his mouthpiece Ram Mohammad Thomas, Swarup, the novelist attempts to portray the dire consequences of violence on women in our society.

The novel is all about a penniless orphan who wins India's most popular quiz show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" Every chapter, in the novel, ends with a question for which Ram Mohammad Thomas answered in the quiz show earlier. He explains Smita, the lawyer who saves Ram Mohammad Thomas from the commissioner's ill-treatment, how he knew the answers for those questions. When she was demanding Ram to be true to her and disclose everything about the quiz show, he just answers, "Do you notice when you breathe? No. You simply know that you are breathing. I did not go to school. I did not read books. But, I tell you, I knew the answer" (Q&A 30) Ram starts narrating his memories from his childhood which helped him to answer those questions in the show. These memories were not the ones that Ram keeps thinking all the time but for years, those were stored in his mind somewhere deep inside which he recollects within himself as he is questioned in the show. The questions which had connections to his life instances kindled his unconscious mind to relive those moments in his imagination. His reservoir of stalked repressed memories comes out in each chapter. Here we can observe that how dreaming allows Ram to escape his reality in the slums and hope for a better future one day. Therefore, in the novel, Vikas Swarup has marvellously described describes multidimensionality of life in Indian Society.

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## The 'Private' Female Body in the Public Space

Deepthi Prashant

### Abstract

The female body, considered the most personal and the most private has very often been drawn into the centre of major public debates and controversies right from the contraceptive pill to the recent abortion issues. Even and especially women occupying the public space, discover that when they assert their rights over their bodies, several contentious issues emerge as in the case with Deepika Padukone who asserted her right to her cleavage or Merin Joseph whose work as an IPS officer got highlighted along with (because of) her 'unbelievably' good looks. These two cases of controversy throw up several questions in relation to the divide between the private and the public which this paper seeks to address within the broad theoretical framework of feminism. The paper seeks to address the question of whether the body of the public figure remains private or public by examining theories of the private/public as linked to the questions of sexuality and the body.

**Key words:** Private, Public, Space, Female body, Deepika Padukone, Media

A close examination of the debates of the private public divide within feminist theory is attempted within the paper to understand discourses of the present. The paper attempts to situate this debate within recent controversies involving two women who occupy public spaces to examine stereotypical representations within these two boundaries and discusses situations when boundaries of the divide are transgressed.

Historically, feminist theory has questioned such a dichotomization, critiquing the separation which assigns gender specific connotations to these two spaces. This division between the private and the public is gendered and hierarchical and makes women's lives invisible. According to feminist historians of the 1970s and 80s, this division was a product of the bourgeoisie society, which created a woman's realm and assigned leisure, pleasure and recreation to this domain. This was evident in the way these spaces were organized through architecture and in the definition of roles (Wischermann, 2004). Women's issues got separated spatially and were placed beyond the realm of the public and the political. Although these spaces are separate, there have always been transgressions and consequently, controversies.

Deepika Padukone, one of the most popular Bollywood actresses, was in the heart of a controversy recently over her objection to some pictures published by one of the most reputed newspapers. This controversy played out publicly in the media, with the public taking both sides on news channels, twitter and face book. What is interesting about the controversy is the constant use of terms like private and public, with discussions concentrating on the female body, and its propensity to enter the public when the person in question is placed already in the public space. Placing this issue within the theoretical premise outlined briefly above and discussed in detail

further, the paper argues that the controversy has its locus in the body, thus underscoring its primacy in fixing the boundaries of these spaces and marking transgressions.

The Cartesian mind/body duality historically positions the body as inferior when compared to mind/intellect. Feminists have identified how women had been subjugated primarily through their bodies and theorists right from De Beauvoir to Kristeva and others, have consistently said that perceived biological differences between the two sexes place this discourse within western philosophical thought which has primarily followed dualistic thinking. King quoting Bailey says that man has always been the essential norm representing the human whole against which a woman was defined. Thus the “the active, strong and moral half of a human whole” becomes superior to the passive weak woman. She quotes from Beauvoir to say that “Aristotle regarded the female as being “afflicted with natural defectiveness” and St Thomas Aquinas saw woman as ‘imperfect” (King, 2004, p.4). King quoting Beauvoir says that “(w)oman’s association with body/nature is strengthened by biological essentialist and determinist paradigms which define woman according to her reproductive physiology. She is thus feeble and passive, literally a receptacle for the desires of the male and incubator for his offspring; a creature driven by emotion and instinct; a slave to her reproductive organs/hormones” (King, 2004, p.4).

Western ideology of the active spirit/passive body gets enmeshed within the bodies of the male and female. Thus female symbolizes the more primitive urges and lesser impulses. The body thus starts getting associated with the feminine. So ‘mind/body dualism is not just a philosophical enterprise, but a clear practical metaphysics that has been socially embodied in medicine, law, literary and artistic representations’ (Bordo p.8). Body has always been viewed as an impediment and there is a perceived need to transcend body. Therefore the female becomes the other, the body that is continually trying to lure the soul/mind towards evil. The body therefore belongs to the private space, connoting all bodily aspects that need to be hidden from the public gaze. Consequently, this duality plays itself onto all bodies thereby situating all minds as masculine and all bodies as feminine. Therefore in religious and especially in spiritual tracts, there is an allusion to rise above the body and respond to the needs of the mind or the soul. Hence, even in a man, the body is female and has to be hidden. When the man becomes aware of his own body (its arousals and needs) it is because of, the feminine aspect of his being, which is ‘Othered’ into the body of the female. Hence the female becomes the evil luring away the male body from reaching higher ideals. Thus the relationship of the body to the self gets conceptualized as a binary, privileging mind over the body and the binary gets heavily gendered.

Accordingly all efforts that focus on the body, any attempt to dress the body, or all attempts that do not diminish the body are labeled feminine. Any gesture that highlights the body is termed feminine. By virtue of being in a female body, the woman gets tied to the body and through it to the private space. Bordo says, “(A) nd for women, associated with the body and largely confined to a life centered on the body (the beautifications of one’s own body and the reproduction, care and maintenance of the bodies of others), culture’s grip on the body is a constant, intimate fact of everyday life’ (11). Thus even though seemingly occupying a public

space, Deepika Padukone is invariably tied to the private space on account of her gender. So the question of an actress in a public space, or in general, a woman in a public space, is always already undermined on account of her gendered presence.

Having centered the private-public divide onto the female body, the paper next addresses how cinema and acting itself is gendered with a view to underscore the prominence of the body within cinema also. Historically, cinema and acting have been considered professions that are feminine since they are perceived to not involve hard labor. They cater to emotions and also to an audience largely comprised of women, the lower middle class, the Black or any minority. Though cinema seems to be a public space, it is about the private lives of individuals and therefore extremely private. Rosewarne calls the world of magazine and television advertising also as "private" (2005). Acting itself is considered natural and spontaneous as opposed to more intellectual and trained pursuits. Cinema to a large extent, unlike Deepika Padukone's observation or the general view, is a private space impregnated by the female body. So the female body is not just representative of gender, but also of class and race. King says that women's bodies are looked at, evaluated and always potentially objectified. Sexual objectification occurs whenever a woman's body, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments or regarded as if they were capable of representing her. When objectified, women are treated as bodies and in particular, as bodies that exist for the use and pleasure of others. But because a sexually objectifying gaze is not under women's control, few women can completely avoid potentially objectifying contexts. Unlike in men, where face gets prominence in their representation, in the women, it is the body that is represented. The visual media portray women as though their bodies were capable of representing them (King, 2004). Even when women are silent (or verbalizing the opposite) their bodies are 'speaking a language of provocation', says Bordo (4). Body in cinema merely represents the private nature of cinema defining masculinity through the voyeuristic gaze. It is this space that Deepika's role in movies, bikini ad shots etc. occupies and hence does not invite much controversy. Also, as Bordo says, 'conscious intention, is not a requisite for females to be seen as responsible for the bodily responses of men, aggressive as well as sexual' (4), therefore underlining the lack of similar controversies within this space. The newspaper's contention is that, while Deepika willingly chooses to display her body in her films, that she should object to a few pictures being published in a newspaper (which incidentally the paper claims, are less vulgar compared to her reel images) is hypocrisy (Gupta, 2014).

The controversy therefore, the paper argues is very clearly related to this disjunction between the spaces. As long as the roles are performed within the spaces assigned, the duality is not questioned. However, it is when Deepika transgresses the space that she sparks off a controversy. From the space of the cinema which is feminized, Deepika moves on to a public space. The controversial picture is from one of her public appearances. This public space is heavily masculinized and it is here that the female body is subjected to a disciplining gaze and therefore found objectionable. Post structuralist thought declared body as a political site, recognized that the most mundane 'trivial aspects of women's bodily existence were in fact significant elements in the social construction of an oppressive feminine norm"

(Bordo). Rosewarne discusses how even advertising shooting within outdoor spaces becomes difficult for women because of the fear of offence and masculine control of these spaces contribute to the exclusion of women and subject them to disciplining gaze.

'Women's historical association with the body has resulted in her being judged by and valued for her appearance more than man, often above all else, and has also engendered the fear and dread of otherness. Even in this supposedly equal, liberated and progressive society, femaleness is still disturbing enough to require supervision and containment by forms of discipline that men are not subjected to' (King,2004 p.9). Foucault's argument of the body as being conditioned through surveillance resulting in a docile body gives rise to the contention of this paper that a woman's presence in the masculine space is always censured and observed critically. It is by deliberately drawing attention to the feminine body and its associated negativity that the discourse links back to the mind/body debate asserting that it is impossible for a woman to rise above her body which is made evident in her inability to efface her body. Body parts specifically associated with female sexuality are not only highlighted to remind this but also to discipline at the same time. So this controversy from being more than a question of choice becomes one of the ways in which the media censures Deepika's transgression into the public space. Having said that the body (specifically the female body because of its inability to efface its femininity) was assigned to the private space, I go on to argue that the controversy gains the overtones of a disciplining gaze because of the involvement of the media. This is supported by readings on female fashions quoted by King which specifically draw attention to the site of otherness such as the breasts, waist, buttock and hips which are exaggerated. Fashion obsesses itself with gender and serves to define and redefine the gender boundary. Women's bodies are considered pre-modern since they are primitive and uncivilizable. As a consequence, the feminine (and the female body) has historically been constituted as that which must be defined, directed and controlled through the application of disembodied, objective, masculine knowledge says King. So a woman's entry into the public sphere is seen with suspicion and constantly monitored.

When a woman enters the masculine public space dominated by intellectual and rational thought, she has to be continuously monitored because she is unable to efface the primitive instinct in her, projected through her body. She is always inferior but also unknowable, enigmatic and disquieting and as Bordo says, represents that which must be investigated and dissected until her secrets are relinquished. Consequently the female body has been subjected to the scrutinizing gaze of the human sciences far more than the male. King details out how the female body has been subjected to various scrutiny where 'every hint of abnormality has been thoroughly and enthusiastically ferreted out and classified by numerous experts eager to provide indisputable proof of its inherent pathology'(4). She says that female sexuality has been studied so that its uncontrolled sexuality must be contained and inherent weakness of character exposed, particularly as it is primarily a reproductive body. Medical and scientific discourse has confirmed the pathology of female biology and legitimated women's subjugation, prescribing in the past what activities women should engage in, what clothes they should wear to preserve

appropriate 'womanliness', their moral obligation to preserve their energy for child birth and so on'. She argues that in each of these discourses, "'the naturalness' of gender is constantly invoked, but masculinity and femininity are disciplines of the body that require work" (King, 2004 p.6). Also, bodies as Judith Butler says are constantly performing for gender identities. A particular kind of gender neutral performance is expected in the public sphere. Discussing fashions, Bordo quoting Foucault says that 'the advent of modernity characterized by rationality sees a certain 'rationality' appear in men's attire; women, however, are not regarded as rational agents but as instinctual, inherently pathological bodies, unaffected by culture, outside of modernity. Primitive and 'uncivilisable', these distinctly 'pre-modern' bodies therefore require pre-modern methods of containment and control that simultaneously brand them with the 'infamy' of their gender and the 'irrational' display that becomes regarded as an inherently feminine trait'(7). And hence 'woman's crime of being other - of embodying all that man fears and despises yet desires - finds fitting 'punishment' in clothing that draws erotic attention to the body by simultaneously constraining and 'correcting' it' (Bordo, p.7).

Coming back to Deepika's controversy, the media subjects her to a disciplining gaze because she transgresses the space within which her body has to be encapsulated. Deepika contends that the private within cinema can be subjected to the male gaze while the need for privacy needs to be respected outside cinema (Padukone, 2014). By commenting on her body outside cinema, the media is not complimenting her as it says, but actually directing a specifying kind of gaze aimed at controlling her sexuality within a space marked as masculine. Thus the paper argues that the media reports that Deepika condemns essentializes a dominant discourse of male gaze and of female conditioning through self and public surveillance. By virtue of having masculinized itself through its heavily intellectualized programmes which in itself is debatable, media plays the role of the moral police of the society. It is this discourse of power relations that the paper has attempted to unearth through a discussion of Deepika's case. Thus even though Deepika is seen as occupying the public space, the paper shows that she continues to inhabit the private space because of her feminine body.

Thus the whole controversy regarding Deepika Padukone's commodified representation by the media gains significance. Deepika chooses to respond to the newspaper's objectification through her twitter which again draws a lot of comments and responses. Women's presence within social media itself has been theorized and it is perceived that women who enter these spaces are by virtue of being there showing a desire to be looked at. Since they have posted their pictures, and revealed stories about their personal lives, it is assumed that their private lives have entered the public space. Thus public and private spaces are not necessarily about physicality of space but also denote certain issues and subjects which by virtue of being feminine are relegated to a space that is not public. The newspaper's justification that it was merely doing its job and that they were catering to a particular kind of audience by sensationalizing an event and also that they believe in women's equality is itself subject to a different reading. By justifying its act of catering to a kind of audience, the media is also differentiating or earmarking specific spaces for its audience. The media is indirectly hinting at the kind of

audience that this news interests and this audience is relegated to the sphere of the private and the feminine. The media's explanation that it shows not just Deepika's body but also Shahrukh Khan's eight pack abdomen and underscores this argument that the kind of audience both cater to are essentialized with feminine attributes of being primitive, impulsive and all about the body.

When female bodies do not efface their femaleness, they may be seen as 'inviting and flaunting'. Unless they are in a profession which valorizes the body, or in spaces where their biological differences need to be accentuated, women need to efface the body. Simone De Beauvoir and several other feminist theorists too opine thus. Hence, even if in a profession unlike Deepika's which in spite of being in a public sphere is a very private experience, women go through a similar inspecting gaze. Surveys of the history of political thought have shown that the habit of contrasting the 'worlds' of men and of women, the allocation of the public sector to men and the private sector (still under men's control) to women is older than western civilization (Kerber, 18). The most masculine of all spaces which is completely influenced by western philosophical thought on governance, is the Civil Services in India. It is this space that the paper briefly posits as contradictory to the space that Deepika occupies and argues that in spite of the differences, the expectations from the body remains the same. On occasions, when the woman is allowed to enter the public space, it is as an extension of the domestic sphere. The entry into public sphere is permitted only as an extension of the domestic sphere. As long as it adheres to, or remains within patriarchal beliefs and practices about women's role within the domestic sphere, women are granted admission into this space, evident in the way women are expected to carry out roles akin to their domestic chores even within their professional space. The other alternative open to them is to obliterate the body. This is something expected from both the genders, since the body is considered an impediment to rational and objective thought within public space. The paper argues that Merin Joseph, and Smitha Sabharwal, who faced sexism at workplace, were victims of this duality paradigm which hierarchized mind over body. The public space of the bureaucrat which is heavily imbued with symbols of public service, nationhood, rationality and high intellectualism does not really accommodate women unless the feminine body is completely effaced. Ironically the feminine body as Bordo says is almost always present just by being. As already argued, with or without the woman's consciousness, her body is necessarily subjected to a male gaze, fetishized, censured and also disciplined. As a result, women are allowed into this space but only after obliterating all representations of the feminine body. In a Gender Studies workshop conducted at the IAS training academy at Mussorie, the trainees were said to have said that dressing up in drab, starched cottons with high necked and long sleeved blouses to some extent, helped in obliterating the feminine body. There is a masculinization of this space achieved by emphasizing on the predominance of the mind over the body bringing one back to the Cartesian duality. Whenever the body gains prominence or the women refuse to deny their body, the controversy emerges. Social construction of femininity as delicacy and domesticity is best exemplified in the production of a socially trained 'docile' body and it is this training which evens this public space



given to women. However, Smitha and Merin chose to question the accepted mode of femininity within this space by choosing to unhide their body.

Cixous and Kristeva look at the body as the site of the production of new modes of subjectivity. By choosing to define their own subjectivities, both these women get embroiled in controversies. Merin and Smitha, are described by the media in sexist language, caricatured and dismissed as mere 'eye candy' (Menon, Tata, 2015). The media and social media discourses around these two women center around their exceptional good looks, dressing styles and are replete with sexist terms. Unlike several other women officers who did not threaten this divide, these two women seem to be trying to alter the public space in order to accommodate their bodies, one of them even going so far as to sue a magazine for defamation. The public space, without relegating the body into the private, needs to accept it within its own terrain. As Bordo says, 'As long as there is a specific space left for women for them to fulfill their maternal responsibilities and remain true to their feminine nature- the domain of the private- then the dualism will continue. So masculinisms of the public institutions (manifest in the styles of professionalism that they require but in their continued failure to accommodate and integrate the private for instance, into the public sphere will look at the feminine bodies as aberrant'(26). Both these spaces, as Wischermann argues should not be looked at as fixed dualities but as entities which are relational where constant negotiations are happening, giving way to newer understandings. These controversies show how the boundaries between the spaces disintegrate threatening customary polarizations and dichotomies.

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## The Humanoid Monsters of Victorian Age

Himanjali Gollapinni

### Abstract:

This article intends to throw light upon the theme of madness used in some of the prominent works of the nineteenth century by women writers of that time taking into account Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's critical work titled "Mad Woman in the Attic". The novel examines women writers of the Victorian era from a feminist perspective, and discusses a number of authors and their works such as Jane Austen, Mary Shelly, Charlotte Bronte and Emily Bronte, it brings into focus the rigid notion that women writers of the nineteenth century were forced to make their heroines embody either the angel or the monster, this problem had its roots in the male dominated society and literature of that time that portrayed women as pure and angelic or rebellious and imbalanced. This article analyses the works of three important women writers of the nineteenth century centered around Gilbert and Gubar's argument, the writers being Emily Bronte, Charlotte Bronte and Charlotte P Gilman and their works being *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre* and *The Yellow Wallpaper* respectively. This article intends to carry forward Gilbert and Gubar's argument and to discuss the reasons as to why the characters that these wonderful women created went on to become so destructive and the social and political environment around them that acted as catalyst for such change.

**Key words:** Mad Women, Confinement, Conformity, Mental Health, *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Yellow Wallpaper*.

Emily Bronte was an English novelist and poet, she is best known for her only published novel *Wuthering Heights*, she received a lot of criticism for her unorthodox characters and bold narrative. *Wuthering Heights* is a story that revolves around two families and two generations of the Earnshaw's and the Linton's. Set in the Moorish countryside it's a passionate love story between Heathcliff and his Catherine. Her Byronic hero Heathcliff was characterized as unorthodox, heretic and maniacal by many and was also the topic of discussion of Gilbert and Gubar's 'Mad Woman in the Attic'. This first narrative instead discusses Bronte's fierce heroine Catherine Earnshaw and her journey.

### Catherine Earnshaw of *Wuthering Heights*

For a woman to be herself, within the setup of society, under constant scrutiny of her peers with the surety of being judged falls nothing short of being in the eye of the storm and Emily Bronte's novel *Wuthering Heights* showcases the heroine Catherine Earnshaw going through a similar dilemma of either confining herself to the rigid norms of society or following her heart. Catherine was born at *Wuthering Heights*, she grew up in synchrony with the moorland and Heathcliff. Physically she was

described as having the bonniest eye the sweetest smile and beautiful curls but her true beauty lay beneath her physical appearance in her undying spirit. Just like the moorland spread far and wide endlessly in every direction as a young girl Catherine's mind and thoughts travelled endlessly across the vast moors, just like the untamed wilderness growing on the moorland, Catherine's spirit grew wild and free away from the constraints of the society and the warmth of her heart spread as infectiously as the whistling winter winds of the moorland. She was all this and more and Heathcliff occupied the centre of her heart, he let her be what she truly wanted to be by becoming one with her soul.

Her downfall occurred when one day due to a bad fall while playing around on the moors young Catherine had to spend a week with the Linton's at Thrushcross Grange. Here she was for the first time properly introduced to the views, opinions and expressions of society, the social, emotional and mental conditioning that she received here both from the Linton's and her brother and his wife who were bent upon making her more acceptable to society, caused her fiery and independent spirit to diminish. Here she made her first mistake; in order to accomplish the demanding goals that the society set on their women she chose to marry Edgar Linton for his wealth and position in society. Since Heathcliff was an adopted boy and occupied a lower position in society she satisfied herself by saying that she was doing all this in order to help Heathcliff rise up in society.

If I marry Linton I can aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brothers power (WH)

Catherine felt the need to protect Heathcliff which is a trait generally expected to be present only in men. Her clear ideas of what she wanted and how to go on and actually achieve them was a character trait that did not match with the societal norms for Victorian women. Soon after her marriage, symptoms of an illness affecting her mind started showing up she became weak and frail and showed no signs of the young spirited girl that she used to be. At first her strange behavior and failing health was given the name of her grabbing attention for pleasure but soon it was clear that she was suffering from brain fever. Physically it had taken the appearance of an illness but internally it was her struggle to follow her heart and be herself or listen to society. Catherine was well aware of her love for Heathcliff and was bold enough to confess it:

If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn into a mighty stranger. (WH)

Heathcliff's presence in her life was as organic as the grass that grew on the moorlands and the snow that fell in the winters, having to give up her soul and change herself according to the expectations of her brother and husband broke her internally. This madness or illness that possessed her was born from the chains that society latched onto her. She was one with nature with Heathcliff but the amount of pressure that she took upon herself in order to fit in cost her peace of mind;

unknowingly she lost what connected her soul to life and to nature eventually leading to madness.

### **Bertha Mason of *Jane Eyre*:**

Charlotte Bronte was a British novelist and the eldest of the three Bronte sister's her most prominent work was the novel *Jane Eyre* which went on to become an English classic, to avoid gender biased criticism she published under the name Currer Bell. The novel *Jane Eyre* is a story that revolves around the protagonist Jane, an orphan who comes up independently in life and her adventures when she meets the hero Rochester.

The title of madwoman in the attic is taken from Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason was Mr. Rochester's first wife who was declared mentally unfit and kept locked up in the attic for years. To a reader Rochester's initial descriptions of Bertha and her propensities seem nothing out of the ordinary. He introduces her as a Jamaican woman whom he married only to inherit her large fortune. His complaints against Bertha are, of her nature being wholly alien to his, her tastes obnoxious, her cast of mind low and her intellect small. A sensible mind can easily reason that these differences in tastes and manners occur due to their varied upbringing and cultures. Bertha's Jamaican descent although never discussed in detail holds major importance in the way Rochester viewed her and his absolute unacceptance of her. Her long dark hair indicative of her foreign descent are mentioned a number of times to describe her appearance by various characters including Jane as though belonging to a witch of some sort. The initial description of Bertha's voice by Jane is as follows:

This was a demonic laugh – low, suppressed and deep (Jane Eyre)

Bertha's mere voice is described as demonic, deep, beastly and goblin like by Jane. She is frequently attributed adjectives such as beastly, demonic, and lunatic with the reader perceiving the character of Bertha only through the description of Rochester and Jane. Bertha does not have a single dialogue in the entire novel. Bertha is depicted as a monster; her actions are described to resemble those of a wild animal prowling the forest at nights. She is seen walking on all fours and attacking the various members of the house ferociously. Towards the end of the novel when Jane who had formerly run away from Thornfield found out about the shaking incident that nearly killed everyone at Thornfield hall, she forces out the entire story out of a host at a nearby inn. The host had formerly served as Mr. Rochester's butler at Thornfield and describes the big reveal of Rochester's first wife Bertha Mason who had been locked up in the attic for years so much so that her existence was unheard of

She was kept in very close confinement, ma'am: people even for some years were not absolutely certain of her existence. (Jane Eyre)

He goes on to describe the great fire that Bertha had caused at the mansion which eventually led it into ruins and cost Mr. Rochester his eyes. For a single women who

had been brutally locked up for years in a dingy attic and was said to be ill and undergoing treatment, to have the strength and the intellect to cleverly hatch such dangerous plans in the dead of the night after being watched over so strictly sounds strangely exaggerated. An individual who is so sure of how to execute a plan for revenge and on top of that actually burn down an entire mansion to ruins sounds more like a smart criminal and less of a lunatic. To a reader Bertha is a victim of her circumstances, being of foreign descent she was hugely discriminated and disliked, after being disowned by her husband for merely being different she is bound to have had moments of panic, distress and even depression, her efforts and pleas to save her marriage probably were ignored by her husband, and any human when stretched beyond a point is bound to get frustrated and temperamental, her anger and frustration were most probably construed as a mental disorder and she was forced into oblivion. After being humiliated and stripped of basic human rights it's highly likely for any human, man or woman to enter into a dark and depressive phase, Bertha may not have actually been a patient of a mental illness from the start, she was forced into it by the cruel circumstances that her husband forced upon her.

### **Unnamed Narrator of *The Yellow Wallpaper***

The Yellow Wallpaper by American author Charlotte P Gilman is a real life experience penned down by the author, it's a short story that consists of a collection of journals written by a woman whose physician husband had rented a mansion for the summer in order to cure his wife of temporary nervous depression a condition common in women during that era, which meant she was forbidden from working or writing and even socializing with people. She was locked up in a nursery upstairs and was only asked to sleep and not exert herself in any way. Yet to let out her emotions she secretly kept a journal and described her thoughts and experiences for lack of any better alternative. In these journal entries she mentions her new born baby and how she cannot care for him due to her delicate health; this suggests a possibility of postpartum depression common in new mothers. She constantly mentions the yellow wallpaper of her room with a looped intertwined pattern which she absolutely detests but never mentions it much to her husband because she has been taught to keep her emotions in and not express them if she can help it. Talking about her emotions was not encouraged by her husband, and any kind of outburst or anger was treated with similar force. She was expected to heal on her own without any interaction with another person in the house; her husband did not acknowledge her emotional needs and the fact that all she needed was his time, company, his attention and love. Having to spend most of her time staring at the walls of her room she started to see the wallpaper as a text and kept trying to interpret it for lack of a better occupation of mind, she began to see the wallpaper as a cage and imagine herself barred behind it. A simple problem of nervousness had enlarged into hallucination due to the mere ignorance of her husband and society's attitude towards mental health. She was a perfectly sane, intellectual and talented woman, she loved her husband and her family and was willing to do so much for them but the mere treatment of women and the attitude of society towards them pushed them further into darkness.

## Conclusion

Gilbert and Gubar's discussion holds importance even in present times, their observation of the situations of women in the nineteenth century and their works is eye opening. The women writers of the Victorian era had no role model to look up to, the entire scenario was alien to them, they were unaware as to how they were going to represent themselves through their works at a time when writing was mostly forbidden for women. Yet they found ways to express themselves even though it was by creating characters that gave readers the chill at nights, they paved a path for themselves and for their works, these women refused to give in to the demands of society and turn into one of their characters, instead they channelled their energies into their writings and created works that are seen as classics worldwide.

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## Construction and Annihilation of Patriarchal Hegemony in Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*

Janmejay Kumar Tiwari

### Abstract

Since the inception of humanity and the influx of civilization, the clash between masculinity and femininity have been perceptible, gender discrimination has been in fashion by one way or the other. Adam has always been measured innocent and Eve the demolisher of Paradise and harbinger of mortality. Everything constructive and affirmative has been assigned to the male and the discredit of negatives goes to the fairer sex. Male has been a creator of the aura and woman has been pushed in the world of man forcefully. The present paper deals with the construction and destruction of male hegemony simultaneously in a society; how a group of religious women demolishes a powerful patriarchal, parochial and totalitarian world from within. Successful subversion of "myth of femininity", illumination in a sinister world for females, callous attitudes of a sect of terrorists and the demolishing of a patriarchal empire are the points of discussion. Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* is not only a testimony of three female narrators but also a record of conquest, a documentation of feminine power.

**Key words:** Hegemony, Patriarchy, Totalitarianism, Femininity, Masculinity.

Margret Atwood's second Booker winning novel *The Testaments* like its pre-equal *The Handmaid's Tale* raises the question of women's role in a patriarchal society by narrating the account of a totalitarian state Gilead. The foremost focus of the novel attracts attention towards the subjugation of women by converting young maidens into aunts, making women as a baby producing machines called Handmaids or turning them into Pearl Girls. The issue of identity for women and adopting an assortment of names to fit to the occasion is also a point in question. This dystopian novel is also situated against contradictions: in Gilead there is good as well as evil, there is oppression, suppression as well as resistance to repression, confrontation to authoritarianism, coercion-- "I imagine you expect nothing but horrors, but the reality is that many children were loved and cherished, in Gilead as elsewhere, and many adults were kind though fallible, in Gilead as elsewhere" (Atwood 9). The novel depicts the falling of patriarchy, the destruction of Gilead Empire as "there was too much wrong in it, too much that is false, and too much that is surely contrary to what God intended" (9). Atwood finally reassures us that totalitarianism/patriarchy can be wiped off if we are an Aunt Lydia.

The novel is narrated by three women, Aunt Lydia, Agnes and her sister Jude. The major and significant portion of the text is narrated by Aunt Lydia who was formerly a judge and then she was made the in-charge of Ardua Hall, a convent being run on the whims of the Commanders of Gilead especially by the paedophilic Commander Judd. In the pre-equal to *The Testaments*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, Aunt Lydia was an elementary school teacher, but in the sequel she emerges as a power-



wielding matriarch and tells the reader, "I control the women's side of their enterprise with an iron fist in a leather glove in a woolen mitten, and I keep things orderly: like a harem eunuch, I am uniquely placed to do so" (62). Lydia is discreet, absorbing, complicated and authoritative, and she fascinates the reader with her views on the mechanisms of Gilead, and proves herself as the coxswain of Gilead as well as of Commander Judd. She succeeds in throwing sand in the eyes of the Eyes by virtue of her determination and multifaceted celebrity.

The workings of Gilead is very much against the nature of a state and are very much akin to an insufferably overbearing behaviour of a dictatorial state as is described by one of the narrators. This is a place where there is no cope for women, they are marionettes compelled to become mothers of the children of the dictators of Gilead. The character of Aunt Lydia develops against these scourges of terrorism. Lydia has to overcome this mechanism by any means and she, like her creator Atwood, knows that this system could be brought down by entering its threshold and by creating a parallel empire. Initially she was not in a position to open her mouth against the scumbags of Gilead but while living at the Ardua Hall, she sculpts plans to devastate not only the inner space of Ardua Hall but also the whole empire.

The most disgusting part of the novel/Gilead is the introduction of Handmaid's episode fashionable in the autocratic empire. In no enlightened and cultured society can a womb be borrowed or rented and no where Handmaids are baby producing machines but in Gilead. They don't have any right, they are not allowed to think of their own, their future and marriages. They are to bear babies but don't have the privilege of motherhood and this torturing of them is approved by the Bible through the Rachel and Jacob episode – "Here is my slave girl Bilhah; sleep with her, so that she can have a child for me. In this way I can become mother through her". (Holy Bible, Genesis 30, 34) Does this episode allow the Gileadians to use other women's wombs to become parents? The fact is that the dictators use, disuse and misuse everything even scriptures for their advantages. Two of the narrators are Handmaid's daughters: Agnes and Daisy. The childhood survival of Agnes, her recently found sister Jade was very much devastating as the school friend of Agnes Shunammite tells about their mother: "She was stealing you from Gilead; she was trying to run away through a forest, she was going to take you across the border. But they caught up with her and rescued you. Lucky for you." (85) On being asked the fortune of her mother by Agnes, Zilla replies that Gileadians "would never kill a valuable woman like that unless they really couldn't help it" (89). In Gilead all Handmaids were supposed to be primarily floozies or sluts. A Handmaid doesn't have any identity or even her own name. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Offred the narrator protagonist was a Handmaid, as Agnes ponders and she is the mother of these two narrators of *The Testaments*. Here in *The Testaments* we have Ofkyle (belonging to Commander Kyle) who has been hired by the stepparents of Agnes, Paula and Commander Kyle. "Once they become Handmaids they don't have their old names anymore, and in those outfits they wear you can hardly see their faces. They all look the same" (90). They not only appear the same physically and outwardly but have the same disgusting lives. To become a handmaid means to shed the membrane of plurality, to lose one's identity, uniqueness and even their names are done and dusted.

Reviewing the novel Katherine Hill writes: “The women of Gilead are either innocent or conniving, and the men are all cartoonish sadists, literal wife killers, and child rapists”. Next to the Handmaids are the Marthas’. They are the underemployed caretakers working in the homes of commanders and their conditions are no less pathetic than the Handmaids as they are bound to live the lives of slaves: “The Marthas were eating the leftover party food: sandwiches with the crusts cut off, cake, real coffee” (103). *The Testaments* is particularly prevailing as it explores the menacing ways-- how a society makes sets of laws for its women, how it pictures and pollutes its fair sex in front of the world and how girls understand their own sexuality: schoolgirls are taught that they are “precious flowers” who need protection, white dresses for purity, slut-shaming, victim-blaming, teenagers forced into marriage with old men- “those from good families as well as the less favoured—were to be married early, before any chance encounter with an unsuitable man might occur that would lead to what used to be called falling in love or, worse, to loss of virginity” (153). Women are denied the choice of when or whether to have a baby, they are marginalised for their failure to produce a baby and those who bear babies are supposedly sluts, Handmaids. Even “Reading was not for girls: only men were strong enough to deal with the force of it” (156). The situation across the world is no more different from the fictional account of Margaret Atwood. The UNICEF claims that, an estimated 650 million girls and women alive today were married before their 18th birthday and the total number of girls married in childhood is estimated at 12 million per year across the globe. Atwood uses the narrative technique of magic realism in the novel to blur the distinction between flight of the imagination and reality.

The condition of women is so underprivileged that even in choosing husbands they have Hobson’s choice only. They are supposed to marry a person of their parents’ choice without resistance as they have always been victims of male hegemony. In the mid of the nineteenth century, Charlotte Bronte wrote:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts, as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. (102)

The condition of women in Gilead is no more different; they are the very object of all types of exploitations, whether it is their forceful conversion to become Handmaids or Pearl Girls or child marriage for numerous illogical *raison d'être*. Women are stripped off their professions, traumatized and then employed to realize men’s aspirations. Here in Gilead, women are working against women. Aunt Gabbana manages the bio-data of three candidates for the marriage of child bride Agnes, and out of three two are previously married and one of them was even older than the bride’s father Commander Kyle having “white beard and what looked like jowls underneath it, or possibly wattles: skin folds drooping down....He had already had

several wives-- dead, unhappily- and had been assigned five Handmaids but had not yet been gifted with children" (221-222). This atrocious repulsive fellow was approved by the parents of Agnes to be her groom as he was supposedly the most dominant personality of Gilead and "had been essential in the early struggle to establish the Republic of Gilead" (222). This is too much for a society and such "totalitarian systems don't last, it is my fervent belief," she told the *Times*. "Some of them have lasted longer than others. When they come apart, what is it that causes them to fall apart?"

Atwood goes to the mat for the annihilation of such tyrannical regime from Gilead and how a totalitarian regime concludes was the main interest behind the writing of this sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale*. She doesn't want to see the eradication of this threat from outside so she , "instead of moving away from Gilead, we started moving towards it, especially in the United States", as she says to a large gathering in London. The reincarnation of Aunt Lydia from a school teacher to the boss of Ardua Hall is the focal point of the novel. It is only she who understands the plight of women in Gilead and starts working from within to weaken the patriarchal structure and fortify her own.

*The Testaments* is a futurist novel and by the end of the novel it seems that such a despotic establishment can deteriorate so effortlessly if the stakeholders like Lydia are clandestine ingredients of the resistance, rasping under the oppression. This resistance makes Lydia the protagonist of the novel, rest of the characters are merely puppet in her hands. Dehumanised by the Sons of Jacob for her audacious advance for the welfare of women, she rectifies her miscalculations under the fresh administration, acting as a sycophant, pedagogue, and servant to the authoritative male Commanders and at such a place where "four female witnesses are the equivalent of one male"(252). *The Testaments* celebrates Lydia's inventive long rip off. Though her methodology is reactionary yet she succeeds in achieving the desired outcome with the help of three newly consecrated Aunts, for all the women of Gilead. "The Aunts had their methods, and their informants: no walls were solid for them, no doors locked" (236).

Lydia is just a normal woman, highly successful, highly educated, working as a judge. She got educated at a place where "Reading was not for girls: only men were strong enough to deal with the force of it" (156). Through her eyes and through her experience, the endurance of educated women displays. She is the voice of change in the state and she does her best to get rid of the tyrants. As she being a judge erstwhile working for females opposing the authorities of Gilead, was captured, imprisoned, tortured, and then converted into an activist because:

Any forced change of leadership is always followed by a move to crush the opposition. The opposition is led by the educated, so the educated are the first to be eliminated. You are a judge, so you are the educated, like it or not. They won't want you around. (116)

Lydia was the first of her family attending the college irrespective of gender and she was despised for this unconventional undertaking. She being meritorious was stubborn too but when she was brought to the Stadium along with other middle-

aged women professionals, all her education collapsed without making any noise as she herself saw twenty women being shot without reason by the Gilead men and she thought. Now she puts her mind on the totalitarianism of patriarchy of Gilead. She changed herself at least in the eyes of the Eyes. Favored by Commander Judd, Aunt Lydia, like Elizabeth, Helena and Vidala, is tormented initially, and then positioned as the originator of the scaffold of life for women as she is found to be the most competent among them. She secures supremacy by insisting that only women will be in charge of other women; men are not even permitted into Ardua Hall, where only Aunts and Supplicants dwell: "If it is to be a separate female sphere," I said, "it must be truly separate. Within it women must command. Except in extreme need, men must not pass the threshold of our allotted premises, nor shall our methods be questioned" (176). From Ardua, she rules the roost and plots retribution with infinite patience, waiting for the right girls.

In the novel there are prominently two male characters: Commander Judd and Dr Grove. Both are misogynists and paedophiles connoisseur in the same deeds. Commander Judd, one of the founders of the Gilead Empire, married several girls, kept as many as five Handmaids but still issueless is a merciless creature. Commanders, with their blue-robed Wives, red-robed Handmaids, and green-robed Martha housekeepers, keep hold of power in Cambridge, Mass., heart of Gilead. Illicit sex in this republic founded on sexual control, leads to the intricate, mesmerizing plot of the story and Dr. Grove and Commander Judd are the very quintessence of such misdemeanors. Dr. Grove the dentist molests each young girl whosoever visits his clinic. After seducing Agnes he says, "Good girl. I didn't hurt you" and gives her a "fatherly pat on her shoulder" (96). These girls are taught tolerance and endurance at their school "nice girls did not notice the minor antics of men; they simply looked the other way" (97). Dentist even does not spare his daughter Becka and she develops penis envy because of decal scare: "It's the penises. It's like a phobia" (214) and for her "Dogs are friendly" (163) in comparison to men of Gilead.

Wedding is mandatory for young girls and not to marry and have children means wastage of "woman's body" and denying "its natural function" (171). On the rejection of marriage proposal, Becka's mother tells her, "If she reached eighteen unmarried, she'd be considered dried goods and would be out of running for commanders: she'd be lucky to get even a Guardian" (162). And Aunts think "There is little point in the destruction of young female life for no reason" (215). The powerful men of the state can go scot-free according to the law of Gilead: "The doctors, the dentists, the lawyers, the accountants: in the new world of Gilead, as in the old, their sins are frequently forgiven them" (252).

The theocracy of Gilead is facing a number of hotheaded problems that are to be addressed: "Wives are at war with one another, daughters in rebellion, Commanders dissatisfied with the Wife selection proposed, Handmaids on the run, Births gone wrong. The occasional rape...or a murder: he kills her, she kills him, she kills her, once in a while, he kills him" (212). In this androcentric and patriarchal world women have been relegated to the periphery, to the fringe: "Women are only one of commodities" (210) and Commanders use them as instruments to fortify their empire, to have sex and to be fathers. Handmaids are just surrogate mothers; they

have to bear babies for the sterile Wives and impotent Commanders. Aunts, the women working at Ardua Hall train Handmaids as vessels for sex, whipping girls on feet and hands because those body parts don't have to play any role in their task: to bear offspring to men whose wives are unable to conceive. While processing the children sometimes they succumb to death but their deaths are never mentioned or mourned but even justified by the misinterpretations of the Bible. In Gilead men in power have used the Bible as genesis and validation for death, persecutions and exile.

In order to "organise the separate sphere—the sphere for women" (175), Commander Judd has selected/abducted four female professionals: Elizabeth, Helena, Vidala and Lydia. To establish a different world for women means to put them out of the mainstream and deprive them of equality. In response to Lydia's exasperations that women have been told for so long that they can obtain egalitarianism and segregation won't be entertained by the majority, Commander Judd proclaims: "It was always a cruelty to promise them equality...since by the nature they can never achieve it (175). Seeing this pro-feminine attitude of Lydia and anti-feminine mindset of Commander Judd, one can easily conclude that Gilead is not only pro-masculine and but also it mortify its women in order to subjugate them, to show the patriarchal triumphs over the "weak vessels" as Aunt Vidala thinks of women. To validate this transgression, Giledeans have divine interventions as Judd justifies. The very Divine order is hideous and repulsive; this is a power structure to rule the society, to quench the sexual appetite of its tormenters created by the tyrants of Gilead. They are not working for the welfare of women but like colonials they are creating a hegemonic building/society so that they can rule with the consent of the colonized. Ardua Hall and Rubies Premarital Preparatory School are the institutions that produce Wives, Aunts, Pearl Girls, Handmaids and sluts for Gilead.

Aunt Lydia is the in-charge of Ardua Hall and Rubies Premarital Preparatory School—a school for young women who are learning how to be good wives with a motto from the Bible: "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies" (161). In spite of this rhetoric, Aunts are teaching the young girls the nuances of acting as good wives. As Shakespeare said, "All the world's a stage,/ And all the men and women merely players;/ They have their exits and their entrances;/ And one man in his time plays many parts;/ His acts being seven stages" (*As You Like It*, II, vii, 139-143), the girls are trained to play their parts, the parts of "mistress of high ranking households" (161), Pearl Girls, Supplicants and Aunts—the backbone of the Gilead Empire. Becka had revolted here at Rubies Premarital Preparatory School against the institution of marriage by a failed attempt of suicide. Instantaneously she was taken to the Ardua Hall and with a certain warning was converted into a supplicant: "It's a privilege, not an entitlement" (216). When Agnes, also the apprentice of Rubies Premarital Preparatory School showed disinterest in marrying an aged and grotesquely precarious commander Judd, she was straight away visited by Aunt Lydia with preaching: "Not every girl is suitable for marriage....for some it's simply waste of potential. There are other ways a girl or woman may contribute to God's plan" (231).

Aunt Lydia was in search of rightful and obsequious soldiers for retribution against Commander Judd's principles of Gilead and such right girls are Agnes

Jemima and her best friend Becka. Both have been distressed by a sexual marauder and the power structure of the society where they live in. Commanders are men whose occupation allows them unrestrained entrée to adolescent girls. And one of the predators is none other than the pretended father of Becka, Dr. Grove. Appointed by Aunt Lydia, they become Supplicants, finally taught to read and write, though reading is very tough for the young girls. They passed through a rigorous training by doing all odd works.

The theocracy of Gilead has banned reading especially for women but Aunts were out of this jurisdiction “the gift of being able to read, since all Aunts were gifted in that way” (246). Having learned reading, Agnes realizes that she was living in a completely different and ignorant world. The verses and stories of the Bible she has been read by her father and as those on the pages, her very soul is taken aback, the truths proliferate and all of sudden the world changes. So far Bible was a forbidden book; inaccessible to women, it used to justify deaths, tortures and even Particution. “Our Bibles were kept locked up, as elsewhere in Gilead: only those of strong mind and steadfast character could be trusted with them, and that ruled out women, except for the Aunts.” Agnes becomes conscious that her life has been full of cock-and-bull stories and fabrications, that she might lose conviction and faith. “If you’ve never had a faith, you will not understand what that means.... You feel exiled, as if you are lost in a dark wood.” This is her acknowledgment, recorded years later for posterity.

“The truth can cause a lot of trouble for those who are not supposed to know it” (307). Reading the real version of her parenting and the make-believe of her step-mother Paula, Agnes “was bedazzled, as if struck by lightning” (307). She comes to know that her dead mother Tabitha was not her mother; her detestable stepmother Paula who herself is guilty of mariticide reveals that her birth was to a treacherous Handmaid and above all she has a sister too. She comes across a number of files of different colours for investigation and trails describing multiple crimes of Gileadian people.

Handmaids had been forced into illegal acts, then blamed for them; Sons of Jacob had plotted against one another; bribes and favours had been exchanged at the highest levels; Wives had schemed against other Wives; Martha’s had eavesdropped and collected information, and then sold it; mysterious food poisonings had occurred, babies had changed hand from Wife to Wife on the basis of scandalous rumours that were, however, unfounded. Wives had been hanged for adulteries that had never occurred because a Commander wanted a different younger wife. (307-308)

This is the reality behind the veil of authoritative governments. The power ridden has the clout to do anything with impunity and the “weak vessels” have to bear the consequences of their weaknesses. This is the society that creates women as Simone de Beauvoir had postulated seventy years ago: “Woman has ovaries, a uterus: these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature” (de Beauvoir 15). It’s the weak and meek who bear and have borne

the insubordination and consequently the comeuppance of powerful misdemeanors and to get the absolute emancipation from such tyrannous system she has to “dethrone the myth of femininity” (de Beauvoir 31).

Aunt Lydia devises the plan to annihilate the hegemonic structure of Gilead, to reshuffle the “deplorable degree of corruption that currently exists in Gilead” (337). Primarily “the aims of Gilead at the outset were pure and noble....But they have been subverted and sullied by the selfish and power mad....” (337). To better the “festering shitheap” (379), Aunt Lydia devises two tactics. She excogitates the plan of Particution through which the immoralists are executed by the horde of hyperactive and frenzied women, by the Handmaids. Dr Grove, who raped Agnes and his own daughter, was particuted and next in the queue is Commander Judd. Agnes is provided with all the files related to different types of crimes and criminals for the close study by an ambiguous character probably Lydia herself. Lydia thinks that Agnes should be aware of the crimes and criminals especially of Commander Judd whom she was betrothed to though for a short time. It will help reform the empire. Particution episode is a type of revenge on the corrupt and immoral Commanders by the Handmaids. The Handmaids are usually so downcast and subdued that the exhibit of so much rage and courage on their part is alarming. It provided a weapon in the hands of “weaker vessels” to enjoy the power of men. This tactic of castigation was devised by the Founder Aunts but Lydia brings it to fashion, to capital punishment.

To triumph this structure, in the second plan, Lydia needs the assistance of the inmates of Ardua Hall. Baby Nicole or Jade was brought to Gilead from Canada by the Pearl girls, converted to be a Supplicant but she misfits the atmosphere of the Gilead and Aunt Lydia wishes to disconnect the chain of victims from Ardua Hall by dispersing all the three greenhorns. She uses her wit to the lees as the ability to concoct plausible lies is a talent not to be underestimated. With the consecrated and sanctified aim in mind “The salvation of Gilead. The purification. The renewal” (379), Agnes along with her sister Jude, “my silver doves, my destroying angels”(392), leaves Gilead for good “carrying with them the seeds of Gilead’s collapse” (389), and Becka the Aunt Immortelle, sacrifices her life. She manages everything successfully to dispatch Agnes and Jade to Canada.

Finally, Lydia by putting her life at stake succeeds in writing a new fairy-tale for the Giledean women by playing a vital role in the reunion of Agnes and Jade with their mother who had supposedly joined a terrorist outfit May-day in order to save herself. This reunion also arouses the feeling of motherhood in Handmaids, the feeling that they were deprived of so far and shifts their position from being a machine to a human being, from margin to center. Atwood has a very clear vision for the egalitarian society and the main narrator and protagonist of the novel seems to be her literary counterpart. Every authoritative structure falls at a certain time, ways of falling could differ. Here the patriarchal empire falls with pronouncements to offer the natural right to women, right to motherhood.

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## **Music and Politics Intertwined: How was Music used in Politics during the Pre-Independence Era, and Now?**

Megha Dutta

### **Abstract**

Music plays a crucial role in our lives. With music becoming more popular day by day, we often forget to consider how big of an impact it has on us daily. It is always around us, and it has been used in political situations for decades now. But why did it start being used? And how has it evolved from aiding the freedom struggle to aiding political propaganda? The difference between the music produced then and now, is not only its purpose, but the way it is perceived as well. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 1947, we gained independence. Before 1947, music pushed people to fight for their rights, and fight for freedom. After 1947, music pushed people to celebrate their independence, and celebrate the joys of life. Today, politics and music intertwine once again, with music being a secondary source of votes for many political parties. Music is used to appease younger crowds, and make a change—whether it is changing the way the government functions, or the votes of a party depends on the source. However, how the two will interact in the future is uncertain, as political parties begin to invest in music more and more every day. While some artists choose to follow in the footsteps of pre-independence musicians, and use their music to shine a light on the havoc being wreaked around them, others choose to use music as a tool to persuade those who know no better. Despite being an integral part of shaping the independence movement and encouraging citizens to take part in it, music is now used to electorally benefit political parties, rather than to encourage audiences to participate in beneficial change for the nation.

**Key words:** Music, Politics, India, Independence, Congress, BJP, Independence Movement, Pre-Independence Era

We are constantly in the presence of music. Every day, we listen to the music on our playlists, jazz playing in the elevator, or even the pop music playing in the restaurant. But why do we listen to this music? What kind of an impact does it have on us? Despite music being such a big part of so many of our lives, we never ponder the implications of the music we listen to, how it changes our mood, our ideas. Music is affiliated with culture, and trends and music often depend on one another to progress. This allowed for the usage of popular music for political benefit and/or propaganda. In India, specifically, music played a massive role in encouraging crowds to join the independence movement, and till date, plays a role in politics, however, in a slightly different manner.

The citizens of India in the pre independence era were infuriated with the handling of the Indian government by the British. While some fuelled their emotions into violence, protests and movements, others fuelled it into art. Painters, musicians, dancers, and artists of all sorts expressed their anger in the way they knew best,

through their skills. Musicians produced music that left an impression on their audience, and encouraged them to make their voices heard.

One of the most popular and influential musicians, who was also a writer, was Rabindranath Tagore. Born in Bengal, he pursued higher education in the UK before settling back in Bengal. He gained popularity through his theatre work, which employed colloquial language rather than traditional Sanskrit, attracting and serving a much larger audience. With his platform, he also tried to spread awareness about the importance of education rather than revolution, as he was a firm believer in peace. His ideologies allowed his audiences' view of their place in the movement to change. His faith in peace shone through in his song, "Akash Bhora Shurjo Tara," with the lyrics

*Akash Bhora Surjo Tara, Biswa Bhora Praan*

*Tahar-e majhkhaneamipeyechi mor sthaan*

(The sky is filled with the sun and the stars, and the world is filled with life and in the middle of it all, I have found my place.)

This, in a very subtle way, encourages people to look at how despite being a small entity in a very large world, they can still find their place, and do something with the power their position holds. However, his pursuit of political music began on account of the Bengal Partition, which lasted from 1905-1911. During the Bengal Partition, the British strategically employed their "Divide and Rule" tactic, dividing Bengal, which was the revolutionary hub of India, into two- East and West Bengal. The division, being on the basis of religion, saw the Hindus being placed in West Bengal and the Muslims in East. In order to unify the Bengalis, Tagore released the song "Banglar Mati BanglarJol," with the lyrics,

Bangalirpon, Bangalirasha, Bangalirkaj, Bangalirbhaasha,

(The oaths, will, work and language of Bengalis)

Satya hauk, satyahauk, satyahauk, hey Bhagobaan.

(May they be eternal, Oh my Lord)

Bangalirpraan, Bangalir mon, Bangalirgharejato bhai bon,

(The souls, thoughts, the brothers and sisters in the homes of Bengalis)

Ekhauk, ekhauk, ekhauk, hey Bhagobaan.

(May they be united, Oh my Lord)

Through this song Tagore wanted to instil a sense of unity within the divided Bengalis. In order to aid the achievement of his motives, he also started the tradition of Rakhi, where the Hindu and Muslim Bengalis tied Rakhis onto each other's wrist, displaying their unbreakable bond. Tagore's contribution to the independence movement didn't only catalyse people's involvement in it, but it also helped show them the important difference between blind revolution and educated action. However, Tagore wasn't the only contributor to the movement.

Rajanikanta Sen, born in present day Bangladesh, was a Bengali poet and musician. His mother's interest in literature is what encouraged him to delve into poetry. Sen, unlike the other composers of his time, didn't shy away from discussing

the product of the economy of India, and wrote about them in his music. Given Bengal's financial state at the time, he was aware of the unrest it caused among the working classes of India. Through his music, he encouraged his audience to look beyond the materialistic things in life, and embrace what India had to offer. In his songs, he wrote,

My brothers, please accept the coarse clothing offered by your mother  
As this is all your poor mother (nation) can afford,

As he noticed the dissatisfaction of Indians who thought that British clothing was of better quality than Indian clothing. Inspired by the patriotic music, a majority of his audience saw past the quality of their clothes, and questioned the quality of their lives under British rule, and participated in the Swadeshi movement. Not only did this song encourage them to join the Swadeshi movement and boycott all British goods, it helped them understand the significance of it. Moved by the response of his first song, he produced another, of the same motive. In this song, he called upon his fellow Bengalis, and reminded them of the strength in number between them-

We are extremely poor, we are extremely small  
Yet we are seventy million brothers, rise up,

With no hesitation, he admitted the poverty that he and many like him shared; but he relied on the strength of their unity rather than the strength of their finances, and persuaded them to do so as well. Essentially, he, along with many other artists like him, were responsible for the Bengali uprising against the British, ending the partition. While Rajanikanta Sen was admittedly inspired by Rabindranath Tagore, both musicians, along with the rest of India, only delved into the movement upon inspiration from the man who really sparked a sense of nationalism within his audience through his music; and that man was Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay was born in Kolkata, in 1838. He was a novelist, who published several books in favour of a nationalist movement, the most notable being *Ananda Math*. He delved into music to engage with his audience at a much larger scale. He gained most popularity through his song *VandeMataram*, released in 1882. The nationalist movement was still in the making, and hadn't yet gained much attention. His music, primarily the song *VandeMataram*, helped bring attention to the situation India was in, and emphasized on the need to free India from British rule by referring to the Motherland as Mother-Goddess. By associating the country with various goddesses, such as Durga and Lakshmi, he instilled a sense of nationalism in countrymen and women, as they were obliged to serve the country as their god. Despite it being slightly controversial today, due to its reference to India as a Hindu Goddess, ignoring the monotheistic policies of Islam, it was the inspiration behind the independence movement of not only the citizens of India, but the musicians of India as well. With this song, music found a way to spread as well. *VandeMataram* was sung once again in 1896 by Rabindranath Tagore, during the national convention held by the Indian National Congress. From then on, it became a national slogan for the independence movement, inspiring many more artists to

record the song. It became so popular, that the British imposed a ban on the song. In turn, the song gained even more popularity. After Rabindranath Tagore's rendition of it, it was covered by Vishnu Digambar Paluskar in Raga Kafi, M.S. Subbulakshmi and D.K. Roy as a duet, Bai Mogubai Kurdikar, and was sung by Omkarnath Thakur on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 1947, to mark the independence of India. The impact of these covers led to the spread of patriotic music all across the country, in different dialects and tones, catering to each regions' musical taste. It also led to the recording of renditions of various other patriotic songs, and the demand for concerts. For decades, as a tradition, music and dance were communicated across large distances through word of mouth. After a point in time, everyone seemed to know the words to popular patriotic songs, and concerts would be organised to sing the songs. One such concert occurred in Banaras, where all the women were asked to wear silver chudis instead of gold jewellery to symbolize the shackles with which the British controlled India.

The popularity of these songs attracted the Gramophone Company, a company which specialized in recording and selling gramophone records. In 1901, the first branch of the Gramophone Company opened in Calcutta, and in 1902, men from Germany arrived to begin recording music on the records. The record would be taken back to Germany for pressing and production, and then brought back to India for marketing. For credentials and labelling purposes, the recording artists would have to enunciate their names in English at the end. The gramophone was a fascinating device, and soon, many famous artists such as Gauhar Jan of Calcutta and Jankibai of Allabad began recording for them. However, after the partition of Bengal and the boycott of all British goods, it became hard to sell foreign goods in India, leading to a decline in the Gramophone Company's business. This continued until around 1908, when they set up their own record pressing plant in Sealdah, Calcutta. These plants were called Bajakhana by the factory workers. Due to the availability of shellac, the records were no longer required to be taken to Hanover for production. As this new establishment occurred right around when the independence movement was really accelerating, the fact that the records were now labelled with, "Made in Calcutta," made them even more popular, not only allowing for them to sell more rapidly but also popularizing recording artists and their patriotic music.

Apart from the gramophone, the radio also spread commercially. The most famous broadcasting service was the All India Radio, or AIR. It was initiated in 1923, by the Madras Presidency Radio Club. It was directed by Czechoslovakian composer, Walter Kaufmann, who came to India due to Hitler's regime in Prague. He composed the signature Akashvani tune. While AIR never specifically broadcasted patriotic music, it did bring the country together. It was even supported by the Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin, who said, "In India's remote villages there are many who, after the day's work is done, find time hanging heavily...and there must be many officials whose duties carry them into out-of-way places, where they crave company of friends and solace of human companionship. To all these and many more broadcasting will be a blessing and boon of real value." Not only did AIR give company to those longing for it, it also bound the population together through the 23 different languages and 146 different dialects it broadcasted in, becoming a common

source of information and entertainment for the entire nation. At the time, unity was something that was truly required for India to have, as after years of being divided into different, and usually rival princely states and kingdoms, the nation was still recovering and becoming one.

Today, the methods of broadcasting are vastly different. While the radio is still very much in use, people have adopted different methods of listening to music—some listen to music on the television through music competitions and shows; others listen to music at restaurants. However, today, most people find music through social media applications such as Tik Tok, video platforms such as YouTube, or through applications specifically meant for streaming music, such as Spotify or Apple Music. There are countless musicians across the world, or just even in India, who make music and distribute it through the aforementioned modes. However, these artists don't usually make music to favour political propaganda. For a very long time, music hasn't been required to be political in nature. There are many artists who have used their fame and popularity to spread important political views through or in the form of their music, but many a times, music isn't intentionally political.

In India, the main source of music is Bollywood and T-Series. India also has its own music streaming applications, such as Saavn, Jio Music and Wynk music. While most mainstream music is used to support a film narrative, there are a few artists who have taken it upon themselves to address important issues through their music. One such artist is Ginni Mahi. She is a 21-year-old Punjab based artist who sings explicitly of the wrongfully imposed caste system. She broke into her music career as a singer with her music being of no intention other than bringing joy to her listeners. Her career as a political musician began when she was approached by a fan, who started off by professing her admiration for Mahi, but proceeding to interrogate her about her caste. When Mahi told her about her background, her fan remarked "Oh! I should be careful. Chamars are danger, they say." Being hit with the realization of how many Indians are yet to stop differentiating based on caste, she released the song 'Danger Chamar,' which calls upon the Dalit population to unite and help educate crowds of the social and financial inequality Dalits in Punjab and all across India face till date. Her main source of inspiration is Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the father of Dalit advocacy himself.

Her music has found itself categorized under the Chamar Pop genre, a genre dedicated to advocating Dalit rights and awareness. Inspired by Kanshi Ram's movement for Dalit rights, the genre consists of artists such as Roop Lal Dhir, Sumeet Samos, the Casteless Collective and Ginni Mahi herself. While her music has a genre for itself, other political artists delved into different genres while exploring the style of music which helped get their message across in a catchy tune, without compromising its severity.

The Ska Vengers are one such musical act, except they have decided that instead of sticking to only one genre of music, they will combine several. The Ska Vengers are a New Delhi based act, consisting of Begum X, Delhi Sultanate, Nikhil Vasudevan and Stefan Kaye. They combine aspects of Ska, Dub, Punk, Jazz and Rap to cater to their style of music. This unique twist is assisted by lyrics which invoke a sense of political awareness within their listeners. Much like Ginni Mahi, they never

intended to make political music while beginning their careers in Reggae. The reason they delved into it, and became so passionate about it, is because it was all that they could notice. "Music is a quintessential part of all many fundamental aspects of human life, and protest is no different. You will find that most protest movement and revolutionary movements have songs and their importance should not be underestimated. Music can effectively communicate feelings and forge a sense of unity, it can also galvanise people into action," says Delhi Sultanate in an interview with Outlook India. The fact that Reggae had always been revolutionary music helped steer their message in the direction they wanted it to go in. They felt the need to sing about the damage that politics in the nation was causing, and address the impact it had on people. They believe that not addressing the chaos around them would make them no better than the culprits themselves. In their songs, they explicitly send the messages across, for example, in their song titled, "Modi, A Message to You," they gave PM Modi, as the title suggests, a message. The song is to bring attention to the misuse of power to mute the freedom of speech, the lack of concern and action for women's safety, and the exclusion of the LGBTQ+ community and other minorities, by the BJP, who only aid those who fit their idea of ideal citizens.

While there are many artists who write music about politics, music is used quite differently in politics. In politics, the music is either only about the benefits that voting for a particular party has, or the most popular and trendy music at the moment. The music that is used is mostly popular music which has the ability to attract the youth of the country. According to political campaign advisors, music is one of the most persuasive tools, especially during this type of cultural change, to advertise almost anything. Communication consultant and political campaign advisor Dilip Cherian believes that music is a more effective method of communication than even photographed ads, and has the ability to sway the general public in favour of advertised product. Not only does it catch the attention of the listener, it also efficiently communicates the objectives of the political party in a manner which is appealing to most young voters today. It can also be broadcasted on a much larger scale- radio, television, music streaming applications, etc. Lyrics are extremely memorable, and have been proven to be easier to remember than study material by experiments recorded in the journal *Scientific Reports*. According to the experiments, the neurons in our brain have the ability to make synaptic connections which store our memories, and help us link them to occurrences in our day to day lives. When we listen to a song, or any music on a loop, by default, the synaptic connections help cement the tune and lyrics of the song in our brain, making it much easier for us to remember. This research was conducted with mice, which possessed the same connection forming proteins that we did- NR2A and NR2B. The latter is present on a much larger scale in younger mice, with NR2A being more common in older mice. The younger mice were experimented on by being induced to produce more NR2A, as found in the adults. It was observed that the young mice had much more difficulty forming new memories, as they had too many old, cement memories. The study suggested that humans, much like the mice, simply find it much harder to absorb information they learn because they have too many cement memories. Because we are surrounded by music much more than

things we actually have to remember, we often tend to store the music as memories. Music is also used as a distraction, not only on purpose, but involuntarily by the body as well, as stated by Business Insider. Music is often associated with certain events or emotions, due to which, even when we aren't listening to music, we often seem to be thinking about it.

Because music can be broadcasted on such a large scale- primarily through radios and social media applications- politicians have started to use music to advertise the benefits of electing their party, in mainly two ways- appealing to the youths' taste in music, and creating jingles of their own.

Political parties tend to cater to the youth, as it is believed that the youth holds massive power of the general public opinion, as they don't mind expressing their own. "Apart from being a big chunk of the population, the youth demographic also shapes public opinion, because young people voice their own opinion very openly on social media," stated Shivam Shankar, a former data analyst for the BJP, in an interview with QUARTZ. India's largest group of voters is also under the age of 25, making their votes the most crucial to gain. In order to appeal to the youth, who are their primary target, popular and trendy music is being used in election campaigns. This tactic has been quite successful, as not only has it attracted the youth, it has also attracted various recording artists, with each jingle paying up to Rs. 10,000. For example, political parties in Jharkhand have sent campaign vans out into cities for the Lok Sabha elections, blasting music, the most popular being Hindi and Bhojpuri music. Political parties have been approached by up and coming musicians as well, as not only is creating political music very financially fruitful, it is also a very effective way of entering the music industry. Khesari Yadav, Sanjiv Gupta and Mitali Ghosh are some of the recording artists who have gained quite some recognition through singing for political parties. Political parties have also gained recognition through changing some of the words of popular music in order to fit their agenda. For example, a song from Hindi movie Dabangg called 'tere naina Bade Dagabaaz re' has been changed to 'Modi Bade Dagabaaz re'; and 'Apna Time Aayega' from movie Gully Boy, has been used to cater to the rap lovers as background music in a video. While political parties largely borrow music from popular tunes for their campaign, the never shy away from producing their own.

In the 2019 BJP released 'Phir Ek Bar Modi Sarkaar,' to aid their elections. It has garnered 5.6 million views till date, and has gained massive attention from supporters and adversaries alike. To assist PM Narendra Modi's re-election, they released a second song 'Main Bhi Chowkidar,' along with related merchandise. The songs have become hits amongst BJP supporters; however, they have also been challenged by the opponent party's own music. Congress released a rap song, specifically targeting 'Main Bhi Chowkidar,' called 'Chowkidar Hi Chor Hai, Pata Hai Hindustan Ko.' The song focused on how the Prime Minister caused more problems rather than coming up with solutions, and spent India's money on his foreign trips and statues. Congress also released 'Ab NyayHoga', which is their campaign tagline as well. This song was actually produced by famed musician Javed Akhtar. All the songs, except 'Chowkidar Hi Chor Hai, Pata Hai Hindustan Ko,' have highlighted each of the parties' achievements, emphasizing the benefits one would gain by investing in them. Despite many critics' scepticism, music does

indeed help with the votes attained by a party. With the BJP songs having a significantly larger number of views than their opponent's music, the youth has also sided with them on a larger scale; and with their landslide victory during the 2014 elections, Congress' attempts at gaining more popularity have been much less effective. Essentially, all political parties have dipped their feet into the music industry to help gain the support of the youth, their prime target.

After the completion and compilation of weeks of research, in my opinion, while the usage of music in this field is smart and an effective tactic, I also believe that the wrong music is being brought into the spotlight. Despite often hearing music affiliated with politics, this music is often used as propaganda rather than as encouragement to help the nation. The music mostly focuses on the benefits of voting for a certain party, which is what advertisements are meant for, however, they rarely ever encourage change. *Ab Nyay Hoga*, for example, is a song about how the Congress can bring justice to Indians. But rather than how they will do it, the song emphasises on what they will do. While promising listeners a bright future with little guarantee, their music's primary cause is to bash their opponents. Their tactic is not to gain followers for themselves, but decrease followers for other competitors. Therefore, I don't exactly support the usage of music in this context. Our forefathers had used music not to push an agenda, but to fight for the freedom and rights for the citizens of India, and encourage citizens to join them. Therefore, I believe that the usage of music by political parties is somewhat of a misuse of music, but would not be if it solely focused on how and why they will benefit India, rather than how their opponent will not. However, slight advertisement is expected. I also believe that those musicians who genuinely want to spread a message for the betterment of the nation deserve to be promoted and broadcast, however that can only be done with stricter following of the freedom of speech and expression, which is often taken advantage of by political parties.

There is a stark difference in the way music was used during the pre-independence movement and now. While artists looked to their music, hoping to ignite a sense of patriotism in their audience, apart from a few exceptions, most political parties only want to attract voters. Unlike revolutionaries and freedom fighters before, political parties want to use music in favour of individual party interests rather than national interests. While the music they produce is still patriotic, they are only patriotic to influence people to vote for them. The few artists which make music to bring about a change in the system, much like those before them, have made a local impact, but unfortunately do not have the coverage they require to make a visible difference. Music has shaped our nation in many ways- the film industry, festivals and our culture in general. It has become an integral part of our nation's identity, being involved in politics has only heightened its importance. But how it will be used in the future is unknown.



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## Eco Critical Reading of Robert Frost's Selected Poems

Mita G. Shah & Anant Shukla

### Abstract

Environment is the natural phenomena which affects human life. The present research paper will study eco criticism theory and the selected poems of Robert Frost. The seeds of protection of environment are inherent in the glorious treasure of Vedic literature. The other names of eco criticism like ecology, ecological literature, green reading, green theory, green cultural studies etc. are modified words of nature study and they are stepping stones for the development of eco criticism theory. Eco criticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together. Eco criticism is the latest developed theory which got recognition in 1996 only. Robert Frost is the famous American poet of 20th century. Through textual illustrations, the researcher will express eco critical reading of Robert Frost's selected poems named *Birches*, *A Prayer in Spring*, *Acceptance*, *A Girl's Garden*, *Looking for a Sunset Bird in Winter Morning* and *To the Thawing Wind*. The research paper will examine the eco critical aspects of Robert Frost.

**Key words:** Green Study, Environment, Eco Criticism, Ecology, Robert Frost, Culture

### Introduction

Environment is the natural phenomena which affects human life. The seeds of protection of environment are inherent in the glorious treasure of Vedic literature. For example, "Do not cut trees because they remove pollution" (Rigveda- 6.48:17) (Kumar viii). There are some references which show that without joining in the group of environmentalists, the few persons of India work for protection of India. 'Chipko movement' (Kumar 85) of India at 1970 shows protest of women of Tihari Garhwal region and these women played instrumental role for protection of environment and trees (Kumar 85). Sunderlal Bahuguna, Baba Amte, Megha Patkar revolted for saving environment. Nature has remained the matter of attraction for all the writers of different languages and literatures. Oxford English Dictionary defines nature as "the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals and landscape as opposed to humans or human creation" (Pearsall 950). Eco criticism is the latest developed theory which got recognition in 1996 only. Eco criticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together. "Eco criticism expands the notion of "the world" to include the entire eco sphere" (Glottfelty and Fromm Introduction xix). Eco criticism has broadened the scope from nature writing to the study of literature, society and science, all under one head. The word 'eco criticism' is the combination of two words - eco and criticism. 'Eco' means earth, the whole universe and 'criticism' means study. So eco criticism means study of nature. However, eco

criticism is more than nature studies. It widens and gives more comprehensive approach to the study of literature. It includes the study of nature, culture and geography and thus is interdisciplinary in its approach. The other names of eco criticism like ecology, ecological literature, green reading, green theory, green cultural studies etc. are modified words of nature study and they are stepping stones for the development of eco criticism theory.

Robert Lee Frost is the famous American poet of 20th century. The paper focuses on the eco critical study of selected poems of Robert Frost named *Birches*, *A Prayer in Spring*, *Acceptance*, *A Girl's Garden*, *Looking for a Sunset Bird in Winter Morning* and *To the Thawing Wind*.

Etymologically, ecology is derived from the Greek 'oikos' - signifying 'household' in the comprehensive sense of residence. Chamber's dictionary notes: "Ecology is the study of plants, animals, people and institutions in relation to environment" (Mairi, Robinson and Davidson 417). It is the study of interaction between organism and environment. Aldo Leopold defined ecology as "the science of communities" and coined the term "ecological conscience to refer to the ethics of community" (Buell 140). Ecological issues are both regional and global. It tells the interaction between organism and the environment. William Howarth says, "Eco criticism is a name that implies more ecological literacy" (Glotfelty and Fromm). So, in this way, eco awareness is suggested through eco criticism. The need of ethics is suggested in this definition: "Eco criticism is to be an expression of an ecological ethics - need to be articulated based on an interrelationship of self and other which unsettles the self and the social even as it constitutes them" (Goodbody and Rigby 185). William Rueckert notes the basic maxim of ecology: "We are not free to violate the laws of nature" (Glotfelty and Fromme 113).

Eco criticism often presents the scene of an interplay that stresses the cultural aspects of various concepts of nature. Timothy Clark observes "Eco criticism is varied and fast changing set of practices which challenges inherited thinking and practice in the reading of literature and culture" (Clark 256). Thus, eco criticism functions to evaluate literature and culture: "Eco criticism is a theoretical movement, examining cultural constructions of Nature in their social and political contexts" (Egan 204). In this way, the present theory is interconnected with nature, society and culture. "Eco criticism there might be a means of moving from monoculture view of nature to multi-cultural one from a world of self-isolating societies to a world of unified and unifying cultures" (Nichols xxiii). In this way, the present theory guides the society for an ideal living. Eco criticism looks closely at the human, culture, nature interaction in texts.

It is very interesting and important to peep into the origin of the eco criticism theory. The earlier history of the term reflects the contribution of three persons. The first item in Mazel's anthology of "early eco criticism" dates from 1864 (Buell 152). The German zoologist named Ernest Haeckel used the term ecology in 1869. Joseph Meeker introduced the term 'literary ecology' in 1972. (V. and Jana 3). The term 'eco criticism' was first introduced in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay named *Literature and Ecology: An experiment in Eco criticism*. The writer gives signal to mankind. "...the idea that nature should also be protected by human laws, that trees (dolphins and whales hawks and whooping cranes) should have lawyers to

articulate and defend their rights is one of the marvellous and characteristic parts of the ecological vision" (Glotfelty and Fromm 108). He declares that in literature energy comes from the creative imagination and language is the vehicle for storing the creative energy. In 1996, there is an official announcement of eco criticism theory through the publication of the two seminal works: *The Eco Criticism Reader* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm and *The Environmental Imagination* by Lawrence Buell.

Literature is the medium to reflect the current problems of society. The development of science and technology put the world in summit of progress. But the lives of humans are in danger. "...current environment problems are largely of our own making, are in other words, a bio product of culture" (Glotfelty and Fromme Introduction xxi). If the person is alive then he/she can enjoy the comforts of technology and scientific progress. Eco criticism alerts the persons of society through literary works to sensitize with all problems. So, theory of eco criticism is the most appropriate and useful in 21st century. "If mortals dwell in that, they save the earth and if poetry is the original admission of dwelling, the poetry is the place where we save the earth" (Bate 283). So, above quotation shows the role of poetry.

Robert Lee Frost is very popular poet of not only American literature but of the world literature of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Robert Frost earns name and fame at international level. "He was one of the first writers born on the West coast to attain international fame" (Wager 205). He is the poet of New England region and enriches the American literature with volumes of poetry. His poetic works are in big volumes, nine in numbers. They contain short lyrics and long poems. Robert Frost is the winner of prestigious Pulitzer prizes for poetry, four times in his career. His poems study human life, human relations, and way of living of persons in the background of nature. "Frost enjoyed enormous popularity in America as a benevolent purveyor of versified common sense, rural love and evocations of natural order" ... (Stringer 233). The critic has well evaluated the qualities of Robert Frost as a poet in above quotation.

The very famous poem of Frost, *Birches* is full of ecological allusions. Birches are a common sight in New England. The poem colours with ecology. It consists of a series of beautiful pictures of nature. It is among Frost's best-known pieces and has acquired a wide popularity. The opening lines of the poem show poet's observation of bending of birches to left and right to remain straight in darker trees. The poet delineates the swinging movement of this tree. The icy sunny morning after rain add the beauty of birches. The poet has taken the opportunity to delineate the same: "As the breeze rises, and turn many- coloured" ([www.PoemHunter.com](http://www.PoemHunter.com) - *Robert Frost - Poems* 47 line -8) and " Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells" ([www.PoemHunter.com](http://www.PoemHunter.com) - *Robert Frost - Poems* 47 line -10 ) express the beauty of birches due to the effect of breeze and the sun. The poet compares aspects of tree with way of living of persons. Birches have supplemented the feeling of the poet. The poem rotates around birches and also shows how the poet, boys, girls enjoy the same trees. The swinging movement of birches reminds the poet as if some boys have been swinging on the tree. The falling leaves of birches are compared with girls. All such depiction reminds the inter tuning between nature and human being. The poem proceeds and it also delineates the mischievous boy who enjoys the riding

in trees and swinging on them. In this way the poet depicts the pleasurable moments of childhood period through the character of a boy. The poet also shares his attachment to the same tree through climbing the same tree and how he climbs back branches up to a snow-white trunk. Thus, the poem studies a series of beautiful pictures of nature and of human being. It appears to the humanity in true and broad sense. He climbs carefully and reaches to top branches of a tree up to the brim (edge) and above the brim. So, the poem reflects harmonious tuning between nature and human being which is the part of eco criticism. Through description, the poem presents the relationship between the real and ideal world through symbolism. Life is full of struggle and combination of happiness and unhappiness. The poet also prays that fate may not misunderstand him and may his wishes be half granted. The climbing, ascending and bending of the birches stand for the obstacles in the path of soul's union with God. Thus, the poem strengthens its faith in goodness of life. The poet gives the golden message of harmonious tuning among human being which leads to the world peace. "...Earth's the right place for love: / I don't know where it's likely to go better" (www.PoemHunter.com - Robert Frost - Poems 48, lines 13- 14). So, above lines suggest ethics and value system which are the part of eco criticism. The poem shows eco sensitivity. The poet's anxiety of harming the trees is also suggested in the poem. So, in this way, *Birches* is the best example of Frost's ecological aspects.

*A Prayer in Spring* chants the beauty of nature which is well reflected in the poem. The spring is likable season for poets of different languages and literature. The poem expresses pleasure of spring season on flowers, orchard harvest etc. The poem is divided into four stanzas in sixteen lines. The poem opens with poet's joy: "Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers to-day;...(www.PoemHunter.com 24 line 1). The poet appreciates the beauty of flowers and the springing of harvest in farms. The beauty is so marvellous that there is no need of thinking. It seems that the heart is full of enjoyment. The poem proceeds with beauty of white orchard which compares to ghosts of night. Such beauty of orchard gives happiness to the readers. The positive atmosphere affects the meteor also. This falling star thrusts in with needle bill and stands still in midair. The poet ends with linking of nature with God. The poet tells that the present beauty of nature shadow love which is the base of life for human being. The beauty of spring doubles with such pleasure of nature. Thus, the poem glorifies nature and ecology which are the part of eco criticism. The poet delineates free movement of bees. The beauty of spring motivates bees and swarms which have become more open to the perfect trees. This positive atmosphere encourages the birds to move happily in likable atmosphere. The sound of bees also enlivens the spring season. So, in this way the poem depicts the world of birds which is one of the components of eco criticism. The poem reflects the harmony between nature and human being indirectly. The usage of pronoun 'us' repeatedly in the poem, suggests the effect of nature on persons. The poet is the narrator and the readers are listeners. So, the narrator and readers are suggested here. The poet urges throughout in the poem to give pleasure and to make happy which reflect the inter tuning between nature and human being. The poet and the reader tell the parts of nature not to think so far away, but give us pleasure. The poet and readers wish to enjoy the company of the bees (and swarm). The poem ends with the suggestion of

fulfilled life by the poet and the readers in the background of the beauty of spring. The contrasting narration is depicted here: "For this is love and nothing else is love," (www.PoemHunter.com, 24 line 13) reflects inner feeling of human being. So, the poem reflects harmony between nature and human being. Culture emerged from nature is the part of eco criticism which is well reflected in this poem. "A Prayer in Spring discovers that the greatness of love does not lie in forward - looking thoughts. It lies amidst the beautiful natural scenery which is sanctified with God's blessing" (Mishra 26). This beauty of spring is reserved by God. So, the poet glorifies God as the creator of such beauty of nature. "In *A Prayer in Spring*, he offers his personal prayer in spring time and tells us that the best way to love God is to love natural objects." (Mishra 26). Thus, nature which is the creation of God is appreciated here. Philosophy which is the part of culture is well reflected in the end of the poem. "The which it is reserved for God above / To sanctify to what far ends He will, / But which it only needs that we fulfill" (www.PoemHunter.com, 24 lines 14-16). So, above poetic lines express the power of God and how such beauty is also the grace of God. Such a beautiful spring season create the pious atmosphere. Frost's poem ends with message. The poem gives message of spiritual linking between nature and God. One more reference in the poem is about love. The reference of ghost in the poem reminds the mystic world. In this way, there is eco criticism as *A Prayer in Spring* suggests culture emerged from nature. *A Prayer in Spring* contains praise of nature, care of birds and inter tuning between nature and human being. So, in this way, the poem alerts the human being for eco sensitivity. "A Prayer in Spring indicates his (poet's) desire to enjoy the trust of nature and also to maintain a smooth and harmonious relationship with her" (Subramanian 39). Thus, the poem symbolizes through its theme connected with spring to enjoy the parts of nature and to preserve its beauty. In this way *A Prayer in Spring* is an eco-critical poem.

*A Girl's Garden* pictures the character of a girl. She is a neighbour of a poet. Through her character, the poet wants to show eco sensitivity and also shows the importance of plantation. The girl asks her father to give her a garden plot. The father agrees happily. The girl has tilled the farm with hard labour and has taken care for planting the seeds of various vegetables like potatoes, radishes, lettuce, peas, tomatoes, beets, beans, pumpkins, corn and even fruit trees. Thus, the poem gives a live experience of a girl's plantation. To show eco sensitivity is the part of eco criticism. It is well presented here. The eco sensitivity of father and girl are well reflected here. The poem is in the background of nature. Through the characters of the girl and father, the poem shows the positive effect of nature to the human being. The poem guides the society for thought connected with nature. In this way, the poem reflects eco criticism as the components of it are there in the poem.

*Acceptance* tells about the law of nature and its acceptance by birds and animals. Eco criticism studies the effect of nature on the bird and animal which are well expressed here. The unlikable routine of nature does not disturb birds and animals. They do not complain but accept the situation. The poem gives indirect message to human beings that accept the law of nature and follow them. The sun is same but its sunlight is different in clouds and in gulf. The sense of understanding of birds connected with nature like change of darkness in the sky etc. is well expressed here. The poem notices different observation by different birds to nature during

darkness. To study bird life is the part of eco criticism which is well presented here. One bird has closed his faded eye, some of them have swooped and some of them have spoken softly:

"...Safe! / Now let the night be dark for all of me./ Let the night be dark for all of me / Into the future, Let what will be, be" (www.PoemHunter.com - 36 lines 11-14). Thus, the poem ends with indirect advice given by birds to human being to accept the rule of nature and enjoy the life. Thus, in this poem, the feeling of birds is predominating. It reminds Carson's *Silent Spring*. Through the social discourse, ecology also describes ethical principles as in Rachael Carson's outstanding fable named *Silent Spring*. It presents a serious threat both to wild life and to human health. It shows loss of a bird song. *Acceptance* studies the lives of birds. In this way, *Acceptance* is an eco-critical poem.

*Looking for a Sunset Bird in Winter* expresses eco critical ideas in which nature, its effect on human being and bird are studied with suggestion of eco alertness. The poem opens with the depiction of sunset in winter season. "The west was getting out of gold, / The breath of air had died of cold (www.PoemHunter.com - 115, lines 1-2). The poem is divided into five couplets of lines. The poem describes a way of living of a bird during sunset time. The poet narrator has shared his experiences. The western evening makes the atmosphere golden mingled with cold. The second couplets of lines express the observation of a bird which is singing in sweet voice. Gradually cold night falls. So, in third couplet, the poet says that no voice of bird is singing. The chilled cold affects a tree. And so, there is a single leaf on a branch of a tree. The poet's judgment is that such a crystal chill adds frost to snow. So, the cold becomes unbearable. The poem ends with demonstration of parts of nature like cloud, smoke, a little star etc., have pierced from north to south. So, the poem focuses on the movement of bird and cold evening which are the part of eco criticism.

*October* colours ecology and its effect. The poet praises October morning. The poet's mastery to narrate the smallest parts of nature in different situation is the beauty of Frost's poems. The beauty of warm sunrays of the October morning is narrated here. The poet's noticing art is shown as the poet tells that ripe leaves may fall on tomorrow due to blowing of wide wind. The process of falling of tree is less. The whole process of October morning is slow. The sunrise is delayed in the same month. So, in this way the poem expresses the fact of life.

*To the Thawing Wind* is small poem but reflects poet's affection to nature. The poet invites wind and addresses him as 'Southwester'. This warm wind gives life to buried flowers that are chilled due to coldness. The birds from nest are also unable to come due to cold. The poem invites them to sing in the warm atmosphere. He invites chilled stream to flow freely. The melting of ice of glass of window will also vanished due to warm wind. "Burst into my narrow stall;/ Swing the picture on the wall; (www.PoemHunter.com - 294 lines 11-12). The running of wind makes the rattling of pages of the book and so the pages fall down on the floor. Such a warm atmosphere motivates the poet to go outside and enjoy the beauty of nature. So, this poem studies the tuning between nature and human being. In this way, *Birches*, *Acceptance*, *A Girl's Garden*, *Looking for a Sunset Bird in Winter Morning* and *To the Thawing Wind* reflect eco critical thoughts of Robert Frost.

## Conclusion

At present the world suffers from the problems like global warming, climate change, natural calamities like unbearable heat, icy cold, earthquake, cyclone, flood and so on. The changed atmosphere affects human beings, birds, animals etc. Through his poems, Robert Frost has given golden message for the protection and preservation of environment. The poems also suggest eco alertness to the persons which is the part of eco criticism. The poems penetrate the fact and beauty of nature, its effect on the persons, birds and animals. The poem suggests philosophy of life emerged from nature. So, in this way the components of eco criticism are well reflected here. After reading Frost's poems, the researcher agrees with the remark of John Frost Lynen:

Frost has so many and such excellent poems about natural scenery and wild life that one can hardly avoid thinking of him as a nature poet...Frost's nature poetry is so excellent and so characteristic that it must be given a prominent place in any account of his art(Tilak 24).

Really, Robert Frost's nature poems are up to the mark. Though Robert Frost is lover of nature, his approach to nature is full of realism. He interconnects nature with life. So, his poems give everlasting effect to the readers. He studies the beauty of nature of New England and observers sober and harsh – both parts of nature.. So, nature, bird and animal study, nature's effect on human being, culture, eco sensitivity, etc. are interwoven in the poems of Frost which are the part of eco criticism. In this way, Robert Frost is an eco-critical poet.

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## Cultural Matrix: Modernism and Its Genesis

Munir Khan

### Abstract

This paper tries to vindicate that there are, broadly speaking, two types of modernism—cultural modernism and literary modernism. It focuses on cultural modernism, examining various cumulative facts and factors, which give birth to a new culture in the western world in the early decades of the twentieth century. It proves to be an intentional break with the past culture of the Enlightenment. The paper investigates as to how a number of social, political, philosophical, psychological, scientific theories, technological advancements, feminist demand, the First World War, urbanization, industrialization, commercialization, and the loss of social, moral, religious, and spiritual values changed the entire complexion of the western civilization. This drastic and radical change is noticed in all walks of life—in western art, literature, society, and culture, which determines the further course of the life of the twentieth century world. The main objective of this paper is how cultural modernism originates, grows, and breaks with the past and old culture, leaving a deep impact on the different disciplines, particularly arts and literature. The paper assumes that without having a clear-cut understanding of the cultural matrix of the west, it is rather an uphill task to unravel the intricate knot of modernism in English literature.

**Key words:** Modernism, Enlightenment, Postmodernism, Marxism, Will-to-Power, and Freud

### Introduction

In the current academic arena, 'modernism,' a confusion-ridden term, demands a huge debate, though it defies a clear-cut understanding. It has become so pervasive that we fail to disentangle ourselves from its presence. It permeates all the levels of society and emerges as a brainteaser to students, teachers, and scholars. They generally remain in a state of perpetual puzzle and perplexity. The entire spectrum of scholarly inquiries into modernism produces a host of definitions and explanations. Various historians and scholars have interpreted it from their own perspectives. Spears remarks: "Modernism is, of course, an impossible subject" (1970:3) J. C. Ransom holds that modernism is 'undefined.' To define any term is indeed agitating, but modernism has special difficulties, because it has "no manifesto or organized principles" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 8). It takes a form of Pandora's Box. The more scholars strive to understand and clarify its slippery concept, the more they get trapped in its tortuous tangle. No two scholars agree with each other on its definition. They, therefore, face "a formidable challenge to any attempt at exactness" (Faulkner ix). However, despite its bewildering interpretations, scholars, bearing the brunt of its fuzziness, are always tempted and

rather compelled to define, explain, analyze, and criticize as to what modernism is, because it necessitates conceiving its connotations to enter in scholarly terrain and discourse. It would be very useful, therefore, if we could come to at least some agreed understanding of this term.

It is highly tough task to define modernism. However, it can be, broadly speaking, defined as an enormous change in all walks of life, thoughts, in all disciplines, in all forms of arts, in culture, science, literature, music, and social and political sciences between the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. This deep change is reflected in the form of a cultural and artistic rupture or discontinuity in the west. In a nutshell, modernism is a deliberate radical break with the traditional western culture, arts, and literature. A scholar has to keep in the mind that modernism has two aspects—cultural modernism and literary modernism. Literary modernism cannot be understood in isolation. It has to situate in the socio-economic, political and cultural conditions of the west. In other words, a cultural change, which takes its nomenclature as cultural modernism, gives birth to literary modernism, because it is cultural modernism that paves a ground to create a spirit of literary modernism in the west.

The Dark Ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, Modernism, and Postmodernism are the currents of cultural and intellectual history in the west, which leaves a seismic impact on arts and literature. Generally, a scholar begins his talk on modernism directly plunging into literature and he is caught in the whirlpool of a plethora of literary trends and *-isms*, critical jargons, and theoretical gymnastic display. It seems that it is not a desirable way to the understanding of modernism, because it presents a very confusing and blurred picture of modernism in literature and becomes very difficult to understand it. Of course, it cannot be denied that modernism emerges as a dominant artistic and literary movement, but a scholar cannot apprehend this movement unless he makes a serious study of the cumulative factors, which are responsible for creating a spirit of modernism in the western culture. The new social, political, psychological, scientific theories, technological advancement, industrial revolution, urbanization, feminism, introduction of Radio and T.V. in the society, and above all, World War I bring a revolution and rupture in the intellectual field. This break with the past traditional culture gives rise to a cultural matrix, which accounts for creating the concept of a new man, a new consciousness, a new culture, and a new sensibility. It, therefore, warrants me to adumbrate the larger cultural context, the vexing issues, and the corroding problems, which pave a ground to think human life from a quite different angle and influence the entire gamut of knowledge—literature, arts, architecture, sculpture, aesthetics, in the different parts of Europe in different times. Hence, we should, first of all, try to appreciate the concept of modernism in terms of a new culture breaking with the past culture and then relate it to either English literature or to any other branch of knowledge.

No society lives in a pure present. Every society lives in a constant awareness of its past. The past is tied to the present by organic bounds, and is invariably related to the existing thoughts of given age which constitutes its meaning. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," T.S. Eliot also enunciates his thesis that historic tradition or consciousness has an organic order. Intellectual periods tend to be influenced and

shaped by the periods that precede them. In this respect, modernism is no different. The tradition of the western intellectual movements—the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment—are organically related to modernism. When it is said that modernism is a radical and deliberate break with the traditional western culture, immediately a question crops up as to what the traditional western culture is, which encounters challenges and rejection of the modern world, bringing a change and discontinuity in the current of western culture. The traditional western culture that precedes modernism is called the Enlightenment. Hence, before I should take my debate further on modernism, I must discuss the main characteristics of the Enlightenment which have a direct and enormous impact on and relation with modernism.

### **The Enlightenment**

The Enlightenment is a tremendously broad and ambitious intellectual, philosophical, cultural, and social movement that spread through England, France, Germany, and other parts of Europe in the late 17-th and the 18-th centuries. Many intellectuals consider that the Enlightenment is a major turning point in the western civilization, which heralds an age of light replacing the Age of Darkness. There is no exact date for the Enlightenment, because it did not suddenly spring up out of nowhere but developed gradually. It died out in the early nineteenth century as Romanticism drew appeal. The “forerunners in science and philosophy included Bacon, Descartes, Newton, and Locke” (Baldick 69). The core ideas of the Enlightenment were reason, individualism, skepticism, scientific methods, technology, and empiricism. The Enlightenment thinkers believe in “natural rights” – life, liberty, and property – and promote such ideas as freedom of thought, progress, religious tolerance, constitutional government, and separation of the church from the state. They also believed that human reason and rationality can solve any problem to create better societies and better people to establish peace, prosperity, progress, and happiness. The Enlightenment is also called the Age of Reason. During this period, man began to use his reason to discover truth about the world, human institutions, religion, and politics to improve the lives of mankind. He displayed courage to cast off superstitions, accepted dogmas, blind faith, and fear of the medieval world and put all the disciplines and subjects to rational scrutiny. The effort to discover the natural laws which governed the universe led to scientific, political, and social advances. Many writers and scientists began to argue that science and reason were more important than religion and tradition. They questioned accepted knowledge and logically spread new ideas about openness, investigation, rationalism, progressivism, and cosmopolitanism.

In religion, the Enlightenment developed skeptical rejection of institutionalized church, supernatural occurrences, religious dogmas, scriptures, superstitions, bigotry, and revealed knowledge. It spurred atheism and gave rise to deism. Deism is a belief that God does exist and has created the universe, but once the universe is created, it functions according to the natural laws, and God neither interferes nor interacts with the universe supernaturally. It is just like a relation between a clock and a clock-maker. Once a clock is made, it functions mechanically

without any interference of the clock-maker. The Enlightenment thinkers offer a rational account of the universe like Newton's mechanical universe. For him the universe was a machine. They tried to claim that God was knowable through reason. They typically rejected 'blind faith' and wanted proof before believing anything. This is exemplified by Rene Descartes, who, in searching for proof of his own existence, famously said 'I think, therefore, I am.' This applied to all spheres of life.

To assert the primacy of reason meant to turn away from the essence of religion: faith. It meant a decisive break with the Christian world view, which placed doctrine at the centre of intellectual activity. For centuries the intellectual mentors of Western civilization had been urging man to submit to what he could know least—the divine. The philosophers hoped to change this completely (Chambers, Crew. et al.620).

The erosion of revealed religion was the hallmark of the Enlightenment. It engendered secularism and demystified the universe.

In political philosophy, the Enlightenment thinkers attacked feudalism and monarchical absolutism. They talked secular, pluralistic and political liberalism with an emphasis on individual right and freedom. None of this was really available in the Renaissance. The intellectuals questioned the divine right theory of kinship. According to this theory, monarch derived his right and authority to rule directly from the will of God, not from the consent of the people. He would not, therefore, be accountable for their actions by an earthly authority such as a parliament. Actually this was the fancy way of saying that the king was above the law and was not subject to the laws of ordinary man. Thus, the ruled were not citizens but subjects.

It was the medieval conception that God awards temporal power to political ruler and the spiritual power to the church. This notion had been popular among Catholics for centuries. But with the advent of the Enlightenment this idea began to lose its credibility. In this connection, David Harvey writes aptly:

The scientific domination of nature promised freedom from scarcity, want, and the arbitrariness of natural calamity. The development of rational forms of social organization and rational modes of thought promised liberation from the irrationalities of myth, religion, superstition, release from the arbitrary use of the power as well as from the dark side of our own human natures. Only through such a project could be the universal, eternal, and the immutable qualities of all of humanity be revealed (1989:12).

It is also to be noted here that the Enlightenment would have not possible without the Renaissance and the Reformation. The seeds of discovery and knowledge, reason and logic were already sown in the Renaissance, igniting the ideas of the Age of Exploration, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and finally the bloom of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. In this way, it can be said that the Enlightenment is an extension of the Renaissance. But there is also a difference between these two significant movements. The Renaissance is a cultural movement,

lending huge contribution to many disciplines, mostly to arts like music, visual painting, architecture, poetry, drama, philosophy, and astronomy. On the whole, it was on the artistic side of human life, while the Enlightenment on the intellectual side. The Renaissance was mainly centered on ancient wisdom, freedom of thought freedom of religion, education, and literacy, seeking validation in the texts of the Greco-Roman philosophers, but the Enlightenment thinkers stood more solidly on the plinth of rationality, empiricism, scientific method, industrialization, Astronomy, and calculus. The Renaissance stressed the importance of the power and potential of human dignity, individual talents, humanism, and the glorification of humanity. The Renaissance concept of man was that man is the architect of his own destiny; he can raise himself up to the level of an angel because he is gifted with immense potential and infinite power. But the Enlightenment undermined this uniqueness of man in the overall scheme of things and held man a simply limited being. The humanist root of the Enlightenment is found in the Renaissance. However, many of the ideas of these two movements overlap each other.

To put the debate trenchantly in a nut-shell, it can be said that the Enlightenment is an extension of the Renaissance, laying emphasis on logic, reason, progress, and the universal values of science. The crux of the Enlightenment is concretized in the words of Voltaire's "smash the system" and Horace's "desire to use your reason." The Enlightenment thinkers are quite confident that progress can only be achieved through the exercise of the rational and scientific methods and man can liberate himself from those forces and myths, which keep him from progressing. It is also felt that entire humanity would eventually free itself from misery, religion, superstition, all irrational behavior and unfounded belief; and would thus lead toward a state of freedom, happiness, and progress. These values in the ideal of science and progress or in Christian religion are the centre and anchor for the Europeans.

However, the Enlightenment enjoying its vigorous excitement of rationality for almost one and half centuries comes to end by the beginning of the early decades of the nineteenth century. All of its attributes claiming as panacea to solve all human problems suffer a serious set-back by new emerging intellectual waves, new theories, a new horizon of knowledge, numerous *-isms* and innovations, and the World War I. Now all the established traditional cultural values start crumbling; as they are subject to rigorous scrutiny, criticism, and skepticism. The whole of the nineteenth century, witnessing a series of intellectual development, can be regarded as the incubation period of modernism. From the mid-nineteenth century onward, a change and crisis can be observed in all the spheres of life and disciplines. Thinker after thinker appears on the intellectual landscape with an explosion of knowledge, altering the basic interpretations of 'reality.' People start believing that they are living at the beginning of a new era, and thus develop new ways of understanding man, society, religion, and the physical universe.

### **Theory of Class-Conflict**

One of the great revolutionary heroes in the later part of the nineteenth century who appears on the European intellectual horizon is Karl Marx (1818-1883). Highly

critical of religion and the luxurious life of the upper-class, he presents, for the first time, the concept of man and society with his scientific theory of class-conflict. Establishing an economic theory of history, he believes that it is the economic means of production in society that creates and controls all human institutions and ideologies – education, religion, politics, arts, literature, certain beliefs and ideas. The capital is the driving force of every event in the society, which determines the nature of human reality, too. Marx contends that human history is the history of class-struggle. Throughout history, there has been a conflict between the exploiter and the exploited; though the nature of exploitation varies from one historic phase to another. During his own times, Marx studies European society deeply and arrives at this conclusion that society has progressed from one economic system to another – from feudalism to capitalism. After the Industrial Revolution in 1750, Marx finds that European society has become a capitalist society and that there are two classes of people in it – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie are the owners of the means of production, the factories, and businesses. They take profit and control the capital. On the other hand, the proletariat are the workers who sell their labour to survive and produce wealth for the owners of factories. There is always a conflict between the capitalist class and the working class in the society. In his *Das Kapital*, Marx visualizes that a day will come when the proletariat take an equal part in the economic system, and class-conflict will come to end.

Marx registers his deep concern that “the laws of motion of capitalist society” breed a sense of alienation in the working class. Capitalism and constant industrial acceleration, rise of urban living, communication, transport, production, rise of the bourgeoisie, and technological innovations give birth to an exploitation of the newly born proletariat class which experiences a loss of communal identity and a pang of alienation. Marx believes that capitalist society creates three types of alienation – (i) the worker is alienated from what he produces; (ii) the worker is alienated when he is not working and (iii) people are alienated from each other in capitalist society because it is a competitive society in which people stand in opposition to other people.

Alienation is the hallmark of capitalist society. Prior to Marx, the vision of human society was organic and the individuals were not only essential to society but also integrated and organic part of the society. It was associated with religious beliefs, race, hero-worship, and utopian dreams. The central feature of organic society was that all human relations, specially economic and political, were in some sense personal and characterized by a strong emotional attachment to the fellow people. Therefore, the romantic aesthetes used the term ‘organic society’ to denote a specific and idealized kind of society. For them organic society was local, rural, and traditional rather than cosmopolitan, urban, and mobile. In organic society, the conception of history had been of something in which individual efforts could sometimes play a crucial part. But over the second half of the nineteenth century, the vision of organic society eroded. In the three volumes of *Das Kapital* (1867, 1884, and 1894), Marx explains that after the Industrial Revolution, man is nothing but a cog in the machine. Capitalism, a bane for human beings, has made man dehumanized, alienated, and powerless. In capitalism, there is no image of free man, but he is totally governed by economic theory of capitalism.

The impact of Marx's theory of class-conflict is striking, enduring and far-reaching, and marks a radical break with the past in the nature of the western culture. Childs rightly observes:

An understanding of the nineteenth century shifts from country to city, land to factory, individual to mass production, can best be arrived at in terms of the influence of Marx's analysis of history, politics, and society. Modernism has repeatedly been characterised a literature of crisis and it is Marx who places crisis at the centre of capitalist development (2000:28).

Capitalist society creates a crisis of literature that grows out of a loss of communal community. Modernist writers attempt to represent alienated urban living, fragmentation, defamiliarization, and disaffection. Marx, therefore, advocates bringing an end of these social evils by overthrowing the capitalist class and establishing communist society. He offers his vision of classless society, because he discovers that classes in society are cause of conflict. Therefore, there are no classes and no struggle. It is true that capitalism and bourgeoisie eliminate feudalism, but at the same time beget a new class i.e. the proletariat class.

### **Theory of Evolution**

Throughout the nineteenth century, the rationalism of science and philosophy attacked the validity of religious faith, but it was Charles Darwin (1809-1882), who brought a great havoc to the Christian world with his theory of evolution, overthrowing the old cultural and intellectual order. His two provocative books—*On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871)—spurred an intense debate on the origin and history of man and the traditional belief in God, shaping the thinking of successive historic periods. In other words, he developed a new narrative of humanity, religion, God, and a new view of anthropocentrism. Before Darwin, man had full faith in God's design that He created the world and different species of organisms at a particular time on Sunday about four thousand years before Christ. It was also believed that different species of living beings had been born as such and God had made man in heaven in his image.

Darwin rejected all supernatural phenomena in the rise of human species and emphasized nature being a product of chance rather a design. He proved that nature was not innocent and harmonious as it had ever been considered. He argued that in nature there was a perpetual struggle among all organisms for their survival, where the strong would survive and the weak die away. There was no morality in nature. Only the ruthless forces existed, no rational thought and spiritual presence were noticed. Nature was not static, nor moving towards in a linear direction, leading to a final judgment day, but it was always in a dynamic state in a cyclic movement in which production and survival of the fittest were recognized. Darwin also tried to prove that human beings were driven by the same impulses as 'lower animals.' In a nut-shell, his theory claimed that man was not a creation of God, but a more evolved form of animals. Man is not a fallen prophet, but a risen ape. "Humans were closer



to animals than to God...." (Childs 36). With this fatal change of the concept of man, church received a severe blow and stopped playing a curative and consoling role to human mind. There prevailed doubts and skepticism about the account of the sacrosanct Bible. The evolutionary theory undermined the religious certainty of the general public, the sense of human intellectual uniqueness, the pride and dignity of human beings, and the idea of ennobling spirituality.

Darwin's evolutionary theory gives birth to social Darwinism, which believed in "the survival of the fittest." Darwinism states that the strongest or the fittest should survive, flourish, and become powerful in society; because they are innately better, whereas the weak and unfit should be allowed to die. Over the years, social Darwinism is used to justify colonialism, imperialism, racism, and political conservatism. All these exploits question the validity of their moral values today. Colonialism is one of them, which is seen as natural and inevitable, and given justification that natives are weaker and more unfit to survive and, therefore, they should be ruled and their land and resources be seized. Social Darwinism also gives rise to dictatorship, fascism, and military actions. It is justified that the military would defeat and kill the enemy and would, therefore, be the most fit. On the other hand, casualties on the opponent side would be held as the natural result of their unfit status. Through social Darwinism, the brutal colonial governments gain impetus to exercise tyrannical tactics against their subjects. It also encourages to more exploitative form of capitalism in which workers are paid less for long hours of hard labour. Big business men adopts a frustrating gesture against labour unions and similar other organization, giving an implication that the rich need not donate to the poor or less fortunate, since such people were less fit anyway. This radical definition of reality proves a peculiarity in cultural history that challenges the existing attitudes and values, whose impact is deeply felt in modernist writing as well as in the social and political aspects of life.

### **Theory of Psychoanalysis**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung brought a decided upheaval in the discipline of psychology. They were not concerned with its traditional areas, but made the life of mind the central focus, dealing with the unresolved emotional problems. They tried to demonstrate that the power and significance of the unconscious dimension of human mind is more important than that of the conscious mind. Prior to Freud, the Enlightenment specifies that man is inherently good and the western concept of human mind, human action, human behavior, and human personality were based on the possibility of self-knowledge, presence of mind, the conscious state of mind. But Freud toppled these traditional concepts through the magical wand of his theory of psychoanalysis in one go. His *Interpretation of Dream* (1900), *The Psychology of Everyday Life* (1901), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), *Ego and Id* (1923), and other works greatly undermined the power and dimension of the conscious human mind. In this respect Freud, changing the concept of human personality, is the Columbus to the psychology of the unconscious mind. Crichton-Miller also compares Freud to Newton (1939:7).

Freud divides human mind into three levels of awareness – the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious. These three psychological components interact with one another and operate to determine and define human behaviour and personality. He compares human mind to an iceberg in which the smaller part floating above the surface represents the region of the conscious, whereas the much larger mass hidden in the water represents the region of unconsciousness. *First*, the conscious mind, Freud observes, is in general “a highly fugitive condition. What is conscious is conscious only for a moment” (1949:57). The conscious mind contains all the thoughts, memories, feelings, and wishes of which we are aware at any given moment. *Secondly*, the preconscious state of mind refers to that state of mind when mind is not working actively at a particular moment but its thoughts can be recalled through memories easily and they become readily available at the conscious level. For example, one may not be conscious of his address, but it can be readily available to the conscious mind when asked or given the right trigger. Freud uses this term to make clear that the whole of the repressed thoughts are not always rooted at the unconscious level. Some of the repressed thoughts which can be easily brought to the surface of the conscious mind exist on the preconscious level. *Thirdly*, perhaps the most significant contribution Freud has made to modern thought is his conception of the unconscious. In this vast region of the unconscious, the repressed thoughts, ideas, urges, passions, feelings, and memories are deeply embedded in the mind, which are outside of our conscious awareness. Most of the contents of the unconscious are unpleasant or unacceptable such as feelings of pain, anxiety, sorrow, and conflict, which continue to influence our behaviour and experience even though we are unaware of these underlying influences. The unconscious thoughts are repressed to that extent that one cannot remember them without extreme effort and specialized help. To be more precise, it was a general belief that the conscious is reality and man’s behavior is controlled by the conscious state of the mind, but, according to Freud, it is not true. Reality is hidden beneath the surface of the conscious. In this way, the power of unconscious is replaced by that of the unconscious.

The three conflicting psychological forces – the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious – correspond and overlap with Freud’s another tripartite theory of the *id*, the *ego*, and the *super-ego*. The total healthy and balanced human mind and personality is based on the synthesis and harmonious organization of this fundamental *id-ego-super-ego* structure. In other words, human personality is formed through conflicts among these three fundamental parts of the human mind. The *id* is the primitive and instinctual part of the mind. It is the seat of all desires and wants. Based on the pleasure principle, this primal force contains sexual and aggressive drives and hidden memories, and wants whatever feels good at the time without any consideration for the reality of the situation. The *id* is that component of human mind which is made up of unconscious psychic energy demanding immediate gratification of basic urges, needs, and desires. Freud argues that the region of the *id* is “a dark inaccessible part of human personality; it is primitive and irrational;” it is “a chaos, a cauldron of seething excitement;” it “knows no values, no good and evil, no morality” (1933:104). The only real way to observe this impulsive part of our

personality, Freud suggests, is to study the contents of dreams and neurotic behavioral clues.

The *super-ego* is a judgmental, ethical, and morally correct component of the personality, operating as a moral conscience. The *super-ego* acts to perfect and civilize our behaviour and suppresses all unacceptable urges of the *id* and struggles to make the *ego* act upon ideal standards rather than on realistic principles. In other words, the *super-ego* is a prohibitive socialized force – an inhibitive form of a person's moral standard. The *ego* is a conscious and realistic part of our personality that negotiates or reconciles between the desires of the *id* and the *super-ego* that makes decision. The *ego* is a rational faculty caught in a psychic battle. Thus, the *id* is a primitive force, the *ego* is an executive force, and the *super-ego* is a legislative force. The *id-ego-super-ego* interaction represents Freud's structural model of the psyche that describes the activities of the mental life of a person. Human psyche structured thus develops at different stages in life.

Freud's psychosexual development of human personality from early childhood to adulthood through five distinct stages demolishes the pious relationship between mother and son and daughter and father, giving a smashing jolt to the conscious mind. Man gets befuddled and loses faith in the homogenous and compact mental life and finally in himself. He discovers that the ultimate driving factor of mental life is libido – the sexual energy and aggressive instincts. The important thing is that events in our childhood – during the phallic stage – have a great influence on our adult lives, shaping our behavior. The unconscious leaves a profound impact on how we think about thinking, how we think about reality, and how we conceive of our 'selves.' Thus, things are not as they appear. Freud finds human psychic landscape dotted with numerous conflicts raging ceaselessly, which has more than one aspect. Our true selves exist on different unknowable planes, however active and unconscious our 'selves' are. The truth, therefore, exists below the surface of the conscious and it is not readily empirically observable.

According to Freud, maladjustment among the three causes abnormality in human behaviours. If *id* dominates *ego*, it leads to psychosis, and if *super-ego*, neurosis results. To achieve a normal mental life, there must be a well-balanced *ego*. Thus, the concept of reality undergoes a sea-change in modern psychology, which proves that there is not a unitary normative self to which every individual thinks that he conforms. Reality only exists only in subjective apprehension and it is the past events that shape the human psyche. William James, an American psychologist, compares consciousness to a stream – unbroken and continuous flow despite constant shifts and changes. Human psyche is a stream of consciousness; it is full of hidden meanings, haphazard events, disjointed thoughts or ideas. For example, in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the waste lander's mental life is compressed of 'memory' and 'desire': the past and the future organized in the individual mind in the present.

These Freudian findings and principles open a new vista of introspection. Writers and artists felt the traditional psychology of consciousness is wholly inadequate for understanding the underlying motives of human behaviour. They incorporate the psychological theories into their works. There takes place a cross-breeding between literature and psychology. A number of modern artists – Virginia Woolf, Henry James, T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Ford Maddox Ford,

Dorothy Richardson—knock down the traditional method i.e. realism, portraying surface reality of mind, or the external delineation of the character. Instead, Henry James's 'psychological realism'—a new tool is handled to unearth the real workings of human mind.

### **Will to Power**

There is no absolute standard of good and evil in a godless and absurd world. Man himself is responsible for his rise and fall. Michael Novak rightly points out:

It would be regarded as 'cultural imperialism' to suggest that only one form of reasoning is valid in all matters. It would be naïve to believe that the content of human experiencing, imagining, understanding, judging, and deciding were everywhere the same (1988: 774).

Nietzsche (1844-1900), therefore, rejects the whole western metaphysical tradition right from Socrates, condemns Christian morality of almost two thousand years, and disapproves progress through reason of the Enlightenment—the main characteristic of the western intellectual tradition of the last two hundred years.

Nietzsche violently shakes the entire European intellectual complacency, confidence, and conviction to shock it with his rhetorical prowess and provocation. For him, all is not right and wrapped with a sunny spirit, but doubts and disorientations, naivety and nihilism prevail everywhere in religion, metaphysics, philosophy, culture, morality, and society. He prophesies that "the whole of our European morality" is destined for "collapse," and to mourn deeply, because it is psychologically damaging, baseless, and pernicious. Making a ruthless investigation in all values and systems, he dismantles and then reconstructs them in a new form, stripping off the veneer of unquestionable authority. Nietzsche's negative wide-ranging critique aims to undermine not only religious faith or philosophical moral theory, but also many central aspects of ordinary moral consciousness. Highly critical to altruistic concern—guilt of wrongdoing, moral responsibility, the value of compassion, the demand for equality and so on—he brushes aside all these things.

Nietzsche revolutionizes modern culture through his philosophy of instinct and will to power. It is the power one needs to overcome one's own self. It is an essence of life, an inner struggle, a main driving force, a powerful creative self in all individuals, which spurs the human existence to have some achievement in life. In Nietzsche's view, will to power is a huge reservoir of positive energy ingrained in the individual propelling him to move forward and conquering himself to achieve the highest self. The will to power is an irrational force, which motivates one to achieve something great in life to concretize one's own aim. Hence, human action is based on one's will to power, not to some supernatural universal principle. The aim of Nietzsche's will to power is the production of the 'Superman'—the real man who can exhibit his will to power to the highest possible degree.

A big skeptic, one of the most influential post-Hegelian German philosophers of the nineteenth century, he argues that all the claims of the Enlightenment about civilization, reason, and morality have come to fiasco in the end. His

uncompromising criticism rejects many religious and metaphysical assumptions of the west, and the life-denying Christian moral principles. He values human emotions, passions, instincts, impulses, and self-will, and underestimates the power of reason and rationality of the Enlightenment. He disregards the liberal notion that man is inherently good and exposes that life is full of cruelty, injustice, uncertainty, and absurdity. Man has never lost the instinct of cruelty; he has only refined it. Nietzsche emphasises that aggression, will, and power are the most important human instincts. Modern industrial society and Christian morality have made man a victim of the excessive rational faculty at the cost of human will and instincts. Fascinated by the Greek way of life, he undermines the Christian one, expressing his deep dissatisfaction at the western civilization. Man, Nietzsche holds, must recognize the dark and mysterious world of instincts – the true life force. Excessive rationality, he thinks, smoothes the spontaneity necessary for creativity. To realize his potential, man must develop his instinct, drive, and will, instead of depending on reason and intellect. Nietzsche tries to foreground the limitations of pure reason of man on which most of the philosophers of modernity have banked upon. He holds that there is no higher world, no morality derived from God or Nature, because “God is dead.” He offers new values to promote cultural renewal and improve social and psychological life, exposing the false consciousness, which has infected the received ideas of the people for the last two thousand years.

Nietzsche becomes one of the foremost philosophers who criticizes those principles on which Christian and the western philosophical tradition are founded. His framework of thought is original and shocking because, for the first time, it offers the critique of some institutions, philosophical traditions, and epistemological concepts. He makes a marked departure from the epistemological approach and starts a fundamental phenomenon – “Existence” – his new interpretation of existence. He says that the old philosophizing has come to an end and new philosophizing is beginning. Creating a spirit of the cultural break with the past, he paves a ground for the very complex and confusing, but momentous movement – modernism.

Like Nietzsche, Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), also attacked the fundamental world view of the Enlightenment. He viewed man as innately depraved, irrational, and rebellious. For Dostoevsky, the world is horrible place of naked wills; all engaged in conflicts with one another. In his novella, *Notes from the Undergrounds* (1864), the protagonist rebels all plans and schemes for social improvement. For him there is no absolute, universal, or timeless truths to which all men ought to conform. All the characters in this novella assert their individuality in their irrational impulses and acts, reacting against the culturally constructed system.

### **Theory of Duree**

It has been a perennial problem to know the nature of ‘reality’ from ancient Greek period till today. Reality is always awash with controversies. Western history of philosophy, right from the beginning, is dominated by intellect, reason, and rationality. It regards that reality can be known through reason – a supreme source of knowledge. The entire range of philosophical ideas is sought to be structured in

terms of scientific rationality. That is why reason occupies a paramount position in western philosophy of thought. However, we also encounter a number of other philosophers and thinkers who think that the exact nature of reality can be apprehended only through intuition.

Certainly the most influential thinker of the early decades of the twentieth century is Henry Bergson (1859-1941), who holds a unique position in the history of modernism. He lays emphasis on intuition and human freedom. He accords intuition as the highest kind of knowledge to know reality, trying to project human intuition superior to intellect. His philosophical issues can be seen as part of the modernist reaction to the tyranny of the clock. The Enlightenment places the supremacy of intellect over other aspects of human intelligence, but Bergson reversed that thinking. He argues that processes of immediate experience and intuition are more significant than abstract rationalism and science for understanding reality. Bergson recognizes the narrow range of discursive thought and science with its determinism and mechanism. On the other hand, the phenomena of life, consciousness, and human freedom can only be known in immediate intuition. In his *Matter and Memory* (1898) and *Creative Evolution* (1907), he offers a new theory of human consciousness by integrating biological science and psychology. He supports the idea that time is mind-dependent and real time exists merely in our consciousness. Peter Childs observes:

Bergson's conviction that experience is understood by intuition rather than rational reflection combined with Freud's belief that past events shape the psyche, resulted in the view that reality only exists in subjective apprehensions becoming wide spread in artistic circles (2000:50).

In *Time and Free Will* (1889) and *Creative Evolution* (1907), Bergson presents the theory of 'duree' or 'duration.' He divides time into two categories – (1) time in ordinary sense or chronological time or the mechanistic time of science. Chronological time is the scientific concept of time. It is divided into equal intervals and measured by clocks. It is conceived as running in a linear line on which three points are fixed to designate past, present, and future. This concept of time tells that past is dead, that future lies ahead, and that present is all that is important. Bergson is aware that the moment one attempts to measure a moment, it would be gone. One measures an immobile, complete line, whereas time is mobile and incomplete. He deduces the limitation of the chronological time measured by clocks.

Bergson offers the second category of time, which is called 'real time' or 'real duration.' We actually experience it – lived time, where every moment is unique. Bergson tries to explore the inner life of man, which is a kind of duration. It has neither a unity nor qualitative multiplicity. Duration is ineffable and can only be shown indirectly through images that never reveal a complete picture. It can be grasped through a simple intuition of imagination. Real time is psychological time which is significant and unique to an individual. It has its lasting and continuous character. Bergson writes that *duration* is

...the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future...the past is preserved by itself automatically...all that we have felt, thought, and willed from our earliest fancy is there, leaning over the present which is about to join it, pressing against the portal of consciousness that would fain leave it outside (1911:5-6).

Real time or duration is the flux of consciousness in which sensations, feelings, volitions and ideas follow like a stream. Bergson says: "The truth is that the state (i.e. the state of mind) itself is nothing but change" (1911:2). Bergson undermines the Aristotelian concept of linearity of time—the beginning, the middle, and the end. Frank Thilly states: "Reality is in part, the flux of our sensations coming we know not whence: partly, the relations that obtain between our sensations; and partly, the previous truths" (1965:641).

Virginia Woolf flouts the conventional narrative techniques, character portrayal, self-referentiality, and linearity; and introduced time-shifts, flashbacks, and juxtapositions of events. In her essay entitled "Modern Fiction" (1919), she is least interested in painting the external surroundings, family, home, job, and town. She penetrates into the characters' mind to present a plethora of thoughts, memories, desires, fantasy, fleeting impressions, erratic behavior, and varying motives. "From all sides, they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms." Woolf writes: "Life is not is a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end." She is sure that "The literary convention of time is so different...that, naturally, the feeble are tempted to outrage and the strong are led to destroy the very foundation and rules of literary society."

### **Cyclic theory of History**

In the changing western culture, the concept of history, varying thinker to thinker, undergoes a radical change in the hands of modernists. Albert Einstein's theory of relativity brings a great revolution in the meaning of time. The highlights of the new discovery are that there is no continuity, solidity, or causality in Nature, that matter has no substance, and that time and space are not distinct entities. This gives rise to a concept of time which has been accepted by many a poet and novelist. It simply means that the division of Time into Past, Present, and Future is artificial because it is the present itself which is real and in all the moments of the past and all the moments called future meet, blend, and have their being. This is known as 'Isness' of time, and has found full support in the theory of Bergson's 'duration.' Thus, time is considered as a continuum—past, present, and future are viewed as a continuing whole.

Equally important is Giambattista Vico's cyclic theory of history. He views history as a cycle. In one cycle, the civilization gets through a number of definite stages—birth, rise, decay, and death, and again starts from the primitive stage. The movement of history, thus, is circular rather linear. That is why modernists do not believe that humanity is progressing towards a millennium. Instead they visualize the imminent danger looming over the new dark of barbarianism and vulgarity, as

the World Wars bring in their trail. It is the duty of modern man to protect the cultural and spiritual integration of the commercialized world. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot depicts the moral chaos and spiritual sterility and disintegration of the modern civilization. Vico's cyclic theory of history finds full support in the thesis of Oswald Spengler. In his *The Decline of the West*, he believes that each phase of history is about two thousand years in duration. During this period, birth, bloom, and death of one type of civilization are inevitable. The decay of civilization means the beginning of another civilization. Yeats believes that Christian civilization is almost at the end of its allotted span and a new Annunciation is at hand. This is the subject matter of his "Second Coming" (1921) with its terrible symbolism of new energy moving toward the point of its explosive epiphany. It was written when Europe was in the grip of violent change and the end of civilization to be at hand.

### **Revolution in Science and Technology**

Einstein also published his Special Theory of Relativity (1905) with its model of three-dimensional space-time continuum. He propounds the principle of subject-object relationship. He says that every observer makes a subjective picture of an object he sees. Pictures taken by different observers at the same time and from the same point of space will not be identical unless the observer also moves with the same speed. Hence it is impossible to conceive of a precise picture of any object because the observer and the object are joined together in an observation. And the picture of an object presented by an observer will always be subjective.

In science the most striking case is physics. In its great achievements of this century are Wilhelm Roentgen's discovery of X-rays, Henry Becquerel's discovery of the radioactive properties of uranium, and the Marie Curie's radium. In 1887 J.J. Thomson discovered the existence of separate components which he named electrons in the structure of the invisible atom. In 1902 Frederick Soddy and Ernest Rutherford presented a paper on the case and nature of radioactivity. In 1912 Rutherford presented a revolutionary model of the atom that it has positively charged nucleus having most of the mass of the atom, around which the electrons moved in orbit like the planets round the sun. In 1913 there was also a reformulation of Max Planck's quantum theory of energy. These theories shattered the established theory of Physics. Thus, in the twenty years between 1895 and 1915, the entire face of physical universe gets changed and is replaced by the new models.

### **The Zeitgeist of the Particular Period**

The close of the nineteenth and the start of the twentieth century were confronted with the rapid development of technology, the dehumanizing effect of machine and mechanization of industries, the expansion of the international economy, a great increase of urban population, economic breakdown, mass civilization, isolating and cramping city, and unbearable gigantic organization. "This was the shape of twentieth century European and American society: urbanized, industrialized, mechanized, its life shaped to the routine of factory or office" (Bullock 1976:59-60). It was a society of mass production. Success in business was the only norm in America.



That is why a general proverb was very much in currency that the business of America was business. The subtle scientific explanations and a host of facts and factors were responsible to give a smashing jolt to the general consensus of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, or the orderly and complacent world that had been presented to the reader in Victorian literature. G. H. Bantock remarks: "In the social sphere increasing knowledge tended only to confirm and strengthen imitations of moral ease and to destroy faith in the essential and unquestioned rightness of the Western ways of behavior" (1961:22). In *Kangaroo*, D.H. Lawrence also categorically spells out that there was a general lack of direction and aim:

It was in 1915 the old world ended. In the winter of 1915-16 the spirit of the old London collapsed; the city, in some way, perished from being the heart of the world, and became a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears, and horrors. The integrity of London collapsed and the genuine debasement began, the unspeakable baseness of press and public voice, the reign of the bloated ignominy, John Bull.... The well-bred, really cultured classes were on the whole passive registers. They shirked their duty (1961:21).

Human readjustment and reshuffling was required. It is clear that one by one the foundations of an earlier understanding of the nature and place of humanity were so shaken that many artists and writers throughout the Western world had developed a kind of 'future-shock.' Man's understanding of himself got changed; fresh ways of looking at his position and function in the universe started. People were alienated from all community. Virginia Woolf observed:

On or about December 1910 human nature changed.... All human relation shifted between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature (1966:321).

It was a period of cultural bankruptcy; a period of tension between past and present; a period of lost orientation, new manners, self-conscious fashions, the exploration of new taste, a search for personal identity. The old barriers were collapsing; accepting one's place, loyalty to authority; unquestioning obedience began to break down. Politically there was an increasing challenge to Capital by Labour.

Europe remained a society governed by class distinction, with undisguised inequality between rich and poor. The difference between the leisured and the working classes found expression not simply in their clothes, their food, their housing and their education, but in their physical appearance and mentality. The poor who thronged the overcrowded slums of the big cities were a lower order of humanity, and treated as such, valued only as the vast pool of surplus labour on

which the social as well as the economic system depended (Bullock1976:61).

Europe had a complete political and economic dominance over the world. This was also the age of imperialism. It was based not only on the material prosperity, but on the cultural and racial superiority of the white races of European stock. Alan Bullock remarks: "The British empire in 1900 covered one quarter of the surface of the globe and numbered 400 million people. London was the imperial Capital *par excellence*" (1976: 60)

With the growing economic independence, no one was ready to accept a completely subordinate role in the more open, flexible, and democratic situation. Moral loss, spiritual sterility, divorce, scandal, drug-addiction, murders, suicide, and faithlessness were widespread. Love, compassion, and affection had been replaced by jealousy, abomination, and ruthlessness. The whole series of generation was infected with the spirit of capitalism and materialism. "The atmosphere was charged with glamour and pleasure; wealth and wine: Cities became bigger, buildings taller, roads longer, fortune greater, automobiles faster, college larger, night-club gayer..." (Nevins & Commager 1968:466), but skirt became shorter and shorter and crimes more and more. Family relations were snapped; the relation between wife and husband had turned a mechanical link instead of an emotional attachment. Sex had thrown other values into the background. Women were crazy for wearing topless garments to reveal maximum part of their body. Girls preferred promiscuous sexual relationship and became professional prostitutes. The aunts and unmarried daughters were leaving the shelters of the family roof. Home became less interesting: restaurant, movies, theatre, and the office chief resorts. Of women, F.L. Allen remarks:

... the quest of slenderness, the flattening of the breasts, the vogue of short skirt were signs that consciously or unconsciously, the women of this decade worshipped not merely youth: they wanted to be... men's casual and light-hearted companion; not broad-hipped mothers of the race, but irresponsible playmates(1931:108).

On the intellectual plane, the impact of wireless, cinema, radio and television was to create a day-dreaming, an escapist attitude, or premature consciousness. D. H. Lawrence observes its moral dilemma:

The girl who is going to fell in love knows all about it beforehand from books and movies.... She knows exactly how she feels when her lover or husband betrays her when she betrays him: she knows precisely what it is to be a shaken wife, an adorning mother, an erratic grandmother. All at the age of eighteen (quoted in *Modern Age*, 40).

In the big cosmopolitan town, life, in a corporate anonymity, became a challenge – economically and spiritually. The contemporary man found himself lonely, thrown, and cut off from his own surroundings by artificial barriers – as the boss cut off from

his employees, the rich from the poor, and wife from her husband. Reacting to the mechanical and abstract basis of community relationship, D.H. Lawrence thinks that talking to modern man is "like trying to have a human relationship with letter K in algebra" ( cited in *Modern Age* 32). The zooming scientific rise had stripped off the freedom, values, and respect of man.

### **Feminist Turbulence**

Social turbulence brought about by feminist movement opened a new front for rulers. Women achieved greater consciousness to improve their condition and status. In western culture, down the ages, the concept of woman and her body was inscribed in negative gesture. Western scholars, philosophers, and anthropologists made difference between man and women on the ground of separate and distinct physiological structures. Trapped in social taboos, personal inhibitions, and inferiority complex, they could never realize the worth of female biology. But in the nineteenth century onward women were no more satisfied with their life of home and hearth, because they were joining hands with men in mills and factories and offices. They demanded equal political status with men, equal pay, equal work, equal morality, and equal sexual freedom. Members of the Women's Freedom League formed in 1908 interrupted political meeting, broke windows, and chained to railings the members of the political parties. They indulged in "arson, false fire-arms, cutting telephone wires, slashing pictures in public galleries, and throwing bombs." The feminist reaction went to such an extent that it took a very ugly shape in America. However, the English government passed the representation of the People Act in 1918 granting the right to vote to all women over thirty of age.

### **The Catastrophe of World War I**

Of all the shocking events taken place in modern Europe, The First World War from 28 July 1914 to 11 November 1918 was the most catastrophic phenomenon, which witnessed unprecedented levels of carnage and genocide. Entire Europe had turned into a volcano. Andrew Sanders observes: "what humanity can endure and suffer is beyond belief" (1996: 505). The broken heads and dismembered bodies, the ruined cities and shattered hearth were the naked external symbols of utter disintegration of the entire cultural structure. This global war of destruction brought a great havoc with a chain of rebellious attitude affecting all the spheres of social, religious, political, and individual life. This engendered a sense of disillusionment, angst, ennui, passivity, and nihilism. Dowling gives details of human wreckage authentically:

Over the course of the war, medical officers treated 80000 shell-shocked soldiers, and in the 1920s there were 114000 pension applications related to war trauma. By 1932, psychiatric casualties accounted related for 36 percent of veterans receiving disability pensions (1991:89).

The artists were deeply anguished with the war, which shook the very foundation of the western culture. The war confirmed that the technological advance and the primacy of reason over feeling had to pay a heavy loss to the modern civilization. They were quite confirmed that there was in way or the other a great flaw in the social, political, economic and religious system that caused such an irreparable disaster. The myth of progress shattered to pieces. Modernist texts – Ford Maddox Ford's *The Good Soldier*, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* – mirror the war-ridden Europe in its full fragmentation, cultural crises, chaos, alienation, and neurosis. The traditional hero-worship of the soldier coming back from the battle-field with victory receives a smashing jolt. Childs states: "The war to which so many men had gone in the hope of becoming heroes ended up emasculating them, depriving them of autonomy, confining them as closely as Victorian women had been restricted" (2000:176).

### **Conclusion**

The new dimension of knowledge, new theories, and new values posed a tough challenge to the verity and certainty of the Enlightenment, which had hitherto given support and stability to social system. The new understanding of man, religion, society, physical universe, and the conception of human self shocked the twentieth century western people and forced them to think of and look at life from quite different angles. All the traditional beliefs and established principles appear to be uprooted, like 'a heap of broken images,' and are put to scrutiny and severe criticism. Religious faith, social organization, and daily life were becoming out-dated one by one in the new economic, political, social, psychological, and scientific conditions of the industrialized west. The old ways of explaining and portraying the world no longer seemed appropriate and applicable. There is no absolute truth, because all things are relative. The new knowledge reveals that the world is created in the act of perceiving. A new world order began and the gnawing radical changes took place in western society in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The foundations of earlier understanding was so badly shaken that man lost faith in religion, politics, economics, morality, humanity, and finally even in himself. He appeared to be totally fused and confused standing at the crucial crossroad as to which way he would follow. This Cultural Revolution gives birth to alienation, fragmentation, meaninglessness, spiritual bankruptcy, and rootlessness, which beget boredom, and monotony, pessimism and nihilism in human life. There was an urgent need of a power to bind the whole of humanity together, because only the puzzled self and unordered world was the centre. William Butler Yeats epitomized the spirit of the modern age in such words: "Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold. Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." This zeitgeist nods a break with the traditional western culture, which is known as cultural modernism and later acquires the status of a multinational movement.

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## **Convergence of Disinterested Word and Action - A Presidential Retrospective**

T. Radhakrishna Murty

### **Abstract**

The office of the President of India is the highest office in India. Indian Constitution has visualized a good constitutional government and instituted this office to preserve, protect and defend it. In the era of coalition governments and the consequent constitutional crises and emergencies and exigencies, the role of the President becomes pivotal like an 'emergency lamp' as one of the Presidents, R. Venkataraman observed. There are instances in the history of free India, when the President had been called upon to exercise his official authority, constitutional wisdom and discriminating experience to decide on some issues concerning the nation. Thus, the President of India must always be a man or woman of integrity possessing vital common sense and sagacity to offer advice; the wisdom to rise above the narrow lines of party politics to present a vision; and the perceptive ability to take path-breaking decisions placing the national interest above all. The custom shaped the President of India into a visionary, pathfinder and as the conscience keeper of the nation. The President as an author heralds new perspectives for the nation and the government to follow or implement. The writings of these personalities who sat in the office can be a source of intellectual direction to the nation. R. Venkataraman's presidential auto-biography throws light on this crucial convergence of word and action in the light of political wisdom and constitutional propriety. His trend setting decisions in the appointment of three Prime Ministers and his concern in saving the country from edges of constitutional crisis won laurels from constitutional experts as well as the common man.

**Key words:** President, Memoirs, Word, Action, Political Wisdom, Nation, Constitutional Propriety

### **Introduction**

Eminent and prominent people by virtue of their personality and position lead the society. Their qualities of leadership take the form of a message or action. The writings of these people motivate and direct the society towards the achievement of the aims of the nation. The supreme goal of any body of literature is to guide people towards this attainment. Dearth of critical studies of prose texts in general and of the works of men in high office in particular and the abundant discourse value of the texts encouraged the present study towards of study of the writing of Indian Presidents. Presidents of India are custodians to the constitution and when exigencies demand they act like emergency lamps. The sagacious wisdom, discriminating knowledge and the ever perceptive experience of the person who hold the august office have always been the guiding spirits of the conduct of the office. In the politics of public office convergence and divergence of intentions and

policies underplay an interesting drama of thoughts, words and actions. In the crucible of action one cannot determine the veracity of the action and the word. In retrospective when these persons pen their actions one gets an opportunity to critique them. In this paper an attempt is made to assess that convergence of word and action against the historical perspective taking R. Venkataraman's text, *My Presidential Years*. What he had preached he practiced and what he had practiced, he penned in his memoirs. This convergence has been sought to be highlighted in this paper.

R. Venkataraman, the eighth President of India (1987-92), was a true Gandhian and Nehruvian, a passionate freedom fighter, a discerning economist, an illustrious labour lawyer, a humane trade union leader, a distinguished parliamentarian, a visionary minister, an efficient administrator, a perceptive writer, a journalist and a pioneering editor – all rolled into one. Above all, he was a humanist, nationalist, and rationalist. Venkataraman became Vice President of India in 1984 and the President of India in 1987. As a President, he had the rare opportunity of interacting with four Prime Ministers and unique distinction of appointing three Prime Ministers during the constitutionally turbulent times of late 80's and early 90's. Upon his assumption of the august office, "*The Patriot*, in its editorial, described Venkataraman as 'a symbol of spirit and sanity'. His distinguished public life, the paper commented, 'has been marked as much by a high standard of performance in several capacities in which he has served the country, as by an unswerving commitment to parliamentary democracy and its essential norms.'" In *Bhavan's Journal* he was reasonably praised like this: "Versatility, ability and humility, are the hallmarks of Shri Venkataraman. He is wise, witty and sober. He is a man of unimpeachable integrity. He is a gentleman par excellence." He was conferred the title, '*Sat Seva Ratna*' by his holiness Sankaracharya of Kanchipuram for his religious services.

Indian Presidents were roughly contemporaries with reference to their years of birth falling between 1884 and 1931. Their direct and indirect participation in freedom struggle of India, the roles played by them, the education and the upbringing and the lessons and the experiences, their struggles and sincere rise and invaluable contributions in and to their chosen fields, their words and actions and the books they have written are all inspirational and epoch making. The course of the nation's progress, its problems, its successes and its achieved aspirations appear to entwine with the life and work of each President. In this context, a focus on their writings would be able to give insights and awareness of themselves and the country.

The President as an author heralds new perspectives for the nation and the government to follow or implement. The Presidential thought, reflections and musings in the form of memoirs, autobiographies, discourses, essays, and special lectures require a keen look in view of the fact that neither the position nor the individuals are ordinary. The hand of god or electoral dynamics of the times, of course, play a role in the choice of certain individuals as Presidents of India. The writings of these personalities who sat in the office can be a source of intellectual direction to the nation. These can be considered as a treasure chest of ideas and experiences – full of contemporary relevance to a nation of sixty four years of

independence in its varying stages of development - developed in certain areas, developing in some, and underdeveloped in others. The office is the crucible where the multifarious thoughts and words mix and form a new vision to the nation. This body of writing - presidential prose writings, from the first citizens of India, has the unique flavour of erudition, concern and foresight.

Venkataraman's *My Presidential Years* (1994) as the title itself suggests, restricts itself only to the narration of the matters, events and personalities with which he, as the President of India, had been connected. In the prologue, he stated that the volume was not a contemporary history of the nation during his term and many important national issues in which the President did not play a part do not find mention in the book. He further carefully makes his stand, method and purpose clear: "The views expressed in this volume reflect the contemporary thinking on matters at the time they arose or occurred. I had kept copious notes of events with dates as they occurred and I have not interpolated my subsequent views into the earlier record. It is therefore possible that some contradictions may have crept in. It is human nature to project oneself appropriately when one writes about himself. I have endeavoured in the following pages merely to explain the reasons for certain acts and omissions on my part and have left it to the reader to form his conclusions." [R.Venkataraman RV-My Presidential Memoirs MPM]

The huge volume, divided into four chronological sections (1987-88, 1989, 1990 & 1991-92), covers Venkataraman's tenure in forty-four chapters. The book opens with a poetically titled chapter, "Prelude to the Presidency" and ends with a sombre one, "Last Days in Rashtrapati Bhavan". In between Venkataraman records his impressions, ideas, actions and experiences in well-titled chapters. The saga is told richly in tune with the profuse grandeur and ceremonial dignity which are the natural attributes of the highest office.

In the prelude Venkataraman provides the background to his election offers an insight into the circumstances of intrigue and presents his perception of life that was shaped by the ideals of Lord Krishna in *Gita*: detachment to pleasure or pain, to gain or loss, to conquest or defeat. One year before the end of Giani Zail Singh's term as President of India, one day, the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi informed Venkataraman about his decision to nominate him for the post and asked him to keep it confidential till the announcement by the Parliamentary Board of Congress. During the last phase of Zail Singh's term, Rajiv - Zail Singh relationship reached a new low leading to much speculation about the proposed moves of Zail Singh and some members of the Congress to dismiss the government of Rajiv Gandhi. In this high end politicking, Venkataraman maintained calm neutrality and balance as Chairman of Rajya Sabha when members of Rajya Sabha created commotion over the alleged leakage of communication between the President and the Prime Minister and he gave a ruling that it was confidential and above the range of discussion of the Parliament. This decision set a constitutional precedent. During the height of the scheming that went on, Venkataraman received a shocking proposal from a Congress Member of the Parliament that if he agreed he could become the Prime Minister by overthrowing the incumbent. He says, "His statement left me stunned beyond words. Recovering my poise, I tried explaining to this MP that the whole scheme was ill conceived and that the President could not dismiss a Prime Minister



as long as he enjoyed the confidence of the Lok Sabha. But the Congress MP went on to reveal that more than two hundred and forty members of the party (whose names he had actually typed out!) were opposed to the Prime Minister and were only waiting for an opportunity to register their dissent." Venkataraman was averse to the completely unsavoury episode and much to his discomfiture the President invited him for a discussion. President Zail Singh straight away asked Venkataraman about his response to the MP's idea and added that he was under the impression that Venkataraman was positive to the proposal. Venkataraman made it clear: "I replied, "You know me very well, Gianiji, I never connive at nor indulge in any underhand activities." I even advised him to keep out of these plans himself, and maintain his dignity. He assured me that he was only "listening" to these dissident activities and not supporting them. Both of us agreed that our conversation should remain completely confidential. I have always felt an affinity with Shakespeare's memorable lines in *Hamlet*: "This above all, to thine own self be true,/ And it must follow as the night to the day,/ Thou canst not then be false to any man." [MPY]

In due course of time, Rajiv Gandhi along with Kamalapati Tripathi called on Venkataraman to convey their decision to nominate him for the presidential election. He thanked them for their confidence in him. Then Tripathi hoped that he would not dismiss the Prime Minister, alluding to the alleged moves by the then President Zail Singh. Venkataraman quipped that he would not make an attempt to dismiss the Constitution.

Venkataraman was not interested in campaigning for the election and reminded the media people that Rajendra Prasad, Radhakrishnan and Zakir Hussain did not campaign at all. Gopala Krishna Gandhi comments favourably: "Though the result was foregone, it was suggested to RV that he undertake a nationwide campaign. He declined, "I will have to speak for my candidature versus Justice Krishan Iyer's. That in itself will be unpleasant. But more importantly when the country is plagued by so many divisions, what is the point of a future Rashtrapati, going about dividing the country's Presidential vote..? Let the Electoral College decide on the basis of knowledge of the candidates and a reading of the situation. I will keep quiet." RV did not campaign, and he won. Any candidate of the ruling party would have. But RV's victory was won with a major propriety observed, life shown to be larger than politics, and a worthy opponent left free to lose the election – that was his prerogative – but not his prestige." [MPY]

Venkataraman elaborately describes the swearing-in ceremony of the new President and terms it as a major event in the national history of India. Ruminating over the run of that days' events and looking forward to the future at Rashtrapati Bhavan, Venkataraman soberly reflects, "Thus ended the most hectic and significant day of my life. I had reached the pinnacle of my political career. I had not aspired to, longed for or canvassed for any office that I had held. Each one of the transitions – from the Ministry of Finance to Defence, from Defence to the Vice-Presidency, and from there to the Presidency – had come to me naturally without my particularly seeking them. Now there was no higher office to which I could aspire. All I wanted was to serve the country honestly, diligently and effectively. When C. Rajagopalachari laid down office as the last Governor General of India, Pandit

Nehru said of him that he was a man who looked upon a palace as a cottage and a cottage as a palace. I was determined to emulate his example and remain my essential modest self, not overawed by the pomp and panoply of residence in Rashtrapati Bhavan.”[MPY] He sets out to live his presidential years with purpose and purity.

The first thing that struck Venkataraman was the non-provision of a separate office for the President. So he instructed the officials to prepare a separate office room on the ground floor. He named his office as “Shanti Niketan”. He also informed them that he would regularly come to this office at 10 a.m., stay until half past one and in the afternoon he would return to the office at four and continue as long as it was necessary. He also outlined the procedure for dealing with files and proposed a confidential system of communication between the Prime Minister and the President, which involved locking of files in a box with two keys for both of them. He contentedly says that this system ensured complete confidentiality during his tenure. He was very systematic in his working style.

During these days, Rajiv Gandhi went to Sri Lanka to sign the historic India-Sri Lanka Peace Agreement, which was opposed by a majority of Sinhalese including the Sri Lankan Prime Minister. When he was inspecting the guard of honour at the airport, Rajiv Gandhi escaped an attack from a navy guard. On Rajiv Gandhi’s return to India, Venkataraman, setting aside the protocol, went all the way to the airport to receive and see Rajiv Gandhi in order to demonstrate his concern and the nation’s concern. However, the officials were against his move and he made them realize that he could be firm and they could not make protocol binding on all matters. He further observed that there was an established view about how a President should function and any deflection from the custom used to attract objections whether in the case of security or protocol. He decided to establish his own private kitchen rather depending on Rashtrapati Bhavan kitchen. He says, “I certainly do not believe in concessional meals at government expense.” [MPY]

Venkataraman had the unique distinction of working with four Prime Ministers during his tenure. At the time of his assumption of the office, Rajiv Gandhi was the Prime Minister. Later in the elections held to Ninth Lok Sabha, VP Singh and Chandrasekhar in quick succession occupied the chair. In the midterm elections that were held to the Tenth Lok Sabha, PV Narasimha Rao was elected the Prime Minister of India. Venkataraman’s decisions in appointing the Prime Ministers in a hung Parliament and the sagacity that he displayed in reading the Constitution and circumstances were pathfinders to the next generation. He painstakingly recorded his impressions and decisions in this book.

Venkataraman maintained cordial relations with Rajiv Gandhi and his government. The events that happened during the period from 1987 to 1989 find mention in chronological sequence - day by day. The Bofors and Sub Marine scandal rocked the Rajiv Government. Venkataraman advised Rajiv Gandhi to accept the demand of the Opposition parties for Joint Parliamentary Committee with limited members. He was of the opinion that once allegations levelled against the high office in the Parliament it was the Prime Minister’s duty to clarify the matter otherwise it would be understood as complicity in the alleged crime. He avers, “About the Bofors issue, he (Rajiv Gandhi) said that he was quite anxious to get all the details

regarding payments to Indian nationals but then the Bofors company did not want to violate commercial secrecy as it would affect its future deals. I told Rajiv that as Defence Minister I knew that all arms manufacturers were employing agents and remunerating them under different names. Therefore, it would be unrealistic to think that foreign arms dealers did not have agents. But utmost care should be taken to see that they did not influence our decisions." [MPY] When there were rumours flying thick and fast about the alleged decision of Venkataraman to dismiss the Rajiv Gandhi government, Venkataraman was concerned and instructed his Press Secretary to deny them if they appear in Press. He asked Rajiv Gandhi to probe the origin of the rumour. He comments, "As usual, he took out his pocket book and noted this down. I could not help recall how different his mother's method had been. Indira Gandhi had a gift of remembering even minor matters and pursuing them if she wanted. She also had a genius for communicating just as much as was necessary for the occasion."

Venkataraman observed that during the first three Parliaments of the nation, there were very few changes in the Cabinet and now there were twenty changes during Rajiv Gandhi's time. He draws a contrast with Kamaraj's small cabinet of eight ministers in Madras State. He also resented the clumsy handling of the ceremony without sufficient notice to either the Rashtrapati Bhavan or the Ministers to be inducted. He says, "But it has been the experience with all Prime Ministers lately that they delay decisions regarding appointments until the last minute, but urge immediate action to implement their decisions, regardless of the inconvenience caused all round."

General elections to the ninth Lok Sabha were held in November 1989. Half way through the campaign, Venkataraman sensed that no party would secure a majority; he would have to face a litmus test of appointing the Prime Minister with much difficulty and asked the Attorney General to prepare a note on possible alternatives in case of a hung Parliament. He started refreshing his memory by reading Ivor Jennings, Berridale Keith, Hood Philips and Halsbury's Laws of England. His sixth sense proved right, when the results were announced. Congress became the single largest party but without the required numbers to form the government. The National Front got 145, the Bharatiya Janata Party 82, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) group 55 seats. There was divided opinion about the course of action to be adopted. Some said that Rajiv Gandhi lost the people's mandate and hence he should resign. However, as per the conventions of parliamentary democracy, the leader of the single largest party should be invited to form the government. Venkataraman, through emissaries, advised Rajiv Gandhi to tender his resignation and informed him of the options available to the Congress: i) stake a claim to form the government ii) decline the responsibility to form the government iii) unilaterally declare that in view of the election results, it was not staking claim to form the government. Then Rajiv Gandhi resigned. Venkataraman narrates, "His (Rajiv Gandhi) decision to dissolve the eighth Lok Sabha and not to stake a claim to form the government, even though his was the largest party, deserve recognition. I heaved a sigh of relief as the problem of choosing the Prime Minister had been solved by Rajiv Gandhi himself. While the decks had been cleared for the

formation of a government by the opposition groups, the squabble for leadership emerged prominently within the National Front.”[MPY]

National Front elected VP Singh as its leader and Venkataraman invited him as the leader of the second largest party to form the government and take a vote of confidence of the house within 30 days. The National Front government was supported by Bharatiya Janata Party and Left parties from outside. Venkataraman narrates the sequence of the swearing in ceremony of V.P. Singh as Prime Minister: “..that day I was told that Devi Lal would take the oath at the same time as Deputy Prime Minister. I asked my secretary to convey to VP Singh that Devi Lal would be sworn in only as a Minister and designated later as Deputy Prime Minister. But before anything could be finalized, the ceremony commenced and VP Singh was sworn in as Prime Minister. Then Devi Lal was presented and when I administered the oath as “*Mantri*”, (Minister) he insisted on reading it as “*Up Pradhan Mantri*” (Deputy Prime Minister). I corrected him saying “*Mantri*” again but the second time also he read it as “*Up Pradhan Mantri*”. [MPY] This was fully displayed in the live telecast of the proceedings. I did not want to create an ugly scene and therefore allowed Devi Lal to proceed as he wished. There was a lot of criticism of Devi Lal in the Press for deviating from the text of the oath...” Venkataraman later pointed out there was no position of Deputy Prime Minister in the Constitution and the Deputy Prime Ministers the country had such as Sardar Patel, Morarji Desai, Charan Singh and Jagajivan Ram were all sworn in as Ministers and later designated as Deputy Prime Ministers.

VP Singh faced a lot of problem with Devi Lal in running his government. VP Singh offered to resign and sent his resignation to his Party President, S.R. Bommai. After a series of confabulations and simmering discussions, VP Singh was asked to stay on. He withdrew his resignation. Venkataraman observes, “This did not surprise me. During the conversation with VP Singh on July 14, I asked him whether his proposed visit to the Soviet Union was not too short and whether in view of the multifaceted relationship with the Soviet Union, he should not have planned a longer visit. VP Singh did not say that since he had resigned, the question did not arise. On the contrary, he said four days were quite enough. It was clear that at the back of his mind he was sure of the resolution of the crisis and his continuance in office.” [MPY]

Venkataraman observed that VP Singh was advised by his friends to go for the implementation of Mandal Commission report, which recommended 27 per cent reservations to backward classes in educational institutions and government organisations, to pre-empt the dismissed Devi Lal from cornering advantage and support from the masses. Student’s agitation against the reservations flared up into a full-bloodied emotional movement with the suicides of many students.

Venkataraman was approached by many student bodies and was asked not to sit quiet in this tense situation prevailing in the country. One student castigated the democracy where the President could not express his view on the burning issues. Venkataraman smiled and said he would come to know of the constitutional peculiarities later. Yet he advised VP Singh to call the student bodies for a round of dialogue and a round table conference with all the political parties. VP Singh did not like the idea of talks with students and reiterated his commitment to stand by the 27

percent reservation for other backward classes but he was prepared to discuss only the question of additional reservation of five to ten percent for the economically weaker sections. Here Venkataraman wisely interjects: "Unfortunately, people in office develop rigidity or a false sense of prestige that the government should not yield to pressure. I was no exception to it during my earlier career in charge of vital departments. Wisdom dawns when it is too late or the situation is beyond redemption." [MPY]

As the students' agitation escalated into a national movement resulting in serious lawlessness, many urged Venkataraman to take proper action. He asked the Prime Minister to meet him and before that, he had a meeting with Chandrasekhar, who had always been in line for the office Prime Minister. Chandra Sekhar said that VP Singh proved himself an incompetent administrator, the economic situation in the country was worsening and VP Singh wanted to dissolve the Lok Sabha but for the reported reluctance of the President to accept the suggestion. Later Venkataraman told VP Singh that he was deeply disturbed by the continuing lawlessness and disruption of life over a long period. VP Singh was prepared for talks with students without pre conditions and at the same time, he was under the apprehension that if he whittled down or backtracked on the issue, the pro reservationists would mount a much stronger agitation throughout rural India.

During VP Singh's tenure, the BJP leader, L.K. Advani started a spectacular *rath yatra* from Somnath in Gujarat to Ayodhya in U.P demanding the construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya perceived to be the birthplace of Lord Sri Ram. Venkataraman quips, "If VP Singh thought that he could win the elections with the backing of 52 percent of the backward class population by adopting the Mandal report, why should Advani not think that he could sweep the polls with the support of 80 percent of the Hindu population? The question now was whether Mandal or Mandir would win the election." [MPY]

The Ayodhya issue with the arrest of its leader, Advani, led to the withdrawal of support by BJP to the National Front government. Then Venkataraman, based on the strength of numbers, asked VP Singh to prove his majority in the House of the People. There was intense speculation about the outcome of the no-confidence motion and the consequence of its being lost. Venkataraman says, "...when Rajiv Gandhi came to discuss the situation with me, I asked him whether he would be able to muster sufficient strength to run a stable government for some time. He frankly admitted he did not see any such prospect. When I asked him if he was ready to face a mid-term poll, his answer was that the country was not prepared for it. Then I asked him to consider whether he would allow VP Singh to continue in office by abstaining from voting on the confidence motion. He had not thought of such a course and said he was thinking aloud. Realising that the problems facing the country were so acute that any person shouldering responsibility for government at such a juncture was bound to become unpopular, he remarked with the usual mischievous glint in his eye that he would prefer VP Singh to take that "odium"." [MPY]

Meanwhile, there was also a talk of national government pushed by Venkataraman himself. Atal Behari Vajpayee, BJP leader, asked the President whether he would be prepared to assume the leadership of the proposed national

government. Venkataraman was forceful in his opinion: "I told him that the President should not set this wrong and dangerous precedent as it might kindle ambitions in future Presidents to meddle and indulge in machinations against the Prime Minister. Vajpayee immediately grasped the point and withdrew his suggestion. I told him that if the concept of national government was accepted and if they wanted someone from outside the rank of party leaders, they could think of Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, the then Vice-President, a senior, mature and learned person." [MPY]

As expected the VP Singh government was defeated on the floor of the house and he tendered his resignation. Venkataraman rightly sums up his relations with VP Singh, "During all these eleven months when VP Singh was Prime Minister, my relations with him were cordial, friendly and mutually cooperative. It is my impression that if VP Singh had headed a government with a clear majority instead of depending on a conglomeration of parties mutually destructive of each other, he would have given a good administration to the country. Being dependent on parties with different objectives and ideologies, he could not withstand pressures from discordant groups." [MPY]

Venkataraman immediately embarked on the arduous task of finding an alternative government. He reminds the readers of his own words said somewhere: "The office of the President is like an emergency light. It comes on automatically when there is crisis and goes off automatically when the crisis passes." Rajiv Gandhi assured the President that he would support the Chandra Sekhar and his group to form the government. Immediately the ugly events of 1979 flashed across his mind wherein Indira Gandhi supported Charan Singh and withdrew her support within three weeks. Hence, Venkataraman wanted a firm confirmation from Rajiv Gandhi regarding the longevity of the proposed government and he replied that his support was neither temporary nor conditional but to tide over a national crises. Venkataraman went probing about the likelihood of some important persons forming a stable government. He describes his meeting with Advani, "Advani is one of the rare species of precise speakers. He said that in his opinion, no stable government could be formed from among the parties in the Lok Sabha and therefore dissolution of the House was the only appropriate course. I asked him whether in the atmosphere of the Mandal and Mandir agitations, the Pakistani infiltration in Punjab and Kashmir and the grave economic and foreign exchange crisis, a general election was in the national interest. I felt that Advani was looking at the issue from the point of view of improving his party's strength rather than from the national angle. He might have calculated that an election close on the heels of the *kar seva* in Ayodhya would create an electoral wave in his favour." [MPY] With Chandra Sekhar staking claim to form the government with the support of Congress and others and no other party showing interest, after a careful perusal of constitutional position of the situation, Venkataraman decided to invite Chandra Sekhar to form the government and to this effect issued, on November 10, 1990, an elaborate Presidential communiqué detailing all the efforts taken by him to arrest the crisis and bring stability to the country.

Chandra Sekhar and Devi Lal requested for 700 invitations for their followers for the swearing-in-ceremony to be held at the Asoka hall, which can accommodate

400 only. When told about this scenario, Venkataraman did not want to start with a difference of opinion with the new government yet as stickler for propriety and dignity he was not interested to admit a crowd to the ceremony. Therefore, he decided to hold the ceremony in the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan to accommodate the large supporters of Chandra Sekhar and Devi Lal. He describes, "The function of swearing in Chandra Sekhar as Prime Minister and Devi Lal as Deputy Prime Minister looked more like a public meeting than a solemn national occasion. Shouts of *jai*, never before heard in such dignified functions, rent the air. I was unhappy but still kept a smiling face and went through with it." [MPY] Venkataraman was dismayed at the sordid erosion of etiquette and manners in the new generation and termed their action as deplorable.

Soon differences cropped up between Chandra Sekhar and Rajiv Gandhi. Rajiv Gandhi was upset about the policies of Chandra Sekhar on the Gulf crisis, the government's decision to allow fuelling facilities to US transport planes involved in the Gulf war, the Punjab crisis, economic crisis yet he was in a dilemma about the formation of a new government. Venkataraman calls Rajiv Gandhi as a real Hamlet debating 'to be not to be' Prime Minister. The thaw between Chandra Sekhar and Rajiv Gandhi reached its peak over a trivial issue. Venkataraman was surprised at the violent reaction to what appeared to be a small matter. It led to a standstill situation in the parliament session ultimately leading to the fall of Chandra Sekhar's government. This time, the crisis was even more severe with railway budget, fiscal grant and budgets of state governments under President's Rule awaiting the Parliament's approval. After a series of meetings with jurists, political leaders, senior journalists like Prem Bhatia, and an intense reading of the Constitutional precedents and spending sleepless nights, on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1991, 'ever a copy book President', Venkataraman decided to dissolve the ninth Lok Sabha after it cleared the pending financial bills. He stipulated that the new Lok Sabha to be constituted by 6<sup>th</sup> June 1991 and until that point, asked Chandra Sekhar to act as caretaker Prime Minister. In this entire episode, Venkataraman looks at Chandra Sekhar charitably: "I did not accept the resignation without feeling sorry for Chandra Sekhar. During his few months in office, he had handled Parliament competently and was responsive to suggestions from the Opposition. The office-hungry coterie of the Congress party used to misguide Rajiv Gandhi that Chandra Shekhar's attempts at building up a good image could prove deleterious to his image. Looking back after two years, I realise my naivety in accepting the Congress assurance of "unconditional support" to Chandra Sekhar. I realised that unequal combinations are always disadvantageous to the weaker side."

On May 21, during the intense campaign trail of 1991 general elections, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated at Sriperumbudur in a suicide bomb blast. Immediately that night Venkataraman chaired a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary, the Home Secretary, the Chief Election Commissioner, and the Chief of Army Staff and discussed the action to be taken. Elections were rescheduled. Venkataraman termed Rajiv as a vibrant youth with a charming face and pleasing manners who became the darling of the masses. He opined that Rajiv Gandhi came under a cloud of suspicion largely because of the inexperience of his advisers in the Parliamentary culture. Venkataraman analyses, "Rajiv Gandhi, who started his career as "Mr. Clean",

suffered an eclipse. ...it would have been transient and would have passed off. Unfortunately, a life so full of promise was nipped the bud by an assassin's self-immolating blast.

Venkataraman in his presidential years encountered several issues and problems of national importance. The issues range from Kehar Singh's mercy petition (one of the killers of Mrs. Indira Gandhi); Shanti Bhushan's letter requesting the President for sanction of prosecution of the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi under the Prevention of Corruption of Act; the infamous Postal bill which was passed on to him from Zail Singh; the much criticised Anti -Defamation bill which shifted the burden of proof from the defendant and proposed strict punishment for baseless allegations; the Punjab crisis with the rise of militancy and resultant law and order situation leading to the President's rule necessitating a Central Ordinance which was opposed by the opposition; the Tamilnadu crisis resulting out of M.G. Ramachandran's death and the consequent tussle between Janaki Ramachandran and Jayalalitha and Tamil politicians' petitions to Venkataraman; the Cauvery Waters dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and the resolution of Karnataka Assembly to stop water to Tamilnadu and the intense emotive situation; the representations by Sri Lankan revolutionaries and Tamil Nadu politicians to him on Sri Lankan Tamil issue; the dismissal of DMK government on grounds of LTTE links with local leaders; the Nathdwara temple entry by Harijans; the selection and appointment of Governors and the rise of objections to their choice; and the appointment of additional election commissioners and the repeal of the decision. In all these constitutional, legal and political matters President Venkataraman played a key and sagacious role.

In the book, *My Presidential Years*, he comprehensively describes, explains and analyses every issue that had come to the Rashtrapati Bhavan over which he offered either his counsel or decision. Basing on the merit of each situation, he goes into the matter to trace what he could do as President of India and came up with his impressions and observations. When the Karnataka Governor dissolved the state assembly and imposed President's rule, Venkataraman had no option except to endorse it on the advice of the Union Cabinet. Rajiv Gandhi protested strongly against the centre's move. Venkataraman reacts, ironically, "It had become a custom to criticise the President whenever he accepted the Cabinet decision. Even former Prime Ministers, who had obliquely hinted at the President's obligation to accept the advice of the Council of Ministers, indulge in this game of blaming the President for the acts of the current Prime Minister." [MPY]

In his last address to the Members of the Parliament, he said that he had always acted, in his five decades of active political life, according to his conscience irrespective of praise or abuse that followed and hoped that someday research would be made on the events of his Presidency by scholars of constitutional law for ascertaining how far the provisions of the Constitution had been observed. In the epilogue to the book, Venkataraman says that he relived his years as President in his writing. He had no regrets about his decisions yet he opines that the political parties of the country did not rise to the occasion in the case of Ayodhya issue and to his proposal of National government to solve the financial crises. He is agonized that the self-interest of political parties triumphed over national interests. He warns that



history will judge them. He says, "Despite all these, I firmly believe that a country which had survived thousands of years will be able to tumble through its problems and once again regain its past glory. The question one should ask oneself is, "Are we contributing to that resurgence?"[MPY]

## Conclusion

Venkataraman's text, *My Presidential Years*, occupies a unique place in the domain of political memoirs for its exhibition of guiding coordinates: lyrical style, ceremonial descriptions and display of the literary and learned mind. The grandiloquent inception, the ensued enactment in the middle and the sober soliloquy at the end carry the strands of a Shakespearean drama. The narrative structure of the book is superior and intelligent. The apparently disjointed diary mode narration, adopted by Venkataraman, gradually and unconsciously spreads the pages of thought and fact, which are bound at a certain line of comprehensible reality. The poignant evocation of the imagery, rare in political autobiographies, unites the reader with the author. The narrator presents the issues, events and personalities all in unison. The comprehensive notes, the President piled up, give the narrative a note of authority. The memories though limited to a five-year period touch upon a lifetime of material. In *The Presidential Years*, Venkataraman employs dignified language, elevated style and compatible design in perfect commensuration with the matter. He did great service to the world of literature by writing about his service to the nation.

In view of the momentous times he had at the office particularly with four Prime Ministers, the book threw significant light on the relations between Prime Minister and President as custodians of the Constitution and the traditions to be passed on to the next generation. The *Bhagavad Gita* sings the qualities of a *Nishkama Karma Yogi* (disinterested doer): 'Whatever the Best doeth that the lower kind of man puts into practice; the standards he creates, the people follow.'

Unlike many other texts that dot the landscape of memoirs and autobiographies, this text deviates from the standard of self-platitude towards objectivity and lays bare the truth behind the political intricacies and intrigues. Readers are presented a unique opportunity to measure the level of convergence of word and action of the president as they have access to several documents plying around to gain a retrospective of the things happened, words spoken and thoughts distilled. In that context R. Venkataraman, the author outscored the President in him in adopting a journalistic perspective by pushing the President to the objectification. This memoir stands a testimony to the future political memoirs in establishing the objective procedure for chronicling the events and issues of contemporary interest and historical ramifications without compromising the integrity of the writer, subverting the facts and offering coloured perceptions as facts to the next generation. R. Venkataraman's persona shines genuinely through the convergence of word and action in this text.

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## **Tentacles of Violence and Its Strategic Solution**

Santosh Kumar Singh

### **Abstract**

This article discusses violence as a visible form of competition or conflict which emerges when oppressor takes huge hold on available resources at the cost of the oppressed. Unless these two forces share certain common traits, peace building becomes difficult to prevail. At this juncture conflict resolution gave the impression of solving the problem superficially, but at deeper level it failed to gauge the epicenter of the strain. This gave rise to conflict transformation strategy so that both episode and epicenter of vehemence can be determined to locate the root cause of conflict. This lays out constructive solution for structural violence that fosters strategic peace building process.

**Key words:** Conflict Resolution, Conflict Transformation, Structural Violence, Secondary Violence, and Trauma

### **Introduction**

It is the competition among groups which incepts the seed of violence to establish one's own supremacy. In the course of competition, one party always wants to exercise power over the others. And the others react as well as respond to it for their own existence and sometimes for their own leadership. Hereafter, conflict starts. In the beginning, conflict seems like soft competition but when a party keeps on encroaching on the other, it gradually takes the form of aggression. Moreover, this aggressive form ultimately results in violence. Thus, violence emerges as octopus having many tentacles to support it like a Banyan tree (having many branches to do so). Furthermore, conflict forms a subtle layer which has both latent and manifest forms. In this way, latent forms a vicious circle which is linked with psychological trauma of people in particular and collective conscience in general. In the similar fashion, manifest form reflects via competition, conflict, and violence.

### **Methodology**

There are nine civilizations in the present world competing to one another; some of them maintaining the existing status while the others to exceed them. Huntington rightly points out the current world order after cold war based on civilized competition, conflict, and violence. Although, world politics is directed by civilizations in competition so is the case among civilizations. In the beginning, the attitude towards competition is fair and therefore has positive connotation because of its occurrence within the system. So, it is better known as healthy one. But even within a system ideal competition doesn't exist. Even Karl Marx does not see positivity in it. However, competition is of two types; manifest and latent. To bring out all the aspects of conflict one has to surpass conflict resolution which is rampant

and touches on the limited part of violence to conflict transformation that visualizes the entire gamut of the existing problem. This article focuses on this frame of strategic peace building process as a method to establish harmony in the current world affairs.

### **Discussion/Analysis**

In the beginning of competition between groups, it is latent. Later on it manifests. In this way, it sets a series of actions; from real competition to deploy for fighting. At first, everyone is invited to compete under a shared set of rules then parties come to struggle to exceed each other. When they struggle conflict in latent form takes root. And it is the conflict which is the manifest form of competition. Thus, pseudo form of competition happens to be latent and visible form manifest one which ultimately results into aggression via conflict.

Completely weak cannot come in the state of violence. Rather the empowered one through competition which invites some stamina to ejaculate by their violent temper. When parties are empowered during competition only then they evaluate themselves whether to enter into the phase of violent lacuna or not. If they build some degree of confidence among themselves only then they initiate to show the characteristics of it or not. Therefore, it is the conflict which is most likely to push people for violence. If the parties are wise enough in handling conflict they solve their problems here and the status of compromise begins which possess potentiality for creating peaceful society to live in; neither opposite alternative stands there in the form of hostility.

Violence comes at last when there is no solution during competition and conflict. Although everyone is violent; tacit agreement between the parties are needed. In addition, violence has clearly negative connotation. One harms the other. So far, harming others is considered, it can be of several types; epistemic/symbolic, systemic/exploitative and physical one. Moreover, it is the rule or system which allows people to exploit others. While exploiting others; they do so, on the basis of cultural difference, religious difference and sometimes linguistic difference.

Culture is not natural rather a created one. There used to be the time when culture was coherent relationship with the individual. So, it was purely dependent for an individual to adapt it. But due to colonization as well as globalization; no culture remains pure or single. So, a person may belong to several cultures at the same time. Therefore, Franz Boas focuses on diversity, plurality and it is burdened with many meanings. Yet people are strived for their unique cultural identity based on certain geography of the nation in particular and of the world in general. More often than not, people compete for it and during competition; they happen to pass through the above mentioned phases i.e. competition - conflict - and violence. As culture is intrigued with religion; culture outlets its actions to religion. And one fine example of it is partition of India and Pakistan.

People, on the basis of religion, compete to each other for distinguished identity. It is, in the course of segregating identity from others, people happen to choose a path of violence when they get no other way. But in this course of violence innocent, marginalized and subaltern group happen to suffer. In this regard, story of

Sa'adat Hasan Manto, 'Toba Tek Singh', is quite popular. Where the story writer represents how a mad person is forced to exile in the name of insanity of nationalism. In fact, poor, helpless people suffer a lot but the state counts them 'not'. State always stamps violence as the legitimate one. So, Gyanendra Pandey writes in his essay "The prose of Otherness" as state violence does not count as violence at all.

Everything is legitimized for nation building and the new society. Modernity progress heals everything. No one listens to the cry of poor, marginal and subaltern people. Manto represents partition's violence from victims' point of view. Humanist's perspective should be engaged before inviting violence of any sort is the conclusion of the story writer. In addition, cultivation of peace, harmony and tolerance must be up healed among people so that they would never seek for the days of suffering and violence. Manto also explains how literary text fails to represent violence due to some shortcomings like language, analytical stand and evidence. As there is no language for pain and suffering and big violence destroys evidence.

So is the case with Nepal in recent time during Maoist insurgency for the common utopia that is betterment of the people, nation and society. Conflict is raised against existing power. And during struggle and revolution, how common, innocent and poor people went through physical and psychological trauma, are subtly represented in the stories of Sanat Regmi's 'Curfew' and Pradip Nepal's 'Dactarni Aama' where the story writers seem successful creating dark face of violence. In 'Curfew' story writer wisely represents characters from Hindu and Muslim religions. The writer provokes how years long harmony, friendship, cooperation, and tolerance came into question when the riots between Hindu and Muslim began in Nepalgunj. These two poor people from different communities suffer psychologically. For some days, mental trauma keeps them unrest due to so called cultural/religious identity. So, the writer seems to strike on the modern legacy of identity which mars the harmony that existed among people for centuries. Thus, the writer seems questioning the legitimacy of violence in the name of identity.

Although, the story does not narrate open violence but the trauma which goes in the mind of Ramdin and Alarakha is the matter to record. Both of them are innocent but the external agency of selfish people quickens them to invite conflict on the one hand, and prove unrest to the other fellow, on the other. Psychological torture in characters' mind is the strength of story whereas story fails to create guilty at the highest level. Even though story depicts how economically deprived people live in harmony than the people having all ends meet. So, at the bottom there lies peace, tolerance, mutual cooperation and harmony among people of innocent cults. Besides, the story successfully captures humanist perspective to understand society beyond cultural, religious and national diversity.

As Gyanendra Pandey fosters in his essay how insanity of nationalism cripples people of divergent mentality. So is the story of Pradip Nepal in 'Dactarni Aama' (Mother Doctor) where he represents a character devoted to serve her village, no matter how her husband and son forces her to leave the village for urban life. But the cruel mentality for the sake of progress kills the service Goddess in a moment. In addition, fear among peasant, subaltern, and poor sounds roaring in the story from both state and revolutionary side. The writer seems to equate the pain of woman's

labor to the transitional period of nation or society. During transitional period common people suffer a lot be it for food, trauma, fear, and stability. Thus, the story provokes about the miserable life of innocent people when opposite ideologies come to interact.

In the case of opposing ideological conflict negotiation plays crucial role between the conflicting parties for resolution of their arguments. For the cooperation, dialogue provides reassuring ground and a hidden thread like passage that keeps them moving even if tension appears from outside. In the absence of diplomacy, parties do not come together for co-living. Then the tactics of coercive mediation can be applied where threat and reward approach may work. But these schemes have frequently been failing in the international arena. In this case, problem-solving workshop facilitates two unequal powers to be equal in all the respects so that resources can be shared generously to end the conflict forever. These days conflict seems to be empowering and experiencing to gain justice and equality. This provides them will power to interact with the opposing party both positively as well as negatively. Hence, struggle looks like benefitting people in the long run.

Conflict is normal in human relationships, and conflict is a motor of change. To understand conflict one should be deeply familiar with the terminology 'transformation' because it provides the practitioner common ground of the participants to sharpen appreciative behavior for greater acceptance in human relationships. Conflict transformation is a way of looking as well as seeing. The lenses of conflict transformation show: the immediate situation, underlying patterns and context and a conceptual framework. Framework addresses; content and context that is structure of relationships. Conflict transformation is to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships.

A transformational approach recognizes that conflict is a normal and continuous dynamic within human relationships. Rather than seeing peace as a static "end-state," conflict transformation views peace as a continuously evolving and developing quality of relationship. Conflict impacts us personally, relationally, structurally, and culturally. Change must be viewed descriptively and prescriptively. Because of these two approaches, layers of vision are framed that provide the root cause of problems in human relationship that finally uproot the concern of conflict. By this way, healthy relationship can be established among the conflict participants after addressing each step like the content, the context and the structure of the relationship. Transformation's guiding question is this: How do we end something not desired and build something we do desire? Transformation addresses both the episode and the epicenter of conflict.

The occurrence of the conflict and its focal point can be captured only when we observe the tension at the broader spectrum rather than looking it as a single piece and finding the monumental solution. For this creating a map of conflict; this approach goes beyond negotiating solutions and builds toward something new and acts as an opportunity or as a gift. For that linear process does not act rather circular method functions to evacuate the traumatic condition and brings marked change to

soothe the prevailing problem. Change as a circle: things move forward, things move backward, things hit a wall; Movement stops, things collapse. The capacity to live with apparent contradictions and paradoxes lies at the heart of transformation. Try never to ignore or talk away someone's perception. Instead, try to understand where it is rooted. As conflict transformation returns and originates from relationship. In this context, Lederach asserts:

The key to creative solutions, transformation suggests, lies in designing a responsive and adaptive platform for constructive change that is made possible by the crisis and the presenting issues. The episode of conflict becomes an opportunity to address the epicenter of conflict. (32)

While combining the visible part of conflict with the underlying one it generates a solid ground from which a long term solution can be formulated. Thus the extensive range of knowledge caters to locate the essence of the problem and peace building begins to take shape. Hence this is possible only through conflict transformation but not with conflict resolution.

The narrowness of resolution approach like considering a singular way to delve the existing solution may solve problems but miss the greater potential for constructive change. Nonviolent action aims to raise awareness and balance power but does not prove restrain free and one way or the other conflict prevails at least like a hidden thread of a beautiful garland. That avoids individual irrespective of their background to be treated equal. Hence, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, suicide, depression and internalized oppression look rampant among members of certain community. In this regard, Schirch remarks:

Disparities, disabilities, and deaths result when systems, institutions, policies, or cultural beliefs meet some people's human needs and human rights at the expense of others. Structural violence creates relationships that cause secondary violence to occur. (24)

Creating imbalance in social structure fosters not only the visible operational modification but it inserts deep down to every individual that ultimately results into secondary violence like self-destruction, community destruction and national and international destruction which is largely visible in Nepal.

These strategies aim to prevent victimization, restrain offenders, and make a safe space for other peace building processes. Laws and justice systems can help maintain order, which is essential for a sustainable peace. An ounce of violence prevention is worth a pound of post-violence peace building. Right relationships; healing trauma, transforming conflict and doing justice avoids structural violence. In this regard, Schirch remarks:

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Traumatic experiences leave people with lingering needs and wounds. Conflicts are ripe for negotiation when power is roughly balanced and there is wide awareness of the key issues. Without coordination, different approaches to building peace may contradict other approaches or simply fail to achieve their maximum impact.

## Conclusion

Violence exclaims from competition and conflict which further gets its roots in cultural, religious, racial, and ethnic identities. Diversity among people on various tags divide them in several sanctions which ultimately hamper the century long harmony among people which is widely visible in the present world order. In addition, use of local resources and its unequal distribution is the one reason to cultivate violence among people while, the other reason is the cultural identity of people. As a whole, whether it is of at the world level or it is of at individual, communal, national and international unless the structural violence is checked conflict keeps on emerging like Phoenix. And structural violence that leads to secondary violence performs frequent reactions and responses to the oppressive force by damaging itself.

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## Teacher Reflection to Nurture Effective ESL Pedagogic Practices during Pandemic Crisis

Chandrasekharan Praveen

### Abstract

Following the lockdown, many tech-shy teachers have been forced to quickly commence teaching online. Suddenly, teachers have been asked to administer own teaching, create materials, broadcast own class, interact with students online all alone and grade their work. More significantly, most such teachers are ones who never received training on how to create accessible digital materials or evaluate digital tools, resources and apps for accessibility. At the other end there are millions of English language learners (ESL/ELL students) who find themselves in a precarious position as remote learning continues.

Teaching, particularly in the initial years is commonly known to be a period of anxiety, uncertainty, and above all a time of intense self examination of own ability in teaching. There are of course several strategies to overcome anxieties of any kind. Experienced supervisors or Mentors can help build confidence in teachers who are confused or are faltering in their steps. But when everyone-the Supervisor, the Mentor and the Novice teacher are in the same boat, struggling to cope with online teaching, can pedagogy survive? The author, a teacher educator, drawing on own decade long experience of techno-pedagogy, suggests that teacher reflection can go a long way in gaining self-confidence and in gearing up to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic crisis in delivering instruction online.

**Key words:** Assessment, ESL, Language Skills, Pedagogy, Reflection

We don't learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience.

-John Dewey

### Introduction

The nationwide closures following the COVID-19 pandemic are impacting over 90% of the world's student population. Several countries have implemented localized closures impacting millions of additional learners.(UNESCO). In response to the pandemic scare, many schools have moved online. But the structure of schooling and learning, including teaching and assessment methodologies, all has been affected. Survey results found that not all educational institutions could seamlessly adopt online teaching methods and many low-income private and government institutions are deeply affected. Many others were found to be struggling to connect with students and families to ensure that their basic needs, including sufficient food, are being met.

Reflection or “critical reflection” refers to an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action. (Richards, 1990)

The disruption in delivery of education should prompt committed teachers to figure out how to drive engagement at scale while ensuring inclusive e-learning solutions and tackling the digital divide. This article lists down a few questions for reflection by teachers in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts in the time of pandemic. It works on the assumption that building resilience to mitigate the negative impact of educational disruptions caused by COVID-19 is essential and the person most suited to tackle it is none other than the classroom teacher.

### **Rationale for Reflection**

Stephen Downes (2020) the Canadian philosopher and commentator in the fields of online learning listed a couple of posts on online teaching which formed the trigger of thoughts for this article:

I don't think what is happening right now can be or should be considered online learning or distance education, or any other established term used to describe learning that is not done face to face. This is emergency teaching and learning in a time of unprecedented crisis. We are in a period of reactive teaching and learning, which is the opposite of online learning. Online learning is planned, deliberate and thoughtful in the sense that online courses often take months or even years to develop, not days or weeks. (Clint Lalonde)

Educational institutions need to stop jamming platforms down throats of educators and, then, students, as a replacement for classroom instruction and instead, consider how people really learn with tech." (Kevin Hodgson)

True, teaching online is a skill, and it is very different to teaching in a classroom. It is not something that can happen overnight. And what better way to commence the process of teaching than to engage in reflection of own teaching. This is because a reflective approach to teaching involves changes in the way we usually perceive teaching and our role in the very process of teaching.

### **Brief Review of Studies**

Reformers in Education like John Dewey in the 1930's spoke about the importance of reflection in the learning process. To Dewey, reflection means thinking. Thinking which involves any mental operation. In the context of reflective thinking, reflection occurs when one questions and clarifies why a person has chosen a particular

method, procedure and content. It also includes studying the school environment, in relation to those choices made.

Kolb (1984) perceived Reflective practice as a powerful tool and key for development. Mohit (1988) perceived reflection as a form of response of the learner to experience. It is an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it.

Bartlett (1990) points out that becoming a reflective teacher involves moving beyond a primary concern with instructional techniques and “how to” questions and asking “what” and “why” questions that regard instructions and managerial techniques not as ends in themselves, but as part of broader educational purposes. Bobb Darnell’s popular website describes learning process as “Input-Process-Output-Reflect” and notes that without reflection, it is very difficult to have genuine learning. Richardson & Diaz Maggioli (2018) in a research paper for the Cambridge Papers in ELT series proposed reflective practice as essential for continuous professional development.

A website which offers strategies for overcoming obstacles (**Edunators**), proposes ‘reflection’ as one useful strategy. While discussing the importance of reflection, in a special post they observed that teachers should not only reflect themselves but also involve students in their own reflection. They even listed thirty questions for teacher reflection focusing on five main areas:

1. Modelling students: Questions to ask with students.
2. Classroom Culture: Questions to ask about rules and relationships.
3. Curriculum and Instruction: Reflection on assessment and Grading Practices.
4. Collaboration: Questions to ask one about own place in a Professional Learning Community.
5. Mental Health: Questions to help teachers maintain a healthy outlook.

### **Teacher Reflection**

A rational suggestion proposed by Gannon (2020) following the pandemic, in the Chronicle of Higher Education is worth pondering on. Good pedagogy requires “... regular, effective, and compassionate communication with students; Flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances; Transparency in course materials, like tests, assignments, and activities. Keep it as simple, and accessible, as you can. A sudden move from in-person to distance learning is disruptive enough- there’s no need to add to it by introducing complicated, unnecessary tools and procedures”. Given below are a set of questions which tries to address the different aspects Gannon mentions. ESL teachers can fruitfully utilize them to reflect on own teaching over a hot cup of coffee/ tea in the evening. The questions basically focus on five main areas: Modelling students, Online Classroom, Techno-pedagogy, Collaboration and Mental Health.

## 1. Modelling students

- Did I help the learners recapitulate the day's lesson?
- Did I provide appropriate reinforcement?
- Did my presentation stimulate students to further learning?
- Did I provide response frames as cue to language use?
- Was my evaluation appropriate to the objective?
- What changes should I make in the assessment practice?
- Did I provide opportunity to foster higher order thinking skills?
- Did I link the content taught with the four main skills-Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW)?
- Did I employ a language game to make my students enjoy learning?
- Did I check learner performance in relation to the four language skills?
- Did I provide practice in use of new words?
- Did I notice any glaring grammar mistakes in language use?
- Did I provide appropriate and timely feedback?
- Did I help learners realize the usefulness of the skill practiced?

## 2. Online Classroom

- Did I overall motivate my learners?
- Were my students motivated to learn?
- Was my content engaging?
- Did I break the learning component into smaller chunks?
- Did I employ authentic materials?
- How often did the pace of the class drop? Why?
- Did I check whether the students are attentive?
- Were my questions distributed to several students?
- How often did I meet with a silence when I posed questions? Why?
- Was the task given suitable to display one's own understanding of learning?
- Did students enjoy the session? If not what I should do in future?
- Did I complete the lesson on time? If not, what should I do in future?
- What were the main difficulties I faced during teaching?
- How can I avoid the difficulties I faced, in future?
- Did students have access to devices and the internet?
- How can I improve my teaching if I teach the lesson again?
- Are students clear on how assignments will be graded?

## 3. Techno-pedagogy

- Was my teaching aid effective?
- Was I able to achieve my objectives?
- Did I use the Smart board effectively?
- What additional learning aid should I use?
- Did I explore the use of offline alternatives?
- Did I caution the student who failed to observe 'Netiquette'?

- Are students following the Fair Use and other copyright laws?
- Did I remind students how often they should log in to the class site?
- Did I specify the activities that are synchronous and asynchronous?
- Did I provide the links to student tutorials for using the technology?
- Did I check learner familiarity with the rubric used for assessment?
- Did I use of strategies such as Brainstorming, Sharing and Polls?
- Did I assign tasks to be completed on Blogs, Padlet etc?
- Did I utilize the digital tools available to their fullest potential?
- Did students experience difficulty in accessing the e-learning activities?
- Did everyone know how to use the digital tool I had introduced?
- Were the digital tools employed to showcase learning appropriate?
- Did I remind learners not to miss phone calls intended to provide practice in listening and speaking?
- Did I remind learners to respond to emails to practice language skills- reading and writing?

#### **4. Collaboration**

- How did the students perform in the collaborative tasks?
- Were the tasks provided suitable for learning through interaction?
- Did I check the effectiveness of the Buddy system being employed?
- Did students effectively utilize the time spent in the Breakout rooms?
- Did I brief students on the proper use of online collaborative tools?
- Did I assign online collaborative tasks to be performed in the asynchronous mode during weekend?

#### **5. Mental Health**

- Did I find students looking bored? Who are they?
- Did I make use of any fun/game element in the class?
- Did my students have a voice and choice in their learning?
- Did I patiently listen to the responses given by my learners?
- Did I check for spyware, malware or phishing attempts?
- Did I take the necessary precautions to ensure student safety?
- Did I employ a caring inviting and enthusiastic tone throughout?
- Did I distribute questions to the bright, average and weak learners?
- Did I overtly penalize my students for late submission of assignments?
- Did I provide an opportunity to share thoughts, fears, and concerns?
- Did I put myself in the shoes of the students to find out their problem?

#### **Summing up**

Reflecting on aspects related to the five main areas identified in this article: Modelling, Online Classroom, Techno-pedagogy, Collaboration and Mental Health, the author, believes can lead not only to professional growth, but also provide the support learners need in the time of the pandemic crisis.

Frequent reflection has its own benefits. The time spent on reflection can help foster positive change. When experience is coupled with reflection, it can turn out to be a powerful impetus for teacher development too. Given the fact that distance teaching of ESL in the time of pandemic is difficult for both teachers and learners to adjust; engaging in reflection of teaching will turn out to be fruitful enterprise.

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## Language Acquisition and Memory

Samuel Mundru

### Abstract

This paper presents how literature is very much pertinent to teach the language with a critical concentration on intermediate learners of the second language. Present-day English has become the passport to venture into any discussion. English as a language is widening its wings day by day and securing its place of link language in the World. And a lot of considerable researches and investigations have been done on second language acquisition like Stephen Krashen's "Monitor model." Carroll's conscious reinforcement model, Lambert's social psychological model, John Schumann's Acculturation Model, according to Gabriel Wyner, all these theories say "if you want to learn a language efficiently, then you need to give that language "life," every word needs to connect to sounds and images, sense and taste and emotions, every bit of grammar can't be some abstract grammatical code, it needs to be something that can help you and tell about your story." In the age of iPhones, not every L2 learner has time and resources to travel around and make memories literature can aid this by offering a transcendental journey to its readers like John Keats had "Away! Away! for I will fly to thee." on the "the viewless wings of Poesy" on the same viewless wings, the literature can take us to Venice to meet the merchant from there to Woolf's room and lets us listen to the unmistakable poetic voice, all this experience allows an individual to identify his or herself in character in the tone of that native English person and creates a memory which is a package of vocabulary, grammar and an ability to acquire knowledge to talk in the target language.

**Keywords:** Second Language Acquisition, Literature, Motivation, Memory, Culture.

### Introduction

The socio-psychological model by Lambert and Gardner's (1959) theory on second language acquisition stresses a lot on motivation as the key concept in learning a language. According to Lambert, there are two types of motivation: instrumental motivation and integrative motivation, instrumental motivation is where an L2 learner wants to learn the language only to clear the exam, to go abroad, to clear GRE, and so on. In contrast to this, an L2 learner with integrative motivation wants to learn the language to attain fluency in the target language, but when both the students sit in L2 learning class they both will be provided with the same kind of instruction to learn the rule-driven language, this might help a student with instrumental motivation to achieve his purpose but will not equip them for the spontaneous communication, researches tell that many L2 learners at an early age can understand the language but are unable to communicate in that because, irrespective of the motivation that a student holds, they are being instructed in the same objective attitude towards the target language.

Flora Lewis analyses "Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things but learning another way to think about things."

### **The firm belief in Natural order**

When an individual decides to learn the language he/she first thinks about the grammatical structures, this thought has its origin in the belief that there is a sequence in learning a language. Roger Brown was an eminent social psychologist, best known for his studies in the early linguistic development of children, after observing three children over a period of time Brown hypothesized a sequence in children learning a language, the research says children first learn "ing" forms next they recognize articles then plurals and later tenses, based on this theory Dulay and Burt (1977) hypothesized that even Adults follow a pattern in learning the language with these strong suggestions and researches all the language teaching books almost follow the same pattern that is a phrase, clause, sentence, parts of speech, articles after this a formal training in vocabulary.

Stephen Krashen is completely against to sequence of learning a language he supports his theory with emigrant language acquisition who went abroad with minimal language and came back with strong command over the target language, based on this he denies the natural sequence of learning a language and formulates the Input hypothesis, his research proposes that even an adult can acquire the language with a strong motivation input hypothesis, to teach language in this model first by communicating with the student the teacher should understand the linguistic ability of that student based on that ability the teacher should suggest little more advanced texts to read and understand and give an opinion, the whole linguistic ability is considered as "I" and the advanced text that teacher suggests is considered as +1 that's the reason this is also called an I+1 model, this was a successful process in helping students to understand the language structures and change of meanings with context but students are unable to retain language they acquired for longer period of time because of lack of creating a strong memory in brain, for instance a person who did not have any traditional training in language and is living in urban society can identify himself with a word like "vote" even though he/she may not be aware of where the word vote is used as a noun and where it is used as a verb in a sentence, getting a holiday to stand in a big queue and getting a blue ink stamp on their finger and the feeling of supporting their favourite leader creates a strong memory that is associated with this word "vote" so he/she won't forget the word. This memory creation process is lacking in the formal training in language and also in input hypothesis when text given is plain.

The Acculturation Model is a theory proposed by John Schumann to describe the acquisition process of a second language by the learner and to what extent an L2 learner likes the culture of the target language is directly proportional to the ability that he acquires to communicate in that language.

The above linguistic and social processes of second language acquisition lack in motivating L2 learners and creating a memory in the learner's brain in association with language and in introducing the culture and cultural similarities in the target language, a detailed observation is done over 3 sample students of various linguistic



abilities over a short period of time indicated that with the help literature students are highly motivated, literature was able to create a memory and cultural similarities and helped them to retain the vocabulary for a longer time.

The tendency towards fluency is the most common behavior of the L2 learners, By understanding the students communicative level according to Krashen I+1 (Input hypothesis), a few novels and poems were suggested to them such as "tale of two cities," "Tintern Abbey"

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."  
-Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

Students expressed that the rhythm of the language motivated them to read it till the end, and the simple sentence structure which is explaining the complex situation in the novel keep them gripped to the pages, the interesting plot allowed them to read even the new words with the help of dictionaries, replacing of plain passages with literary text created a remarkable difference in students interest in learning the target language, and literature creates a memory with elaborated description and details with identical characters and close to real situations creates a strong memory in the brain which is associated with vocabulary and grammar various researches says that Shakespeare tragic endings, Hamlet's character sketch, Darcy's house in *Pride And Prejudice*, love of *Rome and Juliet*, and the inspiring quotes of "wings of fire" these are some of the images created by literature and never forgotten by the reader for the strong memory it has created in the reader's brain.

Acculturation, literature introduces culture to its readers "My Mother" an essay by A.P.J Abdul Kalam, *Kongi's Harvest* by Wole Soyinka are the best examples of that kind.

Literature motivates, creates a strong memory, and produces a cultural memory, in short, it does all that is required to teach a language, but the question that arises is how to select the appropriate literary text to improve the language, there are some blogs to suggest a list of books but according to Krashen, an individual's linguistic ability should be the base to suggest a literary text. Just like young children start off with simple books similar simple text should be given to an L2 learner in the beginning and later should be branched out to complex text.

## Conclusion

Language is a memory when a strong memory is created the left hemisphere of the brain gets activated which is responsible for the production of language and decodes the information through Broca's and Wernicke's area for grammar and vocabulary respectively and the brain uses this existing knowledge. when an individual wants to frame his own sentences in the target language which is called cognitive control, according to this creating a linguistic memory is accompanied with strong motivation and is the best means to learn the language this is possible with literature

alone because language is not just subject, verb, object but a good Samaritan in time of need, a vaccine to eradicate our pain and an oasis in the desert of loneliness.

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## **A Comparison between “The Fire Sermon” of T.S. Eliot and the *Dhammapada* of the Buddha to Establish Ethical Values for B. Tech Students in ELE Classes**

Priyambada Pal & Sanjeeb Kumar Mohanty

### **Abstract**

This paper draws a comparison between “The Fire Sermon” (The Wasteland) of T.S. Eliot and the *Dhammapada* of the Buddha to establish the common grounds of ethical issues; and at the same time correlates them with the demands of the engineering syllabus of Biju Pattanaik University of Technology (BPUT), Odisha to suggest some ways to incorporate these ethical values in the English Language classes to promote the vision of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

**Key words:** Ethics, Values, Desires, Perceptions, Happiness, Gratification, Language Learning, Personality Development

### **Introduction**

An attempt has been made in this paper to analyse “The Fire Sermon” (The Wasteland) of Eliot and the *Dhammapada* in respect of their concern about continence as a way of salvation. The theme of *The Wasteland* encompasses simultaneously several levels of experience arising out of various waste lands: the wasteland of religion in which there are rocks, but no water, the wasteland of the spirit from which all moral springs have evaporated, and the wasteland of the instinct for fertility where sex has become merely a mechanical means of animal satisfaction rather than a potent, creative force.

### **Review of Literature**

It appears to many readers that Eliot has endeavored to give a poetic expression to his feelings of futility and anarchy that is contemporary civilization. Hence, F.O. Matthiessen writes:

It may be that the large task which Eliot set himself in *The Wasteland* of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy of contemporary history caused some of the experiments which he made to gain that end to appear deliberate. Certainly some of his analogies with musical structure, in particular the summation of the themes in the broken ending of the final part, have always seemed to us somewhat forced and over theoretical. But this is very different from concluding that he is too conscious an artist.

(qtd. in Vasant A. Shahane, *Introduction and Notes on the Wasteland* 13)

In the original wasteland myth, the sterility is primarily physical, whereas in Eliot's poem it is primarily spiritual. It reenacts the religious drama of the visit of the Knight to the Chapel Perilous, where the Grail is supposed to have been kept. In another context, the theme of *The Wasteland* seems to be death – "Death by Water" is only one context of it. Death is continually contrasted with life and vice versa.

Hence A.E. Cahill writes, "In *The Wasteland* the forces of life become the forces of death, consuming where they should create, and sterile where they should be fertile" (Eliot and the Human Predicament 48)

Cleanth Brooks appears to be right when he comments that the poem deals with "two kinds of life and two kinds of death" (Shahane 15) and with the contrast that this fact offers. In one context, life which becomes devoid of meaning is equivalent to death, while in another context sacrificial death is shown as life-giving, as almost a means of securing renewal of life. *The Wasteland* is, at one level, concerned with this paradox and with variations implicit in this self-contradictory movement. Another important thematic aspect of *The Wasteland* as pointed out by Ian Hamilton is that the superb trinity of culture, sex, and religion; both as the primary goal of humanity and as something responsible for the deplorable state of western civilization where these impulses work in mutual isolation.

The title of the third section in *The Wasteland*, "The Fire Sermon" is derived from Lord Buddha's sermon in which he calls upon his disciples to give up 'desire', the root of all evil. According to A.G. George:

This section seems to be the most important part of the poem, and it gathers together all the subsuming myths and subsiding themes in one central objective correlative of Buddha's "fire sermon". Here Eliot explains that passion and sensuousness are inherent elements in human nature and that they cause suffering. (T.S. Eliot: His Mind and Art 155)

### **Comparison with the Dhammapada**

The Buddha exhorts them that fires of lust should be overcome. The spirit of the Buddha's sermon, with the ideals of resignation and self-abnegation as its key ideas, is also linked with the kindred passion. A third shade of meaning in this network of allusions is provided by St. Paul's view that marriage should be preferred to the life of uncontrolled lust and carnal burning.

The section opens with the evocation of a nuptial song from Spenser's Prothalamion, "The river's tent is broken" (qtd. In Shahane 17). Spenser's song celebrates the wedding of two noble ladies, Elizabeth and Katherine Somerset, daughters of the Earl of Worcester. Spenser sings of the beauty of 'Sweet Thames', purity of its water, and the flowers on its bank which decorate the auspicious occasion. But in twentieth century England and in Eliot's world, the Thames has undergone a sea change being contaminated by the orgies of lust of holidaying crowds who luxuriate in surface existence.

"While I was fishing in the dull Canal" (qtd. In Shahane 74), alludes to the myth of the fisher king. In fact, the protagonist is essentially the Quester after the

Holy Gail who goes to the Chapel Perilous to answer the riddles, to cure the maimed Fisher King and to restore fertility to the parched wasteland, but in this verse he seems to be the Fisher King or, at least, he identifies himself with him. The scene of Sweeney's rendezvous with Mrs. Porter is preceded by the grotesque images of rat's feet and "bones cast in a little low dry garret" (qtd. In Shahane 80). This evokes the atmosphere of the fear of death, which may be traced to Marvel. The use of 'Tereu', 'Twit Twit Twit', and 'Jug, jug, jug, jug, jug, jug' (qtd. In Shahane 80) all smutty words and gestures not merely invoke the rape of Pilomela; but also the sexuality of Mrs. Porter and her daughter and the homosexual affair of Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna Merchant.

The sense of futility, frustration and boredom implicit in love and sex in *The Wasteland* is skillfully expressed in the scene of the typist girl and the young man Carbuncular. The theme of the song of Thames daughters is a lament on the loss of virginity:

The ri`verswe`ats  
Oil and ta`r  
The baargesdri`ft  
With the tu`rningti`me. (qtd. In Shahane 82)

The implied moral of these songs and the scenes of the recurring loss of virginity imply that the self cannot attain its supreme goal unless it is directed essentially by ascetic ideals – the theme which is further stressed in "What the Thunder Said". Against this backdrop is juxtaposed the Buddha's fire sermons as mentioned in the *Dhammapada*. The Buddha has rightly diagnosed the most virulent malady that afflicts mankind – fires of passion, hatred, and sexual infatuation. This vision is deepened by Eliot's allusion to St. Augustine's "O Lord Thou pluckest one out" (qtd. In Shahane 14) that speaks of the saint's confessional mood. These words echo the Saint's words as he refers to Joshua, a high priest, as a brand plucked out of the fire" (qtd. In Shahane 55).

Eliot's allusion to two important religions i.e. Buddhism and Christianity make it obvious how asceticism is life's sine qua non. Lord Buddha states that the world is on fire, "burning with the fire of hatred, with fire of infatuation, misery, grief, and despair" (qtd. in Shahane 55). All these are in the fire of passion. However, modern people cling to the principles that result in the darkness of the soul. Modern world suffers principally because of its avowed refusal to practice continence. Its indulgence in sex is a senseless enterprise that thrives on inconscienceness.

The *Dhammapada* or "Statements of Principles", a popular collection of saying of the Buddha is about discourses on nirvana. The process of individual liberation and peace of mind outlined in the teachings of the Buddha is referred to as the Lesser Journey. While its goal of nirvana is called the magic city. Once in that realm of consciousness, the ultimate journey is revealed; this is called the Tantra or Fundamental Continuity, wherein heaven and earth are united.

In the *Dhammapada* the Buddha says that, "One who would wear the saffron robe while not free from impurity is lacking in self-control and is not genuine, thus unworthy of the saffron robe" (*Dhammapada*. Trans. Thomas Cleary 9-10). The

saffron robe was a symbol of the Buddhist renunciant, who would gather discarded rags, wash them together into a covering for the body and dye it in uniform colours. Evidently the saffron robe in the Buddha's time was being used as a kind of camouflage. But in *The Wasteland*, Mrs. Potter and her daughter wash their feet in soda water to make themselves sexually attractive. This is a picture of moral decadence of society.

The fire of passion is an evil weapon, which spoils one's being. In *The Wasteland* the poet has presented the picture of Mr. Eugenides, who is a man of bad character. Character is the greatest jewel that one can achieve. So the Buddha says, "As rain leaks into a poorly roofed house, so does passion invade an uncultivated mind. As no rain leaks into a well-roofed house, passion does not invade a cultivated mind" (trans. Cleary 10). And "by energy, vigilance, self-control, and self-mastery, the wise one may make an island that a flood cannot sweep away" (Ibid 14).

Mind is restless, unsteady, hard to guard, hard to control. Its stabilization is cultivated by watchfully keeping it away from random thoughts. For the wakeful one, whose mind is unimpassioned, whose thoughts are undisturbed, who has given up both virtue and sin, there is no fear. A man should be like a bee, because, "Just as the bee takes the nectar and leaves without damaging the colour or scent of the flowers, so should the sage act in a village" (trans. Cleary 21)

Life without attachment is true individualism in that it is tantamount to freedom from pressure. Confucius said, "Ideal people can stand alone without fear and leave society without distress" (trans. Cleary 33). The wise seeks enjoyment therein, having given up all desire, and having rid oneself of mental pollution. 'Therein' means the true individualism of life without attachment. Those in whom the mind is correctly cultivated in the limbs of perfect enlightenment, who have no attachment attain perfect nirvana in this world.

Then again the Buddha says, "There is no satisfaction of desires, even by a shower of money. One is wise to know that desires are painful, bringing little enjoyment" (trans. Cleary 65). Desires are painful in the sense that a state of permanent sensual gratification is biologically impossible, and therefore, it is painful to exaggerate gratification of desires into an end in itself. Finding no delight even in celestial pleasures, the rightly awakened disciple delights in the destruction of craving. The way to end misery, in this context, refers to the noble eightfold path to nirvana; "(i) accurate perception (ii) accurate thinking, (iii) accurate speech, (iv) appropriate way of making a living, (v) precise effort, (vi) appropriate action, (vii) right recollection, and (viii) right concentration" (trans. Cleary 67).

The Tao Te Ching says, "The reason that we have so much trouble is that we have bodies" (trans. Cleary 71). According to the Buddha, "The reason that we have so much trouble is that we have selves" (trans Ibid 71). Hunger of passion is the worst illness. When you know this is as it is, nirvana is the highest happiness. The *Dhammapada* presents the way how to control mind and how to get nirvana; "Cut down the forest, not the tree; Danger comes from the forest. Having cut down the forest and Craving as well, you will attain nirvana" (trans. Cleary 92).

According to Mahaparinirvanasutra, the tree represents the body, the forest is thickest of thoughts. The forest symbolizes mind, the tree symbolizes the body. Fear is aroused because of the talk about the forest. So chop down the forest not the tree.

As long as a man's desire for women, however little, is not cut, his mind remains attached like a suckling calf to its mother.

In the Wasteland, Thames daughters have no care for their chastity. Sex and being raped by others is a routine incident in their lives. In this context, the Buddha's words appear appropriate to be quoted; "An act carelessly performed, a religious observance adulterated with worldly passion, chastity practiced with hesitation – these have no great results" (trans. Cleary 102)

The craving of man who acts carelessly grows like a creeping vine. He jumps around here and there like a monkey in a forest seeking fruit. Whoever overcomes this clinging vulgar craving in the world, so hard to get over, has sorrows fallen away, like drops of water from a lotus.

Spiders have ungummed walkways in their webs that enable them to get around and go about their business without getting stuck. Sometimes they stray or fall from these pathways and get trapped in their own webs. Those acts and qualities lauded by the Buddha are like the walkways, those of which the Buddha warns are the gummed part of the web that acts as a trap. The Philomela myth, in "The Fire Sermon" presents the moral that "those who are infatuated with passion fall into its flow as a spider does the web it has made itself" (trans. Cleary 110)

Characters like Richmond and Kew, who enjoyed the Thames daughters are like, "a heedless man who courts another's wife (and) gets into four states: degradation, inability to sleep peacefully, blame, and hell" (trans. Cleary 101)

Modern people are aimless. They have no particular goal in their lives. Dignity has no place in them. But death never waits for anybody. Death does not see whether someone has completed his aim or not. So the Buddha says that, "Death carries off someone absorbed in picking flower, just as a flood sweeps away a sleeping village. Death overpowers one absorbed in picking flowers, before one has attained one's aim" (trans. Cleary 20)

Such aimlessness of the wastelanders is also obvious from the carefree song of the Thames daughters; "Weialalalela/ Wellalaleialala" (qtd. In Shahane 83). At last the protagonist of *The Wasteland*, Tiresias request his God to save him from this world of endless pain:

Burning burning burning burnig  
O Lord Thou pluckest me out  
O Lord Thou pluckest (qtd. In Shahane 84)

The *Dhammapada* prescribes panacea to this most devastating problem that modern man confronts. This is illustrated in the Avatamsoka – Sutra's book called *The Meditation of Enlightening Being Universally Good*. The Mahaparinirvana-Sutra defines the true community as universal love. Pitted against this, the typist girl in *The Wasteland* has no emotional attachment towards her boyfriend. But there should be love beyond physical aspects, and love should be spiritual. The Buddha says that there are four noble truths which can control human mind and give him nirvana, "(1) Conditioned states are unsatisfactory, (2) this misery has a cause, (3) this misery has an end, and (4) there is a way to the end of this misery" (trans Cleary 67)

The way is universal love, brotherhood, and sacrifice. According to Philip R. Headings:

...only through escaping the burning of the senses can one see the meaning of experience as the seers, prophets, and true poets do - can one trace the cryptogram within sense perceptions and see the meaning in another world. (Philip R. Headings, T.S. Eliot 101)

Thus, Like the *Dhammapada*, Eliot's 'The fire sermon' in *The Wasteland* is a pointer, a way, a prescription. Both aim at overhauling the human self rusted in life-negating forces thus exemplifying that life is not a candle meaninglessly burning but a grand potency to be honoured to a supreme fulfillment through the art and craft of living.

### **Requirement of Ethical Values in BPUT Syllabus**

The Module 1 of Professional Ethics in Biju Pattanaik Technical University (BPUT), Odisha recommends that the students at B. Tech. level should understand and practice professional as well as personal ethics in their personal and professional sphere to create a constructive work atmosphere. These ethics include:

- governing factors of an individual's value system
- understanding personal and professional moralities
- developing professional accountability
- dealing with professional risks
- honing professional craftsmanship
- taking up leadership positions and responsibilities
- respecting professional duties towards the organization

According to R. Subramanian (2016), professional ethics govern around three factors: values, spirituality and stakeholders (individuals, organizations and society). The above comparison between two literary masterpieces provides a possible platform to the requirements of the syllabus at this level. The suggested eightfold path to nirvana; (i) accurate perception (ii) accurate thinking, (iii) accurate speech, (iv) appropriate way of making a living, (v) precise effort, (vi) appropriate action, (vii) right recollection, and (viii) right concentration may help the future stakeholders in achieving their professional endeavors in an ethical way.

As the National Education Policy 2020 focuses on building of one's individuality to create a society building force, which focuses on creating a nation of positivity that believes in morality and constructive ways. The Buddha's teachings on controlling human desires might help these students in organising their lives and ambitions to avoid any kind of negativity. At the same time, it will help them in moving beyond the limits of physicality and physical desires, and see these forces of hormones as the fundamentals of creativity.



## **Incorporating the Findings in ELE Classes**

The following suggestions may be incorporated in English Language classes to inculcate the above values in the lives of these future stewards of the country:

- select texts or contexts that create a forum to discuss these ethical issues
- make tested literary pieces a component of the syllabus
- design language activities around these texts to discuss these ethics in both overt and covert manner
- give special emphasis on learning euphemistic expressions, suitable modalities and propriety in language
- follow up activities must be designed at micro and macro level
- observe and understand individual as well as group behavior
- focus on social, psychological and spiritual requirements
- assess personality development and provide positive feedback

## **Conclusion**

This paper will work as a guide to many English Language teachers in evaluating their ethics in professional spheres and help in restructuring and redesigning their classes, materials, pedagogies, instructions and evaluation processes to help their learners in correcting their ethics.

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## Impact of Printed Text on Deep Reading Skills

Dharshini Shanmugam

### Abstract

Reading is an indispensable factor in the lives of human beings. A society cannot exist without reading skill. Reading has a long history as a means of communication. The changing trend in the world differentiates between reading and the medium it is perceived. As the world is driven towards the digital medium, the print medium has to compete with the electronic medium. Thus, the clash between print and electronic mediums creates an impact on reading skill. Therefore, the proposed research aims to assess the impact of printed text in deep reading skill. As to assess the impact, the research questions the following: Does printed text lead to deep reading? If so, what are the possibilities of a printed text providing a reader to go deep? Does deep reading allow a reader to obtain cognitive skills? What are the struggles that interrupt in the deep reading process and obtaining cognitive skills when reading online? Subsequently, the research uses the qualitative and quantitative methodology. The information is gathered by observing students' in drama and theatre of Swami Vipulananda Institute of Aesthetic Studies. In particular, 30 students from second year second semester were participated based on their reading interest. The analysis will be done based on the observation and students' responses.

**Key words:** Reading, Deep Reading, Print, Digital, Cognitive Skill

### Introduction

The world is filled with books, magazines and newspapers. They exist in abundance and people read them exuberantly. The homes, offices, coffee shops were occupied by stacks of printed material for the purpose of reading. Reading was a passion and it was inextricably interlaced in everyday life. Especially during traveling and to sleeping the act of reading played a very important role. The growth of computers, internet transformed the traditional reading trend to screen reading. People started to shift their way from print consumption to digital mode as their preference and purpose of reading changes. Consequently, the importance of print reading started to decline slowly. Thus, there is a dilemma whether the decline of print medium and the rise of digital medium will impact the deep reading process.

Human brain has a circuit to comprehend any reading material in different mediums but not all the medium immerses the reader into the process of deep reading. Usually readers use skimming, scanning and intensive reading strategies based on the purpose of reading. These strategies help the readers to comprehend a text in any medium but comprehending information, using cognition in each

strategy is different. Perhaps, skimming and scanning referred to glance over the piece of reading material and grasp the main idea but this kind of reading will not lead to high comprehension level. Thus, there is a need for deep reading skill to comprehend information in depth. Thus, the deep reading skill is inseparably linked with cognitive skills. The cognitive skills include receiving information through senses, perceiving, organizing, thinking, remembering, storing, retrieving, drawing analogies and making inferences and so on. These cognitive skills are exhilarated in a deep reading process. These deep reading processes are in endangering condition as the readers preference of reading moved to digital based screen reading.

“When the reading brain skims texts, we don’t have time to grasp complexity, to understand another’s feelings or to perceive beauty”(Wolf Maryanne, “Skim reading is the new normal,” para 1). Therefore, the deep reading skill thrives the reader to be empathetic towards others feeling. The deep reading process needs long time and cognitive patience but the digital screen reading, does not allow the use of these elements effectively. Once the deep reading skill starts to diminish the comprehending level would be under threat. Thus, the proposed research paper aims to unfold the importance of deep reading and the impact of print medium in the deep reading process.

### **Aim**

The aim of this research is to unfold the importance of deep reading skill and the impact of print in deep reading skill.

### **Hypothesis**

Though reading trends have been changing over the time, still the role of printed text is necessary to obtain certain skills. Reading materials differ based on the reader’s interest with skimming, scanning and deep reading strategies. Though, printed texts have been read widely using these three strategies, indeed deep reading becomes more essential in obtaining cognitive skills. Thus, reading in print let oneself immerse in reading to know in- depth. It leads to improve cognitive skills of the readers. Therefore, the proposed research sought to hypothesize that printed text reinforces deep reading that in turn results in readers cognitive skills.

### **Research questions**

- Does print medium lead to deep reading? If so, what are the possibilities the text provides a reader to go in-depth?
- Does deep reading allow a reader to obtain cognitive skills?
- What are the struggles that interrupt in the deep reading process and obtaining cognitive skills when reading online?

### **Literature Review**

Maryanne Wolf in her book Reader, Come Home- The Reading Brain in a Digital World (2019) states that reading in its original essence is a fertile miracle of

communication effected in solitude. The book which takes the reader somewhere outside of themselves to that interior space where the readers are freed themselves to communicate with themselves and the author or the characters who are presented in the text. Further, she states that, one hand, the use of screen reading lowers the capacity to draw analogies and inferences. The immersion in a variety of digital material slows down the cognitive process. On the other hand, use of print material triggers the reader's deep reading in a number of ways. She talks about the term physicality. Which emphasizes the sense of touch in print reading adds an important aspect to draw the high level of comprehension. Having a printed book gives a 'thereness' to the readers which leads the readers to travel in time and space. The readers can go back to what they read and come back to their views and change their perspectives. It leads to perspective taking. It expands the internalized knowledge of the world and re-examine the past assumptions. Thus, according to her the printed books help the deep reading skills.

Nicholas G Carr (2020) in his book *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains* explores the advantages that are offered by the printed books and the trepidation by e- books. He has noted the experiences that were shared by some readers. Specially, author Steven Johnson convey his experience on reading on screen as follows: "I fear that one of the great joys of book reading- the total immersion in another world, or in the world of the author's ideas will be compromised. We all may read books the way we increasingly read magazines and newspapers: a little bit here, a little bit there" (para 7). Christine Rosen, a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington expresses her experience when she read Dicken's *Nicholas Nickleby* on a Kindle. "I quickly adjusted to the kindle's screen. Nevertheless, my eyes were restless and jumped around as they do when I try to read for a sustained time on the computer. Distraction abounded. I looked up Dickens on Wikipedia, and then jumped straight down the internet rabbit hole following a link about a Dickens short story, *Mugby Junction*. Twenty minutes later I still hadn't returned to my reading of *Nickleby* on the Kindle." (para.8). In the same way the author records another experience by a historian on reading an electronic book "A few clicks, and the text duly appears on my computer screen. I started reading, while the book is well written and informative, I find it remarkably hard to concentrate. Interrupt myself more than usual to refill my coffee cup, check email, check the news, rearrange the files. Eventually, I get through the book and am glad to have done so. But a week later I find it remarkable hard to remember what I have read." (para. 9).

## **Methodology**

The research was carried out primarily observing the students' in drama and theatre of Swami Vipulananda Institute of Aesthetic Studies. In particular, 30 students from second year second semester were participated based on their reading interest. The students were divided into two groups. One group was asked to read a short story *A Hunger Artist* by Franz Kafka on printed text. Simultaneously, the other group was asked to read the same short story online. Students were given one hour of time to complete their reading. After the completion of the reading activity students were

asked to participate in the discussion. First the discussion was carried out with those who read the printed text. Later, there was another discussion separately with those who read online. Generally, there were a number of questions put forward to initiate the discussion. Based on the observation of the students' answers and feedback, the impact of print and screen in deep reading were evaluated.

## Discussion

The term Deep reading was coined by Sven Birkerts in *The Gutenberg Elegies* (1994). He defines it as follows "The term I coin for this is *deep reading*: the slow and meditative possession of a book. We don't just read the words; we dream our lives in their vicinity. The printed page becomes a kind of wrought-iron fence we crawl through, returning, once we have wandered, to the very place we started." Thus, deep reading leads to approach a text in- depth thoughtfully. Therefore, in the proposed research, students read a printed text seem to go deeper into the text to draw meanings. When the students asked to summarize the reading, students were able to summarize the story in the chronological order in a way the text propels. Students have visualized the story. They have created a mental image of the story. Even, students had drawings on their text's margins. Specially, some had a cage, and some had a panther face, some had drawn hungry faces, some had drawn religious symbols. Each page had some drawings. Students were able to create a visual image from the words in the text. Wendell Berry (2018) calls the sentence "the feelable thought" (p.37). This capacity to feel a sentence would create a sensory and evocative picture in the reader's mind.

Moreover, students have associated the story and constructed the meaning using their background knowledge on this particular text. Interestingly, students constructed the meaning on connecting clown characters they have already read, some are interpreted the cage in different perspectives, some are pointed names of texts which use the same symbols for various meanings. Not all the students empathize with the Hunger Artist. Each one had their own perspectives about fasting and artists. Some had said, they had to change the notion of fasting and hunger from its literal meaning to understand the deeper meaning. Some have related the story to their daily experiences. To an extent, students said they could be able to immerse themselves into the text and squeeze the deeper meaning of the text by connecting to their background knowledge. Particularly, the students inference the story by giving reasonable points.

John S Dunne (2018) narrative theologian states that, the act of passing over and coming back becomes very important in deep reading. On the one hand, the term act of passing over stresses the process of perspective taking and enters into the feelings of others. On the other hand, coming back fosters a reader to go beyond their inherently circumscribed views to somewhere else and return back with the inherited notions enlarged. The students read in print text had grabbed the skill of passing over and coming back. Here students had given their perspectives and inherited views of the panther and they realized the struggles of an artist to prove his/her artistry. Thus, the students cognitively attained the analogical skills and perspective taking.

In the words of Alberto Managuel (2014)“ The act of reading establishes a physical relationship in which all of the senses have a part; the eyes drawing the words from the page, the ears echoing the sounds being read, the nose inhaling the familiar scent of paper, glue, ink, the caressing the rough or soft page, even the taste at times, when the readers fingers are lift into the tongue.” (p.28). His statements are proved in the reading. When asked, how the physicality of the text helped them in reading. Qualitative and narrative response included.

- I was able to concentrate well.
- I could go back and read as to check what came before.
- I was able to make small notes on the margins.
- I liked the cover, image, color of the front page.
- I was able to recollect my previous reading by the smell of the text. It let me travel and cherish my older memories.
- I was able to focus more and constantly check how much yet to read by the page number.
- Having a book, I felt like having a company.
- In the class I was able to respond well with examples from the text.

All these narrative responses exemplify the need of a physical book while reading to uncover the layers of a text. Maryanne Wolf (2018) in her book *Reader Comes Home* notes a point on physicality by Karin Littau and Andrew Piper. The team emphasizes that a sense of touch in print reading adds an important redundancy to information- a kind of “geometry” to words, and a spatial ‘thereness’ of a text. Thus, the sense of ‘thereness’ helps the students to improve their recursive practice. A physical text is fixed and offers defined boundaries. Thus, it reduces the distraction. It enables the ability to go back and evaluate a text’s understanding. It seems to improve comprehending skills. The sense of ‘thereness’ of a text directs the readers into the process of information retention. Therefore, a printed text slows down the reading with a high level of deep thinking.

The students who read the same short story online expressed differently than the students read in printed text. Students accessed the short story on their mobile phones and laboratory computers. In the initial stage students started with excitement. As it progresses, they get bored to focus on the text. After 10 minutes skimming and scanning the screen, students tend to click the websites related to the reading. 50% of the students went directly to the cliffs notes and Wikipedia to grab the summary. Another 30% of the students finished their reading within 15 minutes and surfed the YouTube to watch a video related to the short story. 20% of the students scrolled the screen up and down and had put little effort to take notes by staying on the same page. Based on the observation, students were unable to complete the reading task. Most of the students just skimmed the screen. It shows the non-linear pattern of reading. Jakob Nielson’s F shaped pattern fosters the act of eye tracking with two horizontal stripes followed by a vertical stripe. This pattern shows that many readers do not read the text thoroughly word by word, readers mostly look for information in the first two paragraphs and they search for subheadings, underlined words and so on. This pattern shows the way readers

approach a screen. Thus, the students involved in online reading were more distracted and gathered information in bits and pieces.

Further, students' understanding of the story meaning was very low. 50 % of students who watched a video were able to summarize the story in a non-chronological manner. There is a lack in constructing the meaning. Students struggle to uncover the deeper meaning of the text. When the students asked to talk about the panther character, 10% of the students were able to empathize and express the feelings of the panther in their own term, the 90% of the students just narrating the story on surface level. When asked, how would they interpret the character in contemporary times? The qualitative narrative responses were showed that they did not comprehend the text well. The students did not travel beyond their story line. They never connected to the matters that are stored in their repertoire. They struggled to provide a solution to the suffering of the panther. When students asked to change the ending as they wish but hardly received comments. When asked to write few words or sentences from the text in a piece of paper, surprisingly, students used 'textese' like picture (pics), Panther (patr) and so on. The frequent use of 'textese' in the writing shows their lack of finding the proper spelling from the text. This shows that, students who read in the screen just scanned the screen for information and are unable to recollect their mind. Alberto Managuel (2014) calls it as "Grasshopper's Mind". It is a mind which shifts from one point to another point. Thus, the memory in a grasshopper mind just skim the text and make a quick decision. Never go in-depth to draw inferences and analogies.

Moreover, the responses of the students show that there are number barriers that prevent the students from going into deep reading to obtain cognitive skills. Specially, the lack of patience in reading to go - depth was identified. Students seem to gain more in less effort. In addition, the screen is malleable and not static like a printed page. Thus, the nature of the floating page distracts more.

## Conclusion

In the words of UCLA Psychologist Patricia Greenfield "more exposure to any medium, more the characteristics of the medium will influence the characteristics of the learner. The medium is the messenger to the context" (Wolf Maryanne, "Skim reading is the new normal," para. 5). This point is very important as it stresses on the medium and learner. Thus, reading in a printed text and online screen influences the reader's cognitive skills. Specially, readers read whatever they get but not everything read thoroughly, some are just skimmed and scanned. Outcome of skimming and scanning merely results in information. Whereas deep reading thrives the readers to go in- depth and stimulates the inference skills, perspective taking and decision making. The deep reading is possible in the printed text as the characteristics of print medium influences the characteristics of the reader. Specially, the printed text itself provides a sense of physical 'thereness', passing over to coming back with enlarged perspectives, visual imagination, and sense of eternal company and so on. These characteristics surly impacts on readers cognitive skills.

At the same time, reading online screen diverts the student's attention from primary task to secondary task. Overwhelmed information and sources prevent the

deep reading. As to refer number of materials and find information, students tend to skim and scan the screen. It results in the inadequate knowledge on the students' empathetic, decision making, perspective taking and argumentative skills. Sometimes, there is a chance to fix to their view of the world and never examine it.

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# **A Course in *Multimodal Academic Writing*: Using Disruptive Technologies to Solve Wicked Problems**

Kshema Jose

## **Abstract**

Teaching writing poses a ‘wicked’ or ill-structured problem – how do we make our writing classes relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner? What writing skills can teachers teach when learner levels are varied, tools for writing keep constantly changing, and real-world writing requirements are in constant flux?

This paper reports the process of transforming an academic writing course into a multimodal academic writing course in order to make instruction of writing in the ESL classroom more relevant for students and equip learners to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace demands. It was observed that the multimodal essays produced by the students evidenced clarity of purpose, clear structure, logic in argumentation and presence of new knowledge.

The paper suggests that the use of web 2.0 tools in the writing classroom to gather information, synthesise and organise ideas, collaborate with peers, and produce written text augmented with multimedia aids, might have the potential to encourage whole-classroom meaningful participation in writing activities, enhanced comprehension through shared understanding, and production of better argumentative essays.

Advocating digital literacy practices and drawing on the principles of Universal Design for Learning, the writer exhorts language teachers to weave multimodal literacy practices into academic writing instruction. This, the writer feels, can address two problems that most ESL teachers face – the disconnect of writing skill as taught in classroom contexts from real world writing requirements; and the inability to ensure productive participation of all students in a classroom.

**Key words:** Multimodal Academic Writing, Digital Literacy, Argumentative Essays, Web 2.0 Tools

## **Introduction**

Pictures are allowed and used in academic essays and research papers written in STEM disciplines. However, humanities as a rule do not encourage bringing pictures into academic writing contexts. This paper reports the design, delivery and observed effects of a course called *Multimodal Academic Writing* that was introduced to investigate whether use of pictures and other multimedia elements could help undergraduate students write clearer, detailed and well-structured argumentative essays with fewer logical fallacies.

## Explanation of terms used

1. A **wicked problem** is an ill-structured problem, a problem that does not have a single cause or effect, or a linear cause and effect structure. Such problems are difficult to solve (hence called *wicked*) because of our inability to identify and/or address all factors that cause it. Compounded by the fact that the various causes are embedded in social and cultural contexts, wicked problems constantly shift shapes because these factors are in flux. This also leads to generation of contradictory knowledge about the problem since characteristics of people and their opinions are context-dependent. Yet another defining feature of wicked problems is the interconnectedness of its causes.

Teaching writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is considered a wicked problem by this writer since writing as a skill is influenced and fashioned by a host of factors such as social contexts, personal variables, cultural factors, tools of literacy available, professional demands, etc. It is difficult to define writing or form a clear articulation of what writing skills are to be taught in the classroom when skills and demands of literacy keep changing.

2. **Disruptive technology** encompasses new ways of doing things that disrupt a traditional method or practice. For example, the printing press overhauled the book-printing process by making mass production of books inexpensive. The result was knowledge explosion and a surge in number of literate people.

Thus, disruptive technology is any innovation that disrupts a long-held way of doing things by altering them significantly. And in most cases, use of disruptive technology results in replacing old practices with the new since the attributes of the new technology are advantageous in terms of relevance, currency and efficiency. An example is use of emails replacing letters or postal services.

Disruptive technologies are thus technologies that disrupt established practices and create new ones. Web 2.0 tools have invaded every sphere of functional literacy and it is in this sense they are termed disruptive technologies in this paper. Writing using web 2.0 tools disrupted the earlier practices of both writing using paper and pen, as well as writing using a word processor on a computer. Web 2.0 tools allow users to go beyond creating, editing, saving and printing documents, and make writing interactive, multimodal and collaborative.

3. **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** articulates a way to make teaching and learning truly inclusive. Principles of UDL explain how all students can be given equal opportunities to succeed if instructional practices offer flexibility in terms of learning materials, tasks and activities, and assessment of learning. The three principles of UDL encourage teachers to develop lesson plans that provide students multiple means of content representation, multiple means for expression of ideas, and multiple means of engagement with learning. Instruction plans designed based on UDL ensure that individual needs are met, and all students are able to access and participate in meaningful, challenging relevant and productive learning opportunities.

4. Basic **digital literacy** skills consist of skills like searching for, locating and using information. However, digital literacy also goes beyond these to include one's ability to decide which digital tools to use to communicate and collaborate with a variety of audience to convey different types of messages; think critically using information; and create ways of presenting new information. American Library Association's Digital Literacy Task Force defines digital literacy as "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills" (ALA, 2013, p 1).

### Background and rationale

The course described in the paper evolved out of a trial run conducted by upscaling and integrating two undergraduate courses - *Presentation Skills* (in semester 3) and *Academic Writing* (in semester 4) both offered to BA Honours English students at a Central University in India. One reason to integrate these courses was that techniques of effective oral presentation and mechanics of good writing match and therefore it was hoped that learning that occurred in the former could be used as a lead-in to facilitate the latter. For instance, several characteristics of effective public speaking like stating purpose of speech clearly, connecting with the audience, etc. match aspects of good writing.

The following are some overlaps between the two courses:

Presentation Skills	Academic writing
Explicitly and clearly stated purpose of speech	Use of thesis sentence and controlling ideas to state objective of text
Grabbing audience's attention	Using types of opening paragraphs to create interest
Clear and logical arrangement of ideas	Well-organised sequence of paragraphs
Using word pictures to create vivid images of ideas	Use of descriptive writing techniques
Use of devices like paraphrasing, repetition, discourse markers, connectives, etc.	Except for discourse markers, similar devices are employed in writing
Form connections between introduction and conclusion by restating ideas	Similar techniques used in writing
Use of appropriate body language and voice modulation to support the message	While non-verbal features do not appear in writing, use of techniques like foregrounding, emoticons, repetitions, order of presentation of ideas, etc. are employed by a writer to subtly project significance of ideas
Use of additional aids like visual props, PowerPoint slides, etc.	Use of images and other aids to provide examples, illustrations, evidence, facts, etc.

Table 1: Comparison of components of Presentation Skills and Academic Writing courses

A second reason for the integration of the courses was that as part of their course in *Presentation Skills*, students were given training in producing effective PowerPoint slides and other visual aids to accompany their speaking.

The table below lists some of the tasks used in the class:

Tasks	Objectives
Design appropriate opening slides	Learn how to choose font sizes, types, placement and arrangement of texts that match the message and audience
Create single slide summaries of longer texts	Learn how to summarise information and present using bullets
Design slides demonstrating effects of complementary and contrasting colours	Learn how to choose colours for text, background, etc. that match the message and audience
Compare audience effects of facts-only slides with facts presented using non-verbal resources like images, infographics, photos, etc.	Learn to distinguish between ideas that can best be presented using different types of resources
Organise information on slides succinctly to create a story, set the mood, evoke feelings, and lead audience to form the desired impression	Learn to ensure cohesion among non-verbal aids deployed
Use multimedia resources to supplement, complement or augment information, or provide additional information	Learn to distinguish between the effects of use of static images, animations, photos, infographics, diagrams, video and audio
Complement speech-text with text on slide and body language	Learn how verbal and non-verbal resources can be effectively combined to achieve delivery of message

Table 2: Tasks that aimed to help students develop multimodal aids to augment their presentations

It was observed that these tasks helped students examine their spoken texts, analyse their audience, restructure their ideas, identify gaps, and search for additional information to strengthen their texts. It is this intense interaction with the text and audience that the writer hoped would be continued in the learners' writing activities. It was also hoped that the students' abilities to identify aids to augment their messages, and design and use multimedia resources to strengthen their oral presentations could be channelised to help them choose and use multimedia resources to write effectively in academic writing contexts.

Thirdly, this writer felt there was a need to overhaul the kind of writing skills taught in our classes. Academic writing taught in the form of writing argumentative essays has relevance only in higher education settings; writing in the real-world and authentic professional contexts is collaborative, employs multimedia resources and uses multiple text types and structures. Most of our learners' daily writing practices transacted through digital tools like Facebook, Instagram, blogs, etc. are also multimedia texts. The use of multimedia resources appeals to the 21<sup>st</sup> century reader and are also relevant. Reinterpreting academic writing as multimodal academic writing was an attempt on the part of the writer to develop these new literacies in our students.

Fourthly, in humanities, with topics for academic writing essays not always based on what is taught in class, generating ideas about the topic, as well as acquiring the necessary language to write about it are problems faced by ESL learners. This writer wanted to explore if interaction and conversation triggered by use of pictures and other multimedia resources could scaffold writing skills of students with low content and linguistic knowledge.

## The Course

During the course on *Presentation Skills* in semester 3, features and structures of spoken texts were discussed using authentic speech samples. Speeches and talks based a broad range of topics delivered by a variety of speakers were analysed to understand text types, text genres and text structures. Based on this, students arrived at an awareness of four types of texts – descriptive, narrative, expository and argumentative, and the techniques used for presentation and development of ideas in these texts. Attention was also paid to examining parts of a speech text – the link between opening and closing paragraphs, and the cohesive organisation of supporting paragraphs.

Once verbal texts were examined closely, their relation with body language and external props were explored. Gestures, facial expressions, intonation and other non-verbal features were understood to illustrate how verbal and non-verbal can complement and strengthen each other. Popular historical and current speeches were then analysed using collaboratively created worksheets.

In the second phase, Bookr (<https://www.pimpampum.net/bookr/now> defunct), a web 2.0 tool was used to develop visual literacy skills in students. They were asked to take parts of texts and find illustrations to match their meaning. Following Carney and Levin's (2002) classification of functions of pictures, students were asked to identify pictures that decorate the passage, represent information in the text, transform the information into a more memorable form, and help the reader organize the text.

This task was followed by the use of another web 2.0 tool, VoiceThread (<https://voicethread.com/>) to familiarise students with using spoken texts to accompany images. Ten images selected by the teacher were posted on VoiceThread and students were asked to provide a spoken text to accompany at least three of the images. They were also instructed to produce texts that were repeated, complementary and supplementary in nature.

After this, the presentation tool PechaKucha was used to train students in controlling the quantity of speech text content and using body language and voice modulation to match the spoken text effectively.

The final task of the course was a group oral presentation using PowerPoint slides. During the course in *Multimodal Academic Writing* in semester 4, features of spoken texts addressed in the previous course were compared with the corresponding ones in written texts.

The following were some components revisited during the first two weeks of the course:

1. thesis sentences, control idea, and supporting sentences
2. text type, text genre, text structure, and register
3. opening sentences, types of opening paragraphs and conclusions
4. cohesion among supporting paragraphs

During this time, activities such as show and tell writing, acrostics, colour and shape poems, changing text genres, replacing sentences with pictures, making notes, paraphrasing, expanding, and summarising were used to develop students' fluency and efficiency in writing.

Since the focus of this course was on developing students' abilities to write effective persuasive or argumentative texts, the first two months aimed to deliver the following objectives:

1. analysis of texts to inspect validity of arguments
2. use of Toulmin analysis to learn appropriate terminology for analysing soundness of arguments and truthfulness of assumptions
3. identify logical fallacies and formulate strong arguments
4. develop digital literacy skills to help research, critical thinking and writing skills
  - a. acquire research skills to search, locate, and evaluate multimodal information to support one's standpoint
  - b. develop critical thinking skills to synthesise information from different sources and modes to produce and support one's claims
  - c. learn to employ a variety of writing techniques, adopt conventional writing mechanics, use appropriate documentation style, avoid plagiarism, practice recursive writing processes, and use collaborative platforms of web 2.0 tools to generate ideas, seek peer-corrections, and offer comments on peer work

During the third month, the students started developing awareness of presence, absence and replacement of features of spoken texts in written texts; effects of types of pictures on audience's perception of messages; differences in message reception when using pictures, audio or video to illustrate and strengthen arguments; ideas that writers choose to present using non-verbal resources and reasons for their choices, etc.

As part of this phase, students were expected to produce two expository and two argumentative essays as group tasks. Students were divided into groups and the groups remained the same till the end of the course. Each essay writing task was preceded by a face-to-face discussion in class during which group members decided on a topic. Topics included same-sex marriages, death penalty, euthanasia, religion, women's safety, sanitation and hygiene, etc. This was followed by a virtual pre-writing task using Padlet, (<https://padlet.com/>) a collaborative discussion board where students shared multimedia online resources related to the topic. Once all students read and commented on resources shared by group members, an essay outline was created using Google docs (<https://www.google.com/docs/>). Each student contributed images and ideas, discussed with group members, edited, and modified the text on Google docs to produce the final versions of both illustrated expository essays.

The production of the two argumentative essays was also preceded by a face-to-face discussion. For their argumentative essays, all groups decided to choose derivatives of their topics of expository essays. Topics included legalising same-sex marriages, banning death penalty, allowing euthanasia, necessity of religion, women

employment to ensure women's safety, promoting sanitation and hygiene through education, etc. This was followed by sharing of online resources on Padlet.

However, the writing process of argumentative essays differed from that of expository essays in that students were engaged in a virtual brainstorming on Spiderscribe (<https://www.spiderscribe.net/>) where they outlined arguments and counterarguments to present and support their points of view. VoiceThread was used to exchange ideas regarding use of multimedia resources to support arguments. A VoiceThread was created for each group and group members were asked to share an image or other multimedia resource and explain its relevance to their topic. (It should be noted here that the class had two students with visual disabilities who were encouraged to locate audio resources like news files, interviews, etc. to support ideas and identify background scores to match the message and the audience.) Both argumentative essays were created collaboratively and presented using Penzu (<https://penzu.com/>) or as a blog post using WordPress (<https://wordpress.com/>).

The final task for the course was individual writing of an argumentative essay incorporating multimedia elements into the verbal text, on any topic that appealed to individual students.

### **Advantages of the Course**

Web 2.0 tools were selected for performing both individual and collaborative activities since the crux of the course on *Multimodal academic writing* is developing digital literacy skills (especially writing skills) in students.

This writer noticed that the use of web 2.0 tools to promote multimodal academic writing resulted in several advantages. (Though classroom-based empirical research is required to prove the various claims made below, it is worthwhile to list them here as they make a strong claim to introduce multimodal writing practices in ESL classrooms.)

The cognitive processes underlying the digital literacy skills of searching for, identifying and consulting multimedia resources to support verbal texts seemed to lead to multiple advantages. Primarily, the interaction with a large number of and wide variety of resources seemed to enable students to form clearer and logical arguments to support their thesis. A classroom example that can be cited here is a student reporting that reading comic strips improved her argumentation levels since they allowed thinking from two or more people's perspectives. Allowing students to choose and use multimedia resources related to their thesis statements also led to the use of precise controlling ideas and creation of focused detail sentences. This writer observed that student writing became more lucid and their arguments had fewer occurrences of logical fallacies.

From an ESL learning perspective, this interaction also served the purpose of providing students both content and language support to write their essays - many students reported that use of multimodal online resources helped improve their vocabulary and ideas.

Thirdly, web 2.0 tools, by engaging students in dialogues with themselves and peers helped tap the potential of distributed cognition. By facilitating student



participation in asynchronous discussions, these tools promoted interaction and reciprocity which helped reduce the occurrence of assumptions and fallacies in both written and spoken texts produced by the students. That dialogues support learning is not new. What this course shows is how dialogues with others become richer when accompanied by pictures or multimedia resources. The *dialogue plus multimedia* tasks also had the potential to make students question and/or alter their deep-seated beliefs and develop openness to form new ideas. In this course, the *dialogues plus multimedia* activities thus served the dual purpose of making interpersonal and intrapersonal construction of ideas more efficient.

## Conclusion and Future Directions

Use of web 2.0 tools in this course was seen to reduce the disruption and replace conventional practices of writing with newer modes of writing that catered to variables like learner needs, interests and requirements. The course *multimodal Academic Writing* can therefore be seen as an attempt to solve the ill-structured problem of teaching writing by making writing instruction relevant.

Introduction of multimodal literacy practices through a course like this can promote multimodal forms of expression of ideas paving the way for classrooms spaces that promote representation of the linguistic, social and cultural diversity in our students. Thus, a multimodal writing course can become a good example for situated instructional practices (1) that help teachers focus on and promote individual background and interests. Multimodal essays have the power and the scope to give voices to individual meaning-making. Writing multimodal essays could thus be considered a means to realise the principles of Universal Design for Learning, paving the way for building not just efficient communicators but empowered writers.

Analysis, evaluation and eventual production of texts where verbal, visual, and aural content coexist to present an argument effectively could eventually facilitate *hybrid writing* where writers incorporate a wide genre of text types and forms like emails, poems, podcasts, blogs, poems, puzzles, photos, brochures, essays, etc. to convey a message.

Thirdly, while there is sufficient research that explains the reception of multimedia texts (Mayer, 2001), research into production of multimedia texts is lacking. Several reading researchers have investigated and explained how use of pictures helps readers understand, interpret, retain and recall text information (Chun & Plass, 1997). But then what about production of the multimedia texts? The process of crafting compelling multimodal arguments needs to be investigated. Images and text have been around for centuries, what is new is the wide array of possibilities of creating and arranging them in multiple formats. It would help add to theoretical understanding of the process of writing if research can be conducted to examine how socio-cultural factors and other writer variables interact when multimodal texts are chosen by a writer and how use of such texts alters the writer's thinking process and the manipulation of the verbal text. Such studies will help explore newer areas of mind-machine interaction (2) and help form a comprehensive theory of the processes of newer modes of writing.

**End Notes:**

1. Viewing learning as a product of the activity, context and culture, a concept discussed by Lave &Wenger (1991)
2. According to Elon Musk, a technology entrepreneur, understanding the brain-computer interface will help us understand how human intelligence can be enhanced when cognitive resources are split between the internet and human brain(Marsh, 2018).

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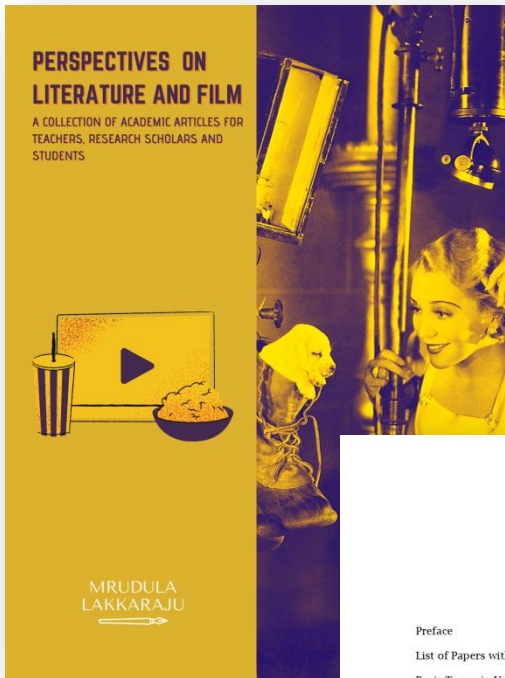
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Perspectives on Literature and Film

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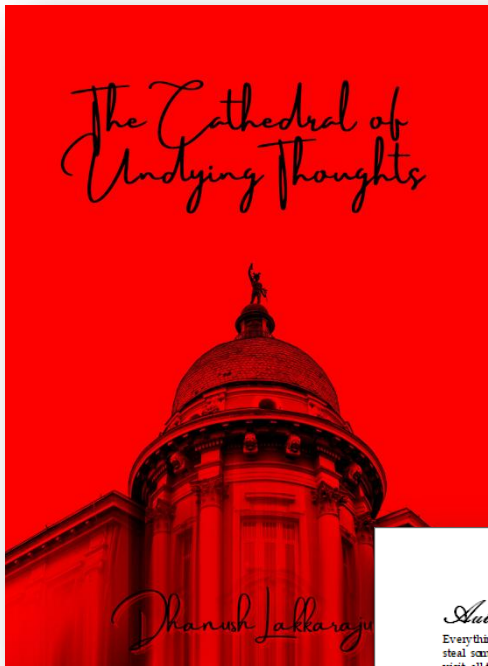
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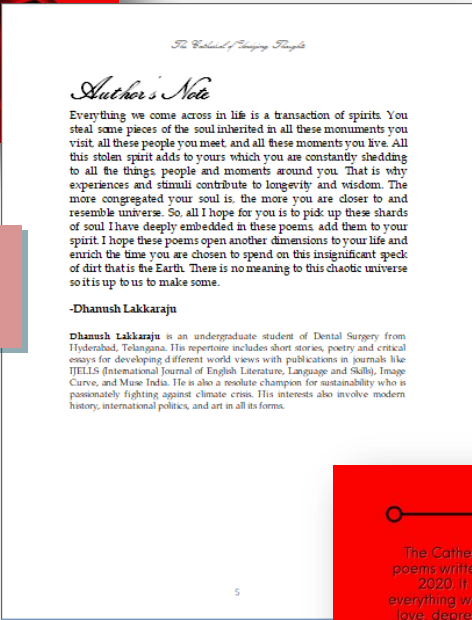
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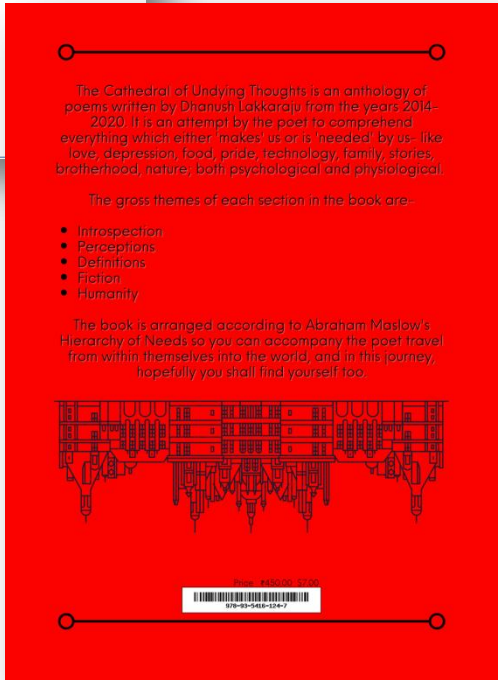


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**Sample...**  
In the cerulean skies, in the verdant fields,  
In the aquamarine waters.  
I have shed too much of myself,  
Like a moulting serpent,  
Into the places, things and people, I've been to  
and thought of.



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